

Chinese Influencers in Taiwan Face Wave of Threats from Chinese Nationalists

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CHINESE INFLUENCERS residing in Taiwan, often the spouses of Taiwanese, have reported receiving threats in the last month from Chinese online nationalists.

It is thought that there are around 80 YouTubers in Taiwan, among 380,000 Chinese spouses who are living in Taiwan. The reason as to why their videos would become targets for Chinese nationalists is because they sometimes depict Taiwan in a favorable light to China, such as regarding the national healthcare system or the efficient functioning of Taiwan's government. Yet, of course, to put themselves in the public spotlight for Chinese residing in Taiwan can potentially be dangerous.

Apart from troll comments on their channels, accusing such Chinese influencers of being funded by the DPP, family members of these influencers have also been harassed. Sources that the Liberty Times spoke to indicate that the harassment is thought to be a result of such videos being noticed by the Chinese government, which then sought to direct online nationalists to harass these influencers.

This proves a new twist on the dynamic of social media contestation between Taiwan and China. Namely, it is more common to hear about Taiwanese influencers, artists, or entertainers who have become implicated in United Front activity so as to create positive perceptions of China in Taiwan.

Sometimes this has taken the form of Taiwanese artists and entertainers [reposting messages from Chinese state-run media](#). It has been more common for this to occur around the time of major holidays, such as the Lunar New Year or National Day, or appearing on Chinese televised programming for such holidays. For such appearances, Taiwan is invariably framed as part of China.

But, to this extent, Taiwanese influencers have also [been courted for influence operations](#) by the Chinese government, in the hopes that this will influence the views of Taiwanese young people in a more pro-China direction.

In June, Taiwanese YouTuber Potter King posted on social media that ten Taiwanese influencers and their production crews were traveling and filming in China on subsidized trips paid for by the Chinese government. Expenses such as travel, food, and lodging are paid for, taking place under the auspices of cross-strait youth exchanges. This, too, would be a means of bettering China's image in Taiwan among young people. Potter King had appeared in videos with former Taiwanese president Tsai Ing-wen in the past.

Subsequently, two entertainers—Alexis Ho and Hsieh Ho-hsien, better known as R-Chord—came forward about having been approached by a Chinese media company about forming a pro-China political party in Taiwan. The political party would be called the “Taiwan Embrace Peace Party”, and frame itself as beyond pan-Blue and pan-Green political distinctions. In return for providing content for the party, the two were promised more than ten million NT per year in advertising and endorsements. Participants in the party [could become its founders](#) and serve as deputy chairs, while members of the Chinese media company would act as its steering committee.

The irony, of course, is that Chinese influencers in Taiwan are not paid by the Taiwanese government for propaganda. But threats against them are relatively new.

Still, this is not the first time that Chinese influencers in Taiwan have been put in the line of fire either. Earlier this year, KMT legislator Hsu Chiao-hsin [lashed out at](#) YouTuber “Anxious Housewife Lia”, attacking Lia as a supporter of the DPP. Lia was originally a Chinese national, who obtained ROC citizenship through marriage to a Taiwanese person.

In a statement responding to Hsu’s comments, Lia emphasized that she had never expressed support for the DPP, Lia brought up that she has an elderly mother who still lives in China, and that being labeled as a supporter of the DPP could potentially deprive Lia of the opportunity to visit her mother in her twilight years. In the statement, Lia also emphasized that attending election-watching events was merely by virtue of being an Internet personality, rather on the basis of support for one party or another.

There were past incidents in which Lia potentially faced retaliation during trips to China. At one point in late 2022, Lia experienced [unexpected delays](#) in receiving a travel permit required from China to return to Taiwan, after returning to her hometown of Dalian to invalidate her household registration.

Given the possibility of being unable to return to Taiwan, Lia recorded a video clip about her dilemma. The Mainland Affairs Council, at the time, stated that it would be in contact with relevant authorities to ensure that Lia would be able to safely return.

As Lia then potentially faced dangers from Hsu putting her in the public spotlight, such incidents may prove dangerous to Chinese influencers going forward. It is to be seen whether this occurs more often going forward, with the pan-Blue camp potentially attacking such individuals.

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