

DWINDLING ALLIES: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON THE LOSS OF HONDURAS TIES LEADING TO TAIWAN'S ISOLATION ON THE WORLD STAGE

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By [formally establishing diplomatic relations with China](#) on March 26, 2023, Honduras has joined a growing list of countries that have recently switched recognition from Taipei to Beijing. Taiwan now has only 12 countries, besides the Vatican, with which it has diplomatic ties, including four small Pacific island nations, Eswatini in southern Africa, Paraguay, and six central American and Caribbean nations. Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang, [who signed the communiqué with his Honduran counterpart Eduardo Reina](#), said it showed Honduras made “a choice to stand on the right side of history...”. Taiwan has accused Honduras of seeking financial assistance as a precondition to continue relations, and President Tsai Ing-wen said, after the switch, that Taiwan “will not engage in a meaningless contest of dollar diplomacy with China”. She also accused China of “persistently [using] any and all means to suppress Taiwan’s international participation, [intensify its military intimidations](#)... and disrupt regional peace”.

The switch by Honduras, as well as Taiwan’s concerns about its shrinking international space, point to the growing stress on the current status quo across the Taiwan Strait. The status quo has generally served both sides across the strait well, preserving peace against tall odds. In Taiwan, a thriving democracy with a highly developed economy, the status quo remains the popular choice for most people, according to numerous public opinion surveys. A minority support Taiwan declaring independence or unification with China. However, both Beijing and Taipei have been accusing the other of changing this status quo. In Taipei’s view, Beijing has exerted growing diplomatic pressure to isolate Taiwan as well as stepped up military muscle-flexing, as seen in exercises that surrounded the island last year following the visit of then U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. In Beijing’s view, the ruling DPP in Taipei, with the support of Washington, bears responsibility for the tensions by pursuing de facto independence. Beijing had warmer relations with the previous KMT regime, with a landmark meeting between leaders Xi Jinping and Ma Ying-jeou in 2015. The Xi government has warned the [U.S. that Taiwan remains a red line for China](#), but with [worsening relations between the two countries](#), Taiwan has yet again emerged as a friction point, as seen by the Pelosi visit last year. Beijing continues to refuse to rule out the use of force for what it calls reunification, should Washington or Taipei cross what it sees as a red line. The tussle between the world’s two biggest powers has left the 23 million people of a vibrant and prosperous island caught in the middle.

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