



An aerial view shows a container ship docked at the port of Yangpu, Hainan, on July 2: China formally launches its Hainan free trade port project across the whole island on Dec. 18, making it the only one of scores of free trade zones across the country to encompass an entire province. © AP

## POLICY ASIA

# China chases economic rally with giant Hainan free trade port

Tropical southern island becomes testing ground for Xi's liberalization ambitions amid tariff turmoil

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HAIKOU, China -- A tourist hotspot closer to Hanoi than Beijing is set to provide a litmus test for a signature economic reform policy that Chinese President Xi Jinping is determined to present as evidence of the country's commitment to free trade.

At the end of a year of economic turmoil triggered by U.S. President Donald Trump's global imposition of "reciprocal tariffs," China's southernmost province, Hainan, known as the nation's Hawaii for its warm weather and pristine beaches, [officially launches](#) on Dec. 18 as a free trade zone bigger than Belgium.

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