

About The Monitor

The Monitor is the long-form publication of Taiwan Security Monitor (TSM), a student-driven research initiative housed at George Mason University's Schar School of Policy and Government. The Monitor publishes timely, evidence-based analysis and commentary on all aspects of Taiwan's security environment.

On any issue, our mission is to help readers — policymakers, journalists, researchers, military professionals, and the informed public — understand what happened, why it matters, and what it may mean for Taiwan and the United States.

What We Publish

The Monitor's 'sweet spot' is long-form analysis that serves as an explainer or technical assessment for professional but non-expert audiences. We are interested in submissions that fall into one of two categories:

Analysis

Analysis pieces are the core of The Monitor. They present objective, factual, and hard-hitting examinations of a specific question, event, or development. Analysis pieces should be grounded in evidence—open-source data, official statements, satellite imagery, procurement records, or other verifiable sources—and should aim to inform rather than advocate. The goal is to help readers understand what is happening and why it matters.

Commentary

Commentary pieces take a clear stance on a pressing policy question or strategic challenge relevant to Taiwanese security. While commentary allows more room for the author's viewpoint, it must still be anchored in evidence and demonstrate command of the relevant facts.

Commentary pieces are distinguished by a "Commentary:" prefix in the title (e.g., "Commentary: Why Taiwan Should Prioritize Asymmetric Capabilities").

Both formats should be accessible to readers who follow defense and security affairs but may not be subject-matter specialists. Avoid writing exclusively for other experts.

Length

Most Monitor pieces run between 1,500 and 3,000 words. We encourage authors to be as concise as the subject allows—say what needs to be said and stop. Pieces under 1,500 words are rarely substantive enough for The Monitor; pieces over 3,000 words are occasionally warranted but should be the exception.

If you anticipate that your piece will exceed 3,000 words, please reach out to us before submitting so that we can discuss scope and structure.

Submission Process

We welcome pitches and completed drafts from outside contributors.

Pitches

Send a brief pitch to tsm@gmu.edu describing the argument or question your piece will address, the evidence or sources you plan to draw on, and why the topic is timely. Include “PITCH” in the subject line.

Drafts

Submit completed drafts as a Microsoft Word document (.docx) attached to an email to tsm@gmu.edu with “SUBMISSION” in the subject line. Include a brief author bio (two to three sentences) at the end of your piece, noting your current position and relevant expertise.

Please do not submit pieces that are simultaneously under review at another outlet. If your piece has been previously published or is under consideration elsewhere, let us know.

Writing Style

The Monitor prioritizes objective, factual, and hard-hitting analysis. Our house style aims for a restrained but readable voice — clear and precise without lapsing into unnecessary academic prose. Write in U.S. English throughout.

Structure and Organization

- **State your thesis early.** Readers should understand the central question and your argument within the first two paragraphs.
- **Use informative subheadings.** Break longer pieces into sections with descriptive subheads that tell the reader what each section covers. Prefer substantive labels (e.g., “Operational Sequencing of the Exercise”) over generic ones (e.g., “Background”).
- **Keep paragraphs short.** Dense walls of text discourage readers. Aim for paragraphs of three to six sentences. Each paragraph should develop one idea.
- **End with implications.** Close with a section that explains what the analysis means for policymakers, analysts, or the broader strategic picture. Avoid simply restating the introduction.

Tone and Voice

- Write with authority but without advocacy (in analysis pieces). Let the evidence lead.
- Avoid unsupported speculation. If the evidence is inconclusive, say so. Hedging honestly (“the available data suggests”) is preferable to overstating a claim.
- Be precise with dates, unit names, quantities, and designations. Vague language (“recently,” “several aircraft”) should be replaced with specifics whenever possible.
- Minimize jargon. Where technical or military terminology is necessary, provide a brief gloss for non-specialist readers.
- Prefer active voice and direct construction. Analysis pieces seldom require passive voice.

Usage and Conventions

Acronyms and Abbreviations

Spell out all acronyms and abbreviations on first reference, followed by the abbreviation in parentheses. Use the abbreviation thereafter. Do not assume the reader knows what an acronym stands for, even common ones.

- **First use:** “People’s Liberation Army (PLA)”
- **Subsequent uses:** “PLA”

Very widely recognized abbreviations—U.S., U.N., NATO—do not require spelling out, though authors should exercise judgment.

Country and Place Names

- Use “U.S.” as an adjective (e.g., “U.S. policy”). Spell out “United States” when used as a noun (e.g., “The United States announced...”).
- Apply the same convention to “U.K.,” “E.U.,” and “U.N.”
- Use official English-language names for institutions, legislation, and military systems (e.g., “Ministry of National Defense,” not “Taiwan’s defense ministry” on first reference).
- For Chinese-language terms, provide the Romanized form and, where helpful, the Chinese characters on first reference (e.g., “Justice Mission–2025 (聯合利劍–2025)”).

Numbers and Dates

- Spell out numbers one through nine; use numerals for 10 and above.
- Use numerals for all quantities involving units, currency, or measurements (e.g., “4 aircraft,” “NT\$1.25 trillion,” “12 nautical miles”).
- Write dates as Month Day, Year (e.g., “March 18, 2026”). Use the 24-hour clock for military time references (e.g., “0730”).

Capitalization

- Capitalize formal titles when preceding a name (e.g., “President Lai Ching-te”). Lowercase when used generically (e.g., “the president stated”).
- Capitalize proper names of military units, operations, and exercises (e.g., “Eastern Theater Command,” “Justice Mission–2025”).
- Avoid unnecessary capitalization. Generic references are lowercase: “soldier,” “the strait,” “the exercise.”

Punctuation

- Use the serial (Oxford) comma.
- Use em dashes (—) without spaces for parenthetical statements. Use en dashes (–) for ranges (e.g., “2024–2026”).
- Periods and commas go inside quotation marks; colons and semicolons go outside.

Sources and Citations

The Monitor uses endnotes for all citations. Number endnotes sequentially using bracketed Roman numerals (e.g., [i], [ii], [iii]) in the body text, with corresponding notes collected at the end of the piece. Do not use inline hyperlinks in place of endnotes—even when citing a web article or online source, the reference should appear as a numbered endnote. This ensures a consistent and verifiable citation trail for all published pieces.

What to Cite

- All factual claims that are not common knowledge should be sourced.
- Cite official statements, datasets, government publications, and news reports with enough detail for a reader to locate the source.
- When citing social media posts (e.g., from X/Twitter or Weibo), include the account name, date, and a URL or archived link.

Endnote Format

Endnotes should provide sufficient bibliographic detail for the reader to find the source. Use the following general formats:

- **Articles:** Author, “Title,” Publication, Date. URL.
- **Government documents:** Issuing body, “Document Title,” Date. URL.
- **Social media:** URL.

Full Chicago-style citations are not required, but endnotes should be complete enough that a reader can verify the claim.

Figures, Maps, and Images

The Monitor encourages the use of maps, charts, data visualizations, and other figures where they strengthen the analysis. If your piece includes visual elements:

- Submit figures as separate high-resolution image files (PNG or SVG preferred) in addition to embedding them in the draft for placement reference.
- Provide a brief caption and source credit for each figure.
- Ensure you have the right to use any images or data visualizations. Original graphics are preferred.
- If reproducing official imagery (e.g., PRC propaganda materials for analytical purposes), note the source clearly.
- TSM’s in-house visualization team may be able to create maps or data visualizations for your piece upon request. Please provide advanced notice of such requests during the editing process. TSM reserves the right to decline requests for maps or visualizations.

Formatting

- **Font:** Submit in a standard serif or sans-serif font (e.g., Times New Roman, Calibri) at 11–12 pt.
- **Spacing:** Single-spaced, with a blank line between paragraphs.
- **Title:** Provide a concise, descriptive title. For commentary pieces, prefix the title with “Commentary:” (e.g., “Commentary: The Case for Forward-Deployed Munitions in the First Island Chain”).
- **Byline:** Include your full name as you would like it published.
- **Author bio:** Append a two- to three-sentence biography at the end of the piece, noting your current affiliation and relevant expertise.

Editorial Process

All submissions undergo editorial review. We may suggest revisions for clarity, structure, tone, or factual accuracy. Our editors will work with you to ensure the piece meets The Monitor's standards while preserving your voice and argument.

TSM reserves the right to edit for grammar, house style, and length. Substantive changes will be discussed with the author before publication. Authors will approve a final copy of the piece before it is published. The editors at Taiwan Security Monitor reserve the right to reject an article for any reason, including if it plagiarizes another work.

Submission Checklist

- Piece is between 1,500 and 3,000 words (or you have contacted us about a longer piece)
- Submitted as a .docx file with "SUBMISSION" in the email subject line
- All acronyms spelled out on first reference
- Endnotes are numbered sequentially and sources are verifiable
- Figures submitted as separate high-resolution files with captions
- Commentary pieces include "Commentary:" prefix in the title
- Author bio (two to three sentences) included at the end
- Piece is not simultaneously under review at another outlet

Questions? Contact the TSM editorial team at tsm@gmu.edu. We look forward to your contribution.