

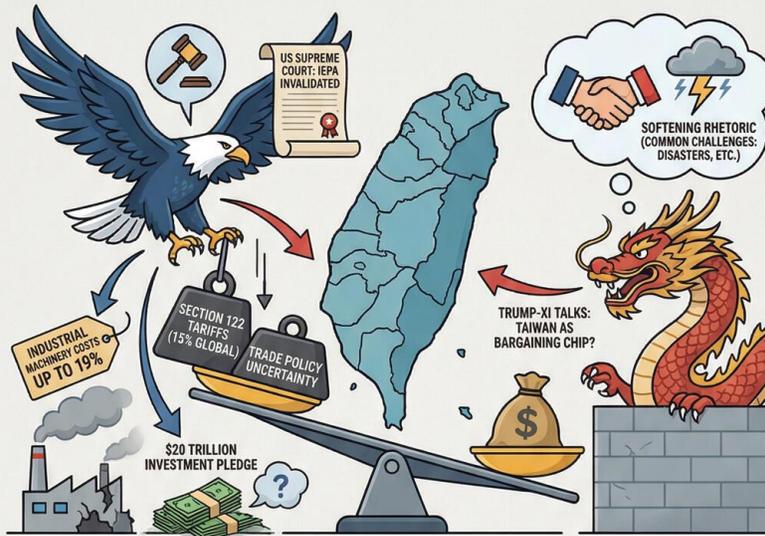
TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

CTV

FEBRUARY 24, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT

TAIWAN'S VOLATILE STRATEGIC LANDSCAPE: US TARIFFS, DOMESTIC SHIFTS, & THE LAI ADMINISTRATION'S RESILIENCE



THE "TRANSACTIONALIST" TRAP & STRATEGIC DE-ESCALATION

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS & KEY GOVERNANCE	DEEP DIVE: TRENDS, THEMES & SOCIAL STABILITY	STRATEGIC FORESIGHT & RECOMMENDATIONS
<p>US Tariff Reversal & Economic Vulnerability</p> <p>IEPA Struck Down → Section 122 Activated (150 Days). Tech Exemptions Uncertain. South Korea/Mexico Competition. "Agreement on Resilient Trade" (ART) Under Fire.</p>	<p>The Erosion of Domestic Trust</p> <p>Gap Between Government Narratives & Public Reality. High-Profile Issues (Child Abuse, Hotel Prices, Earthquake) Fuel Opposition.</p>	<p>Short Term (1-4 Weeks) Medium Term (1-6 Months) Long Term (1-5 Years)</p> <p>Short: Manufacturing Volatility, Legislative Battle over Lai's Report Format. Medium: Trump Visit Inflection Point, Arms Sales Adjustments, 150-Day Tariff Re-negotiation. Long: Semiconductor "Hollowing Out", Potential Shift to Regional Integration.</p>
<p>Domestic Political Reconciliation & "State of the Nation"</p> <p>President Lai's "Olive Branch": Unified Q&A with Speaker Han Kuo-yu. Attempt to Break 1.25T Military Budget Deadlock & Address "Executive Overreach".</p>	<p>Elite Politics & Succession</p> <p>Kim Jong-un North Korea Succession Vice Premier Cheng Li-chiun Trade Fate Kim Ju-ae as "Missile Commander". Cheng's Future Linked to US Trade Talks.</p>	<p>Recommendations & Implications</p> <p>For International Policy (Gov)</p> <p>Diversify Ties Beyond US Exec (State Governors). Define "Red Lines" for Security. Leverage "Common Challenges" for Regional Engagement.</p>
<p>Softening Cross-Strait Rhetoric & Military Uncertainty</p> <p>Lai Emphasizes "Rational Exchange" & "Peaceful Coexistence". US Arms Sales Delays Post-Trump Visit? F-16V vs. Drone Swarms Debate.</p>	<p>Strategic De-escalation as Survival</p> <p>Avoiding a Two-Front Crisis. Reducing Taiwan Strait Tensions Ahead of Trump-Xi Meeting.</p>	<p>For Private Sector/Investors</p> <p>Supply Chain Risk: Brace for 17.5-19% Tariffs, Consider Mexico Assembly. Regulatory Uncertainty: New Domestic Rules (e.g., Window Tinting Costs). Investment Hedging: Monitor Capital Outflows, Re-evaluate Long-Term Strategies.</p>

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TAIWAN NAVIGATES A VOLATILE STRATEGIC LANDSCAPE AS US TARIFF REVERSALS AND DOMESTIC POLITICAL SHIFTS TEST THE LAI ADMINISTRATION'S RESILIENCE.

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

February 24, 2026, marked a day of significant strategic recalibration for Taiwan, driven by a chaotic shift in US trade policy and a surprising pivot toward domestic political reconciliation. The primary catalyst was the US Supreme Court's invalidation of President Trump's "reciprocal tariffs" under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEPA), which prompted an immediate and aggressive move by the White House to invoke Section 122 of the 1974 Trade Act. This move threatens to impose a 15% global tariff, potentially [stacking on top of existing agreements](#) and undermining the multibillion-dollar investments Taiwan has pledged to the US. The administration of Lai Ching-te is now facing intense scrutiny over its "Agreement on Resilient Trade" (ART), with critics labeling the negotiations a "black box" that has left Taiwanese industries, particularly machinery and agriculture,

vulnerable to [intense regional competition](#) from South Korea and Mexico.

Simultaneously, President Lai has signaled a domestic "olive branch," agreeing to deliver a State of the Nation report to the Legislative Yuan under a unified Q&A format facilitated by Speaker Han Kuo-yu. This rare moment of [cross-party cooperation](#) is viewed by skeptics as a tactical retreat to consolidate power amidst a 1.25 trillion TWD military budget battle and a "perfect storm" of external pressures. In foreign policy, the administration is softening its rhetoric toward Beijing, highlighting past exchanges and framing common challenges like natural disasters as [areas for cooperation](#). However, this domestic and regional "thaw" is contrasted by a grim security outlook, as reports suggest the US may be [leveraging Taiwan's arms sales](#) as bargaining chips in upcoming high-level talks between Trump and Xi Jinping.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

US Tariff Reversal and Economic Vulnerability

- The US Supreme Court struck down the IEPA-based "reciprocal tariffs," forcing the Trump administration to [revert to Section 122](#) of the 1974 Trade Act to impose a 15% global tariff surcharge for a 150-day period.
- Taiwanese officials are struggling to confirm if previous exemptions for semiconductors and auto parts will hold, as the new tariff structure threatens to increase the [cost of industrial machinery](#) to 19%.

- Critics argue that Taiwan's \$20 trillion investment commitment to the US has yielded little protection, as competitors like South Korea [maintain better trade positioning](#) under the new regime.

Domestic Political Reconciliation and "State of the Nation" Report

- In a historic move, President Lai Ching-te has accepted Speaker Han Kuo-yu's invitation to provide a [State of the Nation report](#) to the Legislative Yuan, opting for a "unified question, unified answer" format.
- The move is seen as an attempt to [break the legislative deadlock](#) over the 1.25 trillion TWD military budget and respond to public dissatisfaction with the administration's perceived "executive overreach."
- Opposition figures remain skeptical, suggesting the reconciliation is a [diversion from legal pressures](#) facing high-profile politicians like Ko Wen-je and Hsinchu Mayor Kao Hung-an.

Softening Cross-Strait Rhetoric

- President Lai emphasized his history of "rational exchange" with China, citing his 2013 and 2014 visits to Hong Kong and Shanghai as [evidence of his moderate stance](#).
- The administration is shifting toward a narrative of "peaceful coexistence," identifying "natural disasters, geological changes, and infectious diseases" as [common enemies of both sides](#).
- Analysts suggest this shift is intended to [de-escalate tensions](#) ahead of President Trump's scheduled visit to China in late March.

Military Procurement and Strategic Uncertainty

- Reports from the White House indicate that the US may [delay or modify arms sales](#) to Taiwan until after Trump's visit to Beijing, potentially reducing the quantity of high-end equipment.
- Scholars have criticized Taiwan's reliance on F-16Vs and older naval vessels, arguing they are [ineffective against modern threats](#) and serve primarily to enrich the US military-industrial complex.

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

Economic Security and Trade Policy

- The "Agreement on Resilient Trade" (ART) is under fire for potentially [stacking 15% tariffs](#) on top of previously negotiated rates, leaving agricultural products like Phalaenopsis orchids at a disadvantage.
- Taiwan's trade surplus with the US, which reached \$150 billion in 2025, has made it a [prime target for US protectionism](#), regardless of the "security partner" status.

National Security and Defense Strategy

- The 1.25 trillion TWD military budget faces scrutiny over its "special budget" status, with the opposition demanding the [incorporation of personnel benefits](#) and pension protections into the defense spending plan.
- Internal debates are surfacing regarding the [utility of traditional platforms](#) like F-16Vs versus the lower-cost, high-value potential of drone swarms for defensive operations.

Elite Politics and Succession

- In North Korea, Kim Jong-un has reportedly named his 13-year-old daughter, Kim Ju-ae, as "[Missile Commander](#)," signaling her formal entry into the succession hierarchy and consolidating her control over the military.
- In Taiwan, the political future of Vice Premier Cheng Li-chiun is being linked to the success or failure of the [current trade negotiations](#) with the US.

Social Stability and Rule of Law

- Public outcry continues over the "Kai Kai" child abuse case, with the [defense of social workers](#) sparking intense debate over the state's failure to maintain a reliable safety net.
- The government is facing criticism for [excessive hotel price gouging](#) in Tainan during the 228 holiday, with prices for basic rooms tripling to over 6,000 TWD.
- A 5.6 magnitude earthquake off the coast of Yilan [triggered national alerts](#), testing the island's immediate disaster response protocols.

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

Legislative activity centered on the massive 1.25 trillion TWD military procurement bill and the fallout from shifting US trade policies. The opposition (KMT/TPP) is leveraging its control to demand transparency on "black box" trade deals and insisting that President Lai's report to the legislature include [direct interaction and accountability](#).

BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:

- **1.25 Trillion TWD Military Special Budget:** A massive procurement plan currently stalled as the opposition demands it be [subjected to article-by-article review](#) and includes broader military personnel support.
- **Agreement on Resilient Trade (ART):** The framework for US-Taiwan trade, now being [re-evaluated after the US Supreme Court ruling](#) and the subsequent invocation of Section 122 tariffs.
- **National Security Law (Domestic Focus):** Discussion regarding "inland enemy" designations and the use of the ["foreign hostile forces" label](#) against domestic political actors.

HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:

- **Executive Yuan Press Conference on US Tariffs:** Vice Premier Cheng Li-chiun and Minister of Agriculture Chen Jun-ji attempted to reassure the public that [certain exemptions remain](#), despite the 15% global surcharge.
- **Legislative Yuan New Year Gathering:** Speaker Han Kuo-yu called for "rational compromise" and [facilitated the agreement](#) for the President's State of the Nation report.

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

The "Transactionalist" Trap

Taiwan finds itself in a precarious position as the Trump administration's "America First" policy shifts from targeted trade actions to broad, legally creative protectionism. The reversal from IEPA to Section 122 demonstrates that even "special partners" like

Taiwan are not immune to the US administration's [willingness to bypass previous agreements](#). The \$20 trillion investment promise, once thought to be a security guarantee, is increasingly viewed by domestic critics as a "tribute" that has failed to buy either trade stability or [uninterrupted military support](#).

Strategic De-escalation as Survival

The Lai administration's pivot toward more conciliatory language with China—framing cross-strait relations through the lens of ["common enemies" like natural disasters](#)—suggests an awareness that Taiwan cannot afford a two-front crisis. With the US becoming an unpredictable economic partner and Trump preparing to negotiate directly with Xi Jinping, the DP-led government is attempting to [reduce the temperature in the Taiwan Strait](#) to avoid becoming a "bargaining chip" on the global stage.

The Erosion of Domestic Trust

A recurring theme across today's transcripts is the widening gap between the government's "success narratives" and the lived reality of the populace. While officials tout "historic trade breakthroughs," industries are [bracing for 19% tariffs](#). While the government promises social safety nets, high-profile [child abuse cases](#) and drug-related crimes involving families continue to shock the public. This erosion of trust is fueling the opposition's demands for [more rigorous legislative oversight](#) of the executive branch.

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

Short Term (1-4 Weeks)

Expect heightened volatility in the manufacturing sector as firms attempt to

front-load shipments to the US before the Section 122 tariffs [take full effect](#). Domestically, the format of President Lai's Legislative report will be the primary political battleground, with the opposition attempting to use the [unified Q&A session](#) to force admissions regarding "black box" negotiations.

Medium Term (1-6 Months)

Trump's visit to China in late March will be a [critical inflection point](#). If arms sales are indeed adjusted or downgraded, it could lead to a significant political crisis for the Lai administration and a potential shift in Taiwan's defense spending priorities toward [asymmetric, domestic production](#) (e.g., drones). The 150-day window for the new US tariffs will also require Taiwan to "re-negotiate the renegotiated" trade terms.

Long Term (1-5 Years)

The "hollowing out" of Taiwan's semiconductor expertise as a result of [massive offshore investments](#) may lead to a structural shift in the island's economic identity. If the US continues to prioritize domestic manufacturing over partner stability, Taiwan may be forced to seek deeper [regional trade integration](#) within Asia, potentially complicating its strategic alignment with the West.

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

For International Policy:

- Taiwan should diversify its diplomatic engagement beyond the US executive branch, [strengthening ties with US state governors](#) who benefit from TSMC investments and are more sensitive to local economic impacts.
- The administration must prepare for a scenario where "strategic ambiguity" from the US is replaced by ["transactional clarity."](#) requiring Taiwan to define its "red lines" for what it will sacrifice for security.
- Leverage the "common challenges" narrative to [re-engage with regional bodies](#) on health and disaster response, bypassing traditional political stalemates.

For Private Sector/Investors:

- **Supply Chain Risk:** Manufacturers in the "chemical materials, transport tools, and industrial machinery" sectors must [brace for 17.5% to 19% tariffs](#) in the US market, potentially requiring a shift in assembly to Mexico to leverage North American trade advantages.
- **Regulatory Uncertainty:** New [vehicle window tinting regulations](#) coming into effect on February 28 will impose significant costs (up to 30,000 TWD) on car owners, signaling a more stringent domestic regulatory environment.
- **Investment Hedging:** Given the political volatility, investors should [monitor "retirement capital" outflows](#), as rising costs in the US and Japan are causing a re-evaluation of long-term wealth preservation strategies for Taiwanese elites.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

Today's Media Trends is a public interest experiment in applying deep thematic trend analysis to television news coverage from around the world to explore how responsibly applied advanced AI can help journalists and scholars better understand the overarching trends, themes and patterns of our global world.

No data is used to train or tune any AI model.

Each morning, in collaboration with the Internet Archive's TV News Archive, we apply Google's Gemini 3 to deeply examine yesterday's coverage from each television news channel to tease out the overarching themes and trends of its news coverage into a richly annotated thematic analysis. Each high-level insight is connected back to the original broadcast, allowing journalists and scholars to understand the dominate themes and trends and instantly click out to the underlying sources for details.

By helping journalists and scholars see the broader trends and patterns of global news coverage, this analysis helps them identify relevant stories and coverage they might not otherwise have encountered and uncover connections, emphases and narrative shifts that enable more comprehensive reporting and deeper, evidence-based research.

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