

# Taiwan-Nordic Forum 2026: Resilience as Defense

**Event Report**

**April 15, 2026**



Institute for Security & Development Policy

Stockholm Taiwan Center

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# Taiwan-Nordic Forum 2026: Resilience as Defense



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 6th Taiwan-Nordic Forum, titled ‘Resilience as Defense,’ was convened on April 15, 2026 at Sjöfartshuset in Stockholm. The forum, organized by the Stockholm Taiwan Center of the Institute for Security and Development Policy, served as a platform for Nordic, Baltic, and Taiwanese experts and scholars to discuss emerging common defense challenges linked to gray-zone tactics in Taiwan, the Nordic, and the Baltic regions. It was the first time the forum extended its scope to Baltic states, marking an important step towards deepening

cooperation and promoting knowledge exchange, elements that constitute the cornerstone of strengthened national and international resilience.

The event comprised three sessions, each addressing topics of mutual interest, including Taiwanese and Nordic perspectives on critical maritime infrastructure, airspace incursions in Taiwan and Europe, and cooperation in a Taiwan contingency, with geopolitical, economic, and technological considerations explored. Each session intentionally featured Baltic, Nordic, and Taiwanese voices to identify similarities and areas where cooperation

could be enhanced, strengthening joint expertise in a mutually beneficial way. The panel discussions were moderated by members of different parties in the Swedish Riksdag, who enriched the exchanges by providing a political perspective on defense issues.

## OPENING REMARKS

Alongside **Phoebe Yeh**, Representative of the Taipei Mission in Sweden, **Dr. Niklas Swanström**, Executive Director of the ISDP, opened the forum with a welcome remark. They emphasized the importance of strengthening cooperation between Taiwan and like-minded democracies to counter rising common threats from China and Russia, build resilience, and safeguard global peace together.

**In-bum Chun**, Lieutenant General (Ret.), Republic of Korea Army, enriched the introduction with a keynote presentation on South Korea's crucial role in a Taiwan contingency scenario. He remarked that factors such as geographical proximity, established alliances with the United States (U.S.), and economic pressure from China would indirectly affect the country, making a decision to join the conflict inevitable. South Korea, he explained, would be indispensable to maintaining regional stability by deterring North Korea, protecting sea lines of communication, defending the cyber network, and supporting allied forces. Lieutenant General (Ret.) Chun concluded that resilience is, therefore, a national survival requirement rather than an option.





## SESSION I: TAIWAN AND NORDIC PERSPECTIVES ON CRITICAL MARITIME INFRASTRUCTURE

The first session focused on the parallel challenges in maritime infrastructure in Taiwan and the Nordic and Baltic regions, particularly threats and sabotage to undersea cables, the role of commercial vessels in maritime society, and countermeasures to maritime incursions. The panel was moderated by **Björn Söder**, Member of the Riksdag, Sweden Democrats, who introduced the discussion by noting that both the Baltic region and Taiwan face similar challenges from cable incidents. He stressed that, given our society's reliance on undersea communication infrastructure, such incidents should be viewed as part of a broader hybrid threat.

## Lessons from the Baltic Sea: Critical Maritime Infrastructure Threats and Incidents, the Strength of Diversity

**Dr. Hans Liwång**, Professor, Department of Systems Science for Defense and Security, Swedish Defense University, started the discussion by introducing the topic of the Baltic Sea's critical maritime infrastructure across four domains: underwater environments, infrastructure, society, and military capabilities. First, he noted that the underwater domain is operationally complex and remains largely unexplored, with unique conditions varying significantly across regions, for example, between the Baltic Sea and the Taiwan Strait. Moving to infrastructure, Dr. Liwång then explained that technical resilience, especially cable repair capacity in the Baltic region, is

relatively strong due to the rich diversity of cables, infrastructures, and operators. Despite creating coordination frictions, diversity has proven to be key to ultimately strengthening resilience by mitigating incidents effectively. As such, Dr. Liwång explained that the real societal impact of maritime incidents often stems from the uncertainty they create rather than the disruptions themselves, highlighting how a more structured dialogue and information sharing between civilian and military operators remains the missing link in building societal awareness and resilience.

### **Taiwan's Perspective on Military Maritime Infrastructure**

**Bin-Yi Liu**, Naval Captain, Director of the Military Coordination Division at the Taipei Representative Office in Denmark, Ministry of National Defense of the Republic of China (Taiwan), opened her presentation with an overview of Taiwan's military maritime infrastructure organization and challenges. She noted that in recent years, Taiwan has faced several undersea cables incidents attributed to the CCP, which she described as calculated disruptions aimed at undermining Taiwan's security and increasing social anxiety. Captain Liu then addressed a focal point, affirming that these gray-zone activities are particularly difficult to address because of the risk of escalation. As a consequence, Taiwan has adopted a joint civilian–military supervision model, dividing responsibilities between Coast Guards and Navy authorities, to respond

more effectively to cable incidents and monitor ambiguous commercial vessels. She then emphasized that strengthening maritime domain awareness is essential for Taiwan's security, requiring tools such as automated ship identification systems, integrated satellite surveillance, and improved data sharing between public and private actors. Captain Liu concluded that Taiwan is progressively aligning with NATO approaches to critical maritime infrastructure and that combining Nordic maritime expertise with Taiwan's long-lasting experience could further enhance resilience and coordination.

### **Maritime Hybrid Threats in the Baltic Sea: Legal Challenges and Best Practices**

**Dr. Pierre Thévenin**, Researcher at Stockholm International Peace Research Institute and International Technical Expert for Expertise France, approached maritime hybrid threats in the Baltic Sea from a legal perspective. He began his presentation by arguing that maritime hybrid threats thrive in legal gaps in current regulations, which, combined with the fear of escalation, complicate the determination of appropriate responses. Dr. Thévenin focused on two specific threats in the Baltic Sea: damage to submarine cables and shadow fleet vessels, explaining how both exploit specific legal loopholes. First, he explained that actors damaging submarine cables benefit from an outdated legal framework, the 1884 Paris Convention for the Protection of Submarine

Telegraph Cables, which lacks specific provisions to prevent or adequately sanction such activities. Similarly, shadow fleet vessels take advantage of the uncertainty around their legal nature, which prevents authorities from boarding or inspecting them without first determining whether they are civilian, governmental, or military, to avoid the risk of escalation.

To address these obstacles, he noted, Baltic Sea states have developed legal workarounds, such as using environmental regulations to target vessels lacking valid certification, successfully restricting Russian-linked ships from entering European Union (EU) waters. While no unified solution exists for cable protection, countries like Denmark have introduced safety zones around critical infrastructure, enabling authorities to intervene in their jurisdiction. Dr. Thévenin affirmed that these measures have been effective but mostly reactive, while more anticipatory legal frameworks to adapt to future threats should be further developed.

### **Taiwan's Digital Resilience**

The last speaker, **Dr. Christy Ya-Chi Chiang**, Deputy Representative of the Taipei Representative Office in the U.K, enriched the discussion by sharing her insights on digital resilience in Taiwan. She noted that the number of cable-damage incidents in Taiwan had increased from 7 to 11 per year over the last four years, and that four major incidents occurred in 2025 alone, all of which were directly or indirectly

linked to China. Echoing Dr. Thévenin's presentation, Dr. Chiang stressed the legal complexities involved in responding to such incidents. In this context, and following cases of Chinese vessels severing undersea cables connecting Taiwan and Matsu, the Taiwanese government decided to strengthen its legal framework through the 2023 Telecommunications Management Act, which criminalizes the disruption of undersea cables. Dr. Chiang then presented the technological responses Taiwan has implemented to strengthen its resilience. Firstly, she explained that, in the event of submarine cable disruption, Taiwan relies on backup systems, such as microwave links with Matsu Island and satellite terminals. In addition, she noted that maritime infrastructure has been reinforced through improved cable protection and deeper burial, and that the AI-based surveillance system used to monitor maritime activity has been enhanced. Lastly, Dr. Chiang called for a shift in approach, moving from a reactive stance based solely on cable repair to a proactive one characterized by deterrence and redundancy. She also reiterated the importance of international cooperation initiatives, such as the Taiwan–Europe Undersea Cable Security Forum.

### **Open Discussion I**

The open discussion that followed the speakers' insights was integrated with the audience's questions, which mostly centered on:

- The reasons behind outdated frame-

works that could prevent cable damage, and how to close current loopholes

- The space for building stronger cooperation between Taiwan and the Nordic countries in Maritime infrastructure
- The division of roles between military and civilian actors
- The role of lawmakers in increasing resilience

Dr. Thevenin addressed the first point, explaining that the legal framework is outdated because the 1884 Paris Convention was signed before the cable industry existed. He further argued that it is difficult to amend these legal instruments, but there is room for nations to exercise greater regulatory authority within their exclusive economic zones (EEZs). On regional cooperation, panelists agreed that the most sensitive and important priority is the sharing of information and the fostering of dialogue on monitoring developments, legal improvements, and new technologies. Lastly, Dr. Liwǎng clarified that in the Baltic region, NATO is primarily responsible for protecting cables, while cable repair and maintenance are handled by multiple civilian companies. As such, speakers emphasized the need for stronger civil-military coordination, citing Taiwan's coast guard model. On the last point, it was suggested that policymakers could enhance system resilience by promoting cable market diversity to reduce operational uncertainty.

## SESSION II: AIRSPACE INCURSIONS IN TAIWAN AND EUROPE

The Second panel, moderated by **Gustaf Göthberg**, Member of the Riksdag, Moderate Party, addressed the topic of evolving airspace incursions in Taiwan and Europe: dynamics, risks, and policy responses, ranging from classical aircraft exercises to more ambiguous drone and balloon incursions. Particularly, the focus was on their development, challenges, strategic implications, and security consequences.

### Russian Incursions in the Baltic Airspace

The discussion began with **Dr. Tony Lawrence**, Head of the Defense Policy and Strategy Program & Research Fellow at the International Center for Defense and Security, who opened his presentation by framing several Russian actions as hybrid warfare. He argued that activities such as routine military aircraft incursions into NATO airspace are to be considered more of a nuisance than a direct, existential threat. As such, they are best managed through resilience, interception, and protest rather than more assertive actions that could risk escalation. In contrast, he pointed out the growing threat from drones, noting that current air defense systems are optimized for traditional aircraft and struggle to detect slow, low-flying drones with small radar signatures. Reflecting on the broader security context, Dr. Lawrence affirmed



that the current situation in the Baltic, while serious, is not comparable to the knife-edge confrontation of the Cold War, when military aircraft exercises were commonplace, and people had grown accustomed to them. Therefore, he suggested that Russia is more likely to be employing airspace incursions to unsettle neighboring countries, providing the example of the “12-minute” airspace incursion in Estonia, where a relatively minor incident generated disproportionate public alarm. Dr. Lawrence concluded his presentation by suggesting that, in this context, strengthening resilience and improving capabilities to counter drone incursions appear to be the most effective tools to limit the strategic effects of Russian hybrid threats.

## People’s Liberation Army’s Hybrid Operations and Taiwan Responses

Jen-you Wu, Air Force Colonel, Director of the Military Coordination Division at the Taiwanese Representative Office in Lithuania, Ministry of National Defense of the Republic of China (Taiwan), reflected on China’s evolving gray-zone military activity around Taiwan. He explained that the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) intensified conducting military activities around Taiwan and crossed the median line of the Taiwan Strait in 2022. Since then, these activities have increased substantially in both frequency and scale, featuring joint exercises involving naval, air, and ground forces. Such operations, he noted, aimed to

test Taiwan's military capabilities, create confusion among its population, and express China's dissent in connection with specific events, including President Lai's inauguration ceremony in 2024 and periods of broader engagement with the U.S.

Colonel Wu then narrowed the focus on Taiwan airspace, where China maintains constant military pressure through drones, balloons, and PLA aircraft encirclement flights, deliberately violating Taiwan's ADIZ (Air Defense Identification Zone). He then described the various measures Taiwan had implemented in response to these threats. First, adopting a comprehensive air defense system that integrates surveillance, interception, and early warning capabilities establishes a complete protection chain from detection to response. Second, to counter disinformation and psychological warfare, Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense has been publishing regular reports on PLA aircraft activities since 2022 to inform the international community. Lastly, Colonel Wu explained that another fundamental aspect has been the gradual increase in the national defense budget. In 2025, it was estimated at around 21 billion USD, approximately 2.3 percent of GDP, and is set to increase to around 5 percent of GDP after the introduction of a special defense budget of 1.25 trillion NTD (approximately US\$40 billion), proposed by President Lai. The budget was passed by the Legislative Yuan with spending capped at NT\$780 billion (approximately US\$24.8 billion) in May 2026.

Colonel Wu concluded by reminding that, given Taiwan's leadership in semiconductors, a potential conflict would severely affect the global supply chain and disrupt global GDP, underscoring the global importance of preventing an escalation in the Taiwan Strait.

## **Drone Incursions in European Airspace: Critical Insights from Research and Practice**

**Dr. Bruno Oliveira Martins**, Senior Researcher at the Peace Research Institute Oslo, directed the discussion toward drone incursions into European airspace. He observed that drone presence in Europe has escalated over the last decade, with drones entering civilian airspace posing new security problems. Therefore, he argued that creating a bridge between emerging technologies, society, and security is a priority in hybrid warfare. As such, he presented his project RegulAIR, an initiative to safely integrate drones into Norwegian and European civilian airspace through research-based knowledge. However, a central limitation hindering this integration, he argued, is the issue of drone attribution, which creates uncertainty and causes psychological stress within the population. Dr. Martins then showed that drone airspace incursions have usually targeted bordering areas, with a few cases taking place deeply into territories, over airports, and offshore sites such as energy infrastructures, causing several material damages. These incursions are quite significant, as they

introduce an additional economic burden that exacerbates the psychological stress experienced by the population.

Dr. Martins then reflected European drone policies, explaining that the EU has adopted a multilayered vertical protection system covering drones and counter-drones, missile defense, and outer space. Moreover, in 2026, the EU Action Plan to counter drone threats was presented, structured around four action plans: prepare, detect, respond, and strengthen. The plan entails adopting a whole-of-government approach to address the threat posed by drones, integrating civilian and military efforts. Dr. Martins' observations indicated that this approach signifies a substantial advancement, as it is already rooted in Scandinavian countries through the concept of total defense and remains relatively progressive for many other European states.

## **Open Discussion II**

The moderator then opened the floor to audience questions, which deepened the conversation on how to practically prevent and respond to drone incursions. In response, Colonel Wu noted that the most effective step in defensive warfare is drone detection and identification, which could be further enhanced by working closely with Taiwan's allies. Dr. Lawrence added that effective drone defense will require significant investment in new sensors and more cost-effective interceptors, as relying on million-dollar missiles to counter low-cost drones is unsustainable. Furthermore,

Dr. Martins pointed out that jamming the drone communication system has been the most effective approach to drones. However, as drones now rely on AI to communicate with each other, jamming has become less effective. He observed that the introduction of AI has complicated the design of counter-drone systems, which have tried to keep pace with new drone development in an endless cycle. Therefore, the panelists urged for more structured knowledge exchange between countries in order to timely update counter-drone systems and ensure safe airspace in Taiwan and Europe.

## **SESSION III: COOPERATION IN A TAIWAN CONTINGENCY: GEOPOLITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND TECHNOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES**

This session concluded the forum and focused on mapping Nordic and Baltic security expertise onto Taiwan's frontline challenges. Moderated by **Mathias Tegnér**, Member of the Riksdag, Social Democratic Party, the discussion emphasized the importance of assessing risks and strengthening European, Nordic, and Baltic roles in deterrence, crisis prevention, and cooperation in critical technologies and defense.

### **A More Proactive Response to Gray Zone Tactics**

Opening the session, **Maria Martisiute**, Policy Analyst at the European Policy



Center, suggested that Nordic countries should reflect on strategic questions in the context of a Taiwan contingency, including whether and how they would respond to a Chinese blockade of Taiwan, what material support they could realistically provide, and how they would react to potential U.S. pressure to impose sanctions on China. Therefore, she underscored that Nordic actors should assess which measures can be implemented in the immediate future, particularly in addressing cognitive warfare. She then presented three concrete main areas where Nordic-Taiwan cooperation could be strengthened: (1) cruise systems and capabilities, especially in countering drone incursions where

China and Russia currently hold an advantage; (2) data, as access to and control over strategic information is increasingly critical; and (3) semiconductors, with a focus on building resilient and trusted supply chains. Martisiute concluded with a clear and strong stance, describing gray-zone tactics as a notion created by the West to justify what cannot be explained and should rather be seen as deliberate violations of existing rules of international maritime and airspace law. As such, they should be addressed actively, adapting outdated legal frameworks to new common mechanisms to respond to hybrid threats and move from preparedness to actual defense.

## **Resilience through Cooperation in a Taiwan Contingency**

Dr. Tsung-Han Wu, Assistant Research Fellow at the Institute for National Defense and Security Research, began his presentation by highlighting Taiwan's fundamental role in sustaining European industrial continuity. As a primary destination for European foreign direct investment and a leader in the global semiconductor supply chain, any instability in the Taiwan Strait would trigger a global systemic shock, potentially more disruptive than the Strait of Hormuz crisis, Dr. Wu expressed. A second observation concerned Sino-Russian growing cooperation, which he described as an authoritarian alignment posing equal threats to Taiwan and democratic allies. Dr. Wu then moved the presentation to Taiwan's preparedness, noting that the country has boosted its efforts to build resilience through urban exercises and improved coordination among the government, local authorities, and civilians. However, he emphasized, resilience cannot be achieved by a single country alone but must be built collectively. As such, he identified areas for collaboration between Taiwan and the Nordic countries, including securing semiconductor supply chains, protecting critical data and technological knowledge, and, most importantly, fostering exchanges and academic interactions to transform shared vulnerabilities into collective strengths.

## **Emulating Total Defense? Taiwan's Inspiration from the Baltic Sea Region**

The last speaker at the forum, Dr. Marcel Mangold, Senior Lecturer in the Department of War Studies at the Swedish Defense University, underscored the importance of the societal dimension in a contingency scenario. He recalled the Swedish concept of "total defense," briefly mentioned by previous speakers, and described a "whole of society defense approach" to national security based on collaboration among different levels of military and civilian authorities to increase resilience and deterrence. Dr. Mangold emphasized that since 2020, and especially after the war in Ukraine, Taiwan has been turning to this approach, emulating Nordic states. However, societal and political preconditions in Taiwan made the construction of a total defense more challenging. First, Dr. Mangold explained that one primary constraint is low civilian trust in the military since the martial law era, which, combined with a traditional understanding of defense and diverging ideas across parties, hinders the implementation of a territorial defense force. Second, he outlined that structural and institutional aspects constitute another problematic dimension due to the lack of funds and coordination within local governments, as well as the absence of institutional mechanisms to enhance civil-military collaboration. Dr. Mangold concluded that overall, Taiwan experiences

low societal involvement in civil defense, but non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the government have mobilized to increase awareness and preparedness within civil society through training groups, annual exercises, and the publication of new civil readiness handbooks.

### **Open Discussion III and Conclusion**

Following the session, the audience posed a final round of questions regarding the realistic roles of Europe and Nordic and Baltic countries in deterring a Taiwan contingency, their preparedness, and new areas for enhanced cooperation. Martisiute responded to the aforementioned points, proposing a transition from a state of preparedness to a more proactive stance in defense, emphasizing that any transgressions in the gray zone against national borders should be met with clear, equal consequences. Dr. Wu further elaborated that, when it comes to areas of cooperation, there is a tendency to focus solely on the material side, underestimating the importance of human connections and knowledge exchange, which, in turn, is the driving force of resilience.

This final point brought the discussion to an end and reflected the very spirit of the forum, based on the importance of fostering the exchange of ideas, knowledge, and policies that form the foundation for stronger cooperation and greater resilience.

**Dr. Niklas Swanström** echoed this stance in the closing remark and encouraged further

discussion in the future to bring Taiwan and the Nordic and Baltic countries closer together.

### **KEY TAKEAWAYS**

- A shared commitment to safeguard democratic values serves as a unifying force between Taiwan, the Nordic and the Baltic countries in their joint efforts to confront and counter common challenges posed by authoritarian regimes.
- **Maritime Security:** Given our society's reliance on undersea cables amid an increasingly unstable security environment, timely information sharing, joint military-civilian efforts, and diversity within maritime infrastructure and operators are essential. Deeper cooperation between Taiwan, the Nordic and the Baltic countries on these points is key to strengthening collective resilience.
- **Airspace Incursions:** Recent, escalating violations in both Taiwan and Europe represent a serious, emerging threat. Drone and balloon incursions in civilian airspace have created new levels of complexity. Enhanced knowledge exchange, especially regarding new technological advancements in counter-drone systems, enables democracies to respond effectively.
- Taiwan, the Nordic and the Baltic


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countries stand on the same side. Contingencies are no longer hypothetical but already unfolding. This shows the importance of knowledge sharing and continuously strengthening and expanding joint expertise.

- The global supply chain relies heavily on Taiwan's semiconductor leadership, making it even more vital to prevent an escalation in the Taiwan Strait.
- Gray zone tactics, both in maritime and airspace security, play on regulatory

gaps and create a sense of uncertainty that deeply affects the population. Societal awareness and resilience are therefore key to countering such threats.

- Cooperation efforts must extend beyond the material domain to the human domain. Dialogue and the exchange of ideas are fundamental to understanding gray zone tactics. As such, entities such as NGOs should work closely with governments and the military to build a comprehensive resilience system together.



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