



Written by [Angeline Tan](#) on February 13, 2023

## Paraguay President to Visit Taiwan Before Election That Could End Ties

SINGAPORE — Paraguay's president, Mario Abdo, is poised to visit Taiwan this coming week as the island aims to strengthen ties with one of its oldest allies before an election in April that could see the Latin American country abandon Taipei in favor of the communist regime in Beijing.

Paraguay is one of only 14 countries to have formal diplomatic ties with Taiwan, and Beijing has been mounting pressure to get those remaining allies to ditch Taipei.

Paraguay would sever diplomatic ties with Taiwan and start relations with China if the opposition wins the election, presidential candidate Efraim Alegre claimed in an effort to garner votes by pledging to bolster the country's soy and beef exports. Alegre is head of the Authentic Radical Liberal Party.

Taiwan's Foreign Ministry said on Thursday that Abdo, together with his foreign and commerce ministers, would visit Taiwan from February 14-18, meeting President Tsai Ing-wen and attending a meeting on meat promotion and investment opportunities.

"Taiwan and Paraguay have had diplomatic relations for more than 65 years and a deep friendship," the ministry added.

Abdo is not running again for the presidency. Santiago Pena, the ruling Colorado Party candidate, has declared that Paraguay's relations with Taiwan would remain unchanged if he wins on April 30.

Paraguay's Taiwan ties have been under strain in recent years, particularly from the country's beef producers and farmers, who view such relations as a roadblock to obtain access to mainland China, the world's largest market for their products.

China considers Taiwan as a renegade province to be reunified, by force if necessary. Taiwan dismisses China's sovereignty claims, stating that only the island's 23 million people can determine their future.

Latin and Central America, as well as the Caribbean, have historically been diplomatic strongholds for Taiwan, yet China has sought to lure those countries. Nicaragua is the most recent to ditch Taipei for Beijing, in late 2021.

Chinese moves have taken on a wider geopolitical significance amid American fears about China expanding its regional clout.

Last month, Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen voiced the need to jointly defend democracy against authoritarianism, and said that Taiwan and Paraguay were good friends.



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Meeting a cross-party delegation of Paraguayan lawmakers led by lower house speaker Carlos Maria Lopez, Tsai reminisced about her visit to the country in 2016 and the “deep friendship” between Taiwan and Paraguay.

Collaboration between the two is very good, and trade ties are deepening, she added at the meeting in the presidential office in Taipei, describing those present as all good friends of Taiwan. “I would like to emphasize again that in the face of the continued expansion of authoritarianism, [we] allies on the democratic front must strengthen cooperation in order to jointly protect our way of life.”

Lopez, who had articulated his backing for Taiwan, told Tsai he believed that cooperation between the two would make their friendship stronger. “This long friendship of more than 65 years between our two nations is distant in terms of kilometers but not in terms of the affection and appreciation we have,” he said.

Last September, various diplomatic allies of Taiwan used the United Nations General Assembly to insist that the UN include Taiwan as a full member. Based on a report by Breitbart, a considerable number of Latin American states, including Paraguay and Guatemala, defended their cases for more Taiwan participation.

“The difficult crossroads we are currently facing demand addressing global problems jointly.... Given this, my country emphatically reiterates its support for the request by the Republic of China (Taiwan) to be a full member of the United Nations system,” Paraguay’s Abdo stated. “We are convinced of the valuable contributions that its participation would bring to the multilateral system.”

Likewise, Guatemalan President Alejandro Giammattei lobbied for the UN to recalibrate its current stance of excluding a free, democratic government such as Taiwan’s. “Guatemala is ready to collaborate with an open spirit with the efforts for the transformation of this organ ... so that they include within their reforms the right of Taiwan to belong to this organization and be recognized as a nation,” Giammattei declared in his speech, “because this has been denied by one of the Security Council’s permanent members [communist China].”

Another Taiwanese ally, President David Kabua of the Marshall Islands, slammed China for its pugilism against Taiwan and asked the UN to “welcome Taiwan and its people into our global family.” “How long will the UN persist in closing its doors and thereby denying access to the people of Taiwan?” Kabua questioned. “Taiwan is a vibrant democracy and responsible and contributing member of our global family, and the United Nations circle of unity is incomplete without Taiwan and its people.”

“Now that the world is facing escalated tension in and around our islands’ region, we as the world cannot be silent. With the ability for meaningful participation in the UN system, and to make greater contributions, Taiwan can better join all of us to make a collective difference,” the president said. “The UN system should revert to its original policy of consideration of widely-accepted passports for basic public access to the UN itself, and make good on its goal of broader participation, including registration procedures for civil society access.”

For years China has been coercing all countries and international institutions such as the UN to maintain what it refers to as the “One China principle” as a prerequisite for ties with Beijing. The “One China principle” states that Taiwan is not a country, but a province of China.

Notably, the United States has abided by an approach it terms the “One China policy,” which states that Taiwan is not a country, but does not explicitly acknowledge that Taiwan is a province of China, enabling the U.S. to still interact with Taipei with arms sales and other trade transactions.



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In reality, Taiwan enjoys its own government apparatus, military, infrastructure, and democratic society. In contrast to Beijing's claims, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has never governed Taiwan since its inception. Although Taiwan was once a UN member under its official name as the Republic of China (ROC), it was expelled over five decades ago at Beijing's insistence.

The ROC government had escaped to the island of Taiwan with millions of refugees as the communists took power on the mainland. It continued to hold the seat of "China" at the UN, and was a permanent member of the Security Council with veto power. Exiled officials in Taipei initially enjoyed the backing of the United States owing to fears in the West that communism might dominate in Asia during the Cold War.

However, the "Resolution on Admitting Peking," also called Resolution 2758, asked member states to "restore" the rights of the People's Republic of China in Beijing as the "only lawful representatives of China to the United Nations." After years of attempts by Chinese ally Albania, the General Assembly eventually passed the resolution leading to Taiwan's expulsion from the UN.

Washington has since rallied for permitting Taiwan to participate at the UN, despite not explicitly acknowledging the island's sovereignty.



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