

## Scholar Warns KMT's Block on Defense Budget Could Undermine Taiwan-U.S. Ties

July 29, 2025

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A leading U.S. foreign policy expert has warned that Taiwan's defense credibility and its vital relationship with the United States could suffer if the opposition Kuomintang (KMT) continues to block a proposed increase in defense spending. The comments follow the failure of a mass recall effort targeting 24 KMT lawmakers, a move seen as an attempt to punish obstruction in Taiwan's parliament.

David Sacks, a fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, wrote that if President Lai Ching-te's proposed defense budget boost fails to materialize, Washington may begin to doubt Taiwan's commitment to its security. He cautioned that such a perception could encourage greater Chinese assertiveness. "A more vulnerable Taiwan would embolden Chinese aggression," Sacks stated, adding that failure to act decisively on defense could signal to Beijing that Taiwan is not taking its national security seriously.

President Lai has pledged to raise Taiwan's defense budget above 3 percent of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), a figure that still falls short of the 10 percent target suggested by U.S. President Donald Trump earlier this year. The U.S. has long pressed Taiwan to take more responsibility for its own defense amid growing pressure from Beijing.

Sacks also suggested that China may interpret the failed recall vote as a sign that Taiwanese voters are leaning toward a divided government to preserve the political balance and avoid escalating tensions. He warned that such developments might lead Beijing to intensify its political and diplomatic efforts to weaken Lai's position. At the same time, he noted, China could adopt a more patient approach—waiting out Lai's presidency without taking immediate aggressive steps.

As Taiwan's security environment becomes more uncertain, Sacks emphasized the importance of cross-party cooperation. He argued that President Lai must demonstrate he can govern effectively despite lacking a parliamentary majority, and that Taiwan's ability to work through its political differences could have significant consequences for national defense and international trust.

Adding to the discussion, Kharis Templeman of Stanford University's Hoover Institution said the failed recall indicates that Taiwan's political divisions may not be as extreme as some assume. He believes the results won't harm Taiwan-U.S. relations directly but stressed the importance of maintaining trust between the two governments.

With tensions in the Taiwan Strait and global security under scrutiny, Taiwan's internal political choices may carry far-reaching consequences for its partnerships and long-term stability.