



Isolating Taiwan Beyond the Strait

Chinese pressure tactics in four democracies

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FOI-R-- 5250 --SE

MAY 2022



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Title	Isolating Taiwan Beyond the Strait – Chinese pressure tactics in four democracies
Titel	Isoleringen av Taiwan – Kinesisk påverkanstaktik i fyra demokratier
Report no	FOI-R--5250--SE
Month	May
Year	2022
Pages	143
ISSN	1650-1942
Client	Försvarsdepartementet/Ministry of Defence
Forskningsområde	Säkerhetspolitik
FoT-område	Inget FoT-område
Project no	A12213
Approved by	Malek Finn Khan
Ansvarig avdelning	Försvarsanalys

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Abstract

Chinese efforts to isolate Taiwan also takes place in the international arena. This study examines how China pursues coercive actions to pressure actors to refrain from engaging with Taiwan in four democratic countries – Japan, South Korea, Germany, and Sweden – and how these democracies have responded to Chinese efforts to isolate Taiwan in their own countries and on the international scene. China’s means of isolating Taiwan in the examined countries involve various methods of setting out red lines for engagements with Taiwan: posting “disciplinary” public statements; publishing articles in media; contacting and intimidating media outlets, journalists, and politicians; and pressuring civil society, private enterprises, and academia. Much of China’s coercive actions have not been successful, even though there are instances where actors have conceded to Chinese pressure. With the possible exception of South Korea, the examined countries have in general indicated that they are seeking closer relations with Taiwan, albeit within the realm of their unofficial relationships, and that they support increased Taiwanese participation in the international community. Thus, as Beijing’s tolerance for other countries’ engagements with Taiwan decreases, while democratic countries’ sympathies for Taiwan are growing, conflicting positions about what is already a volatile issue are about to sharpen.

Keywords: Taiwan, China, Japan, South Korea, Germany, Sweden, coercive actions, influence operations, democracy, international relations. One China policy, security, economy, political.

Preface

To many of us who came of age in the post-Cold War era, traditional great power politics long seemed to be a relic of the past. Although the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the establishment of a global US-led order did not lead to *The End of History*, it paved the way for a far better world, of economic, social and political progress combined with increased security cooperation among major states. From the 1990s onwards, the threat of great power conflict and nuclear war declined, while issues such as international terrorism, nuclear proliferation, and climate change dominated the international security agenda. Optimists believed that the US-led and largely liberal order was both robust and open, capable of both managing international power shifts and integrating Russia and China into the international system.

However, in the past decade, the world has gradually entered a new era, as the balance of power has moved eastwards, and China and Russia have attempted to challenge US hegemony. The United States has responded by perceiving and treating China and Russia as systemic rivals. This means that History, Geopolitics and Great Power Rivalry have returned to international affairs, while the Cold War-like struggle over power, order and ideology has resurfaced. In Europe, a rearmed and authoritarian Russia has challenged the regional order, first through its initial aggression against Ukraine, in 2014, and now, in 2022, by continuing with its escalation into a large-scale invasion. In Asia, an increasingly powerful and authoritarian China is also challenging the status quo, by building up its military capability, militarising the South China Sea, and adopting an increasingly assertive foreign policy.

Taiwan is one of the strategically most important territories in Asia. China wants to unify Taiwan with “the motherland” and is working assiduously to make the international environment more conducive for “unification”. Meanwhile, the United States is increasing its support for the only Chinese democracy. Taiwan is the most contentious issue in the international struggle between the US and China, as well as a key front in the global battle between authoritarianism and democracy, and over the future world order.

Given the strategic significance of the Taiwan issue, FOI’s Asia and Middle East Programme conducted a study of China’s attempt to isolate “the island democracy” on the international stage. The study has resulted in this important and meticulously researched paper, in which Dr Johan Englund shows how China, through various coercive instruments, operates in four democratic states – Japan, South Korea, Germany and Sweden – in order to influence the issue of Taiwan. The report demonstrates that China employs geo-economic means; utilises propaganda and disinformation; intimidates journalists and politicians; and pressures companies, civil society and academia; in order to diminish Taiwan’s international role, as a prerequisite for a future “unification”. Dr Englund also

analyses how the four democratic states have reacted to Chinese pressures to isolate Taiwan. This analysis provides important lessons on ways to guard national sovereignty; protect the rules-based order; and defend democracy globally; in the face of coercive activities by the Chinese Communist Party. It also illustrates how the sensitive issue of Taiwan is becoming increasingly relevant beyond the Taiwan Strait and making its mark in the domestic life of other countries.

The Programme wants to thank Associate Professor Anna Michalski for reviewing of the report, and Richard Langlais for language editing.

Samuel Neuman Bergenwall
Programme Manager, Asia- and Middle East Programme, FOI

Executive Summary

A central pillar in China's strategy against Taiwan is the adoption of various coercive actions such as disinformation, propaganda, and economic pressures. This is also coupled with a growing Chinese military presence surrounding Taiwan. Even so, Chinese efforts to isolate Taiwan also take place in the global arena. Beijing is stepping up its pressure in international institutions and within other third countries. To this end, the conflict between China and Taiwan affects their own societies and decision-makers as well as those within their immediate spheres of interest. This makes questions about how Chinese influence activities are conducted and how countries respond to these actions even more important.

Rising tensions in the Taiwan Strait have serious international ramifications. Taiwan is the most sensitive issue in US-China relations, and the contention most likely to lead to a military confrontation between the two sides. As the situation in the Taiwan Strait is set to become increasingly strained, Beijing's coercive activities regarding Taiwan will become an even more pressing issue in many countries in the years to come. Thus, democratic countries will increasingly face an authoritarian Beijing that seeks to pressure various actors to shrink the island democracy's international space.

Based on an analysis of official documents, media reports, academic publications, and interviews with relevant actors, this study has two focal points. First, it examines how China pursues coercive actions within democratic countries to pressure actors to refrain from engaging with Taiwan and ultimately isolate it. Secondly, the study investigates how democratic states have responded to Chinese efforts to isolate Taiwan, both at domestic and international levels. To do so, the report considers four countries – two Asian and two European states – as case studies: Japan, South Korea, Germany, and Sweden. The countries are selected based on the interest of understanding how China seeks to shrink Taiwan's operational space in democratic societies, as well as how democracies respond to China's influence activities. These countries are also regional powers having political and economic leverage, while they are at the same time among Taiwan's most important trade partners.

Chinese coercive actions in the countries examined

China's means of isolating Taiwan in the four examined countries involve a wide range of methods: posting "disciplinary" public statements; publishing articles in media; contacting and intimidating media outlets, journalists, and politicians; and pressuring civil society, private enterprises, and academia to refrain from engagements with Taiwan. Beijing's primary aim is to set out red lines for how actors in each country should engage with Taiwan. These red lines not only take form via various coercive actions that are open to public view, but also occur through covert means. Not seldom do they involve intimidation and threats.

A common feature among all four of the examined countries is how the Chinese embassies have the habit of posting statements in reaction to events related to Taiwan. Such statements target media outlets, researchers, politicians, and governments, as they serve to clarify red lines and signal discontent. Although the impact of these statements is unclear, they occasionally include threats of consequences for the actors targeted, while the long-term danger and, indeed, the aim of Beijing, is that actors adopt self-censorship in their engagements with Taiwan.

The Chinese embassies in all four countries have been active in publishing articles in national and local media to state China's position and react against engagements with Taiwan. In at least three cases – Japan, Germany, and Sweden – the Chinese embassy has contacted journalists to dictate to them on how they should write and report about Taiwan. Efforts to quell journalists' writing about Taiwan were most clearly identified in Japan and Sweden, while there were few reports of this in South Korea. However, the phenomenon is likely to take place in all four examined countries to some degree. Thus, seeking to influence reporting about Taiwan becomes a significant factor in shrinking Taiwan's political and economic space abroad.

In all four countries, to varying extent, the Chinese embassies sought to influence other organisational and individual actors, whether scholars, universities, private companies, authorities, or politicians. These efforts all served to isolate the operational space for Taiwan in the countries examined. Examples of this include pressuring the hosts of various events involving Taiwan to act according to Chinese interests, efforts to influence authorities' name standards, and complaints and intimidation against politicians who take a stance for Taiwan.

In sum, in each of the four examined countries, by using carrots and sticks, Beijing seeks to discipline, nudge, or shape, actors to act according to Chinese interests and consequently refrain from engaging with Taiwan.

Responses among the examined countries

The findings among the examined countries indicate a somewhat mixed result. In general, Chinese efforts to influence events involving Taiwan have not been successful, although there have been occasions where actors complied with Chinese pressure. With the possible exception of South Korea, the study has identified evidence of notable concern for Taiwan and palpable indications that the countries are seeking warmer ties with it, albeit within the current "One China" policy. Indeed, none of the four countries is seeking to alter its unofficial relationships with Taiwan. Warmer relations with Taiwan are rather about using the space that is at disposal within the boundaries of the "One China" policy.

Among the four selected countries, Japan is likely the one that has taken the clearest and most significant steps in deepening ties with Taiwan. Considering that Japan is probably Taiwan's most important partner, apart from the United States, on the international stage, this is noteworthy. High representatives and official

documents in Japan have increasingly linked the security of Taiwan with Japan's own security. Japan has also renamed its official office in Taiwan (to the Japanese Representative Office of Japan in Taipei, Taiwan), cooperated with it during the COVID-19 pandemic, and initiated bilateral security talks between the two sides' two ruling parties, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), respectively. On the international scene, Japan has supported Taiwan's bids for participation in international organisations, such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), and the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL). Tokyo has also backed Taiwan's effort to become a member of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), and has become a co-host of the workshops of the Global Cooperation and Training Framework (GCTF). A Taiwan contingency poses serious security concerns for Tokyo, given its geographic proximity and location, as well as its alliance with the US. Japan is likely to be drawn into the heat in the event of a military conflict in the Taiwan Strait. Further, while there are close affinities between the Japanese and Taiwanese peoples, anti-Chinese sentiments are high in Japan. To this end, Chinese pressure on Japan to refrain from engaging with Taiwan has not paid off. The Japanese response has rather been to deepen ties with the island democracy.

Unlike Japan, South Korea has adopted a much more distant and cautious position regarding Taiwan. Seoul has been highly reluctant to touch a sensitive issue as Taiwan, and been very careful not to cross any red lines over it. The South Korean government explicitly declined to support Taiwan's bid to join the WHO despite requests from the US to extend its support, while its multilateral engagement with it is scarce. There are no security dialogues reminiscent of the ones taking place between ruling parties in Japan and Taiwan, and Seoul was found to heavily downplay, tiptoe or distance itself from its joint statements with the US and the G7 on Taiwan. Reportedly, Seoul and Beijing engaged in some backroom diplomatic footwork prior to the two statements. Chinese demands to change or cancel Taiwanese participation in international events taking place in South Korea has been successful, while the South Korean entertainment industry has also conceded to Chinese pressure about issues relating to Taiwan. For Seoul, Beijing's leverage over any resolution of the situation with North Korea means that South Korea is perhaps more reluctant than any other country in this study to provoke Beijing over Taiwan. Coupled with close economic ties, the geographic proximity to China and the history of Chinese dominance helps explain Seoul's distanced and careful approach. Yet, given anti-Chinese sentiments and US-China rivalry, Taiwan may become an increasingly difficult balancing act for Seoul.

Generally, Germany has also been a cautious player regarding China, and thus controlling and careful in its engagements with Taiwan. This is, for instance, seen in Germany's presence and strategy for the Indo-Pacific. Nonetheless, Berlin has remained steady in its support for Taiwanese aspirations to participate in international

organisations such as the WHO, ICAO, and INTERPOL. Nor has it in general complied with those Chinese influence operations identified in this study. Chinese demands on a seminar hosting the representative from Taiwan did not cause the think tank that hosted the event to budge. Neither did a university that was subjected to Chinese pressure to change the designation of Taiwan at an international day. However, concessions occurred at a sports event, and German universities that cooperate with Chinese universities allegedly prohibit exchanges with Taiwanese counterparts. As such, Chinese efforts to isolate Taiwan in Germany has seen a measure of success. Even so, Germany has been supportive, albeit with great caution, of Taiwanese presence in the international community. In addition, the new coalition government is signalling that it may pursue a more value-based foreign policy, which includes the concern for a peaceful Taiwan Strait. However, it remains to be seen if Germany will implement this in concrete terms.

Similar to Germany, the Swedish response to Chinese coercive actions regarding Taiwan has in general consisted of increasing its support for the latter. Growing sentiments of support and paying attention to Taiwan can be discerned among members of parliament, and Swedish journalists seem defiant of Chinese influence efforts. In 2020 and 2021, members of parliament brought up issues concerning Taiwan in an unprecedented number of times. However, as in the case of Germany, China has had some success in its influence activities in Sweden. Some Swedish authorities have switched their designation of Taiwan from “The Republic of China (Taiwan)” to “Taiwan, province of China”. In addition, pressure on events has seen a mixed result of both concessions and deferrals from receiving actors in Sweden. Yet, similar to the cases of Germany and Japan, Stockholm has backed Taiwan’s bids for participation in the aforementioned international organisations. Reportedly, Sweden has played a central role in coordinating EU countries that participate in a grouping of countries in Geneva that back Taiwan’s bid to the WHO. Sweden can thus be said to be taking a cautious but perhaps incrementally supportive approach to Taiwan.

These two European case studies are less exposed to the immediate security implications than the two examined Asian powers are. Even so, Germany and Sweden have large economic interests in maintaining a peaceful and stable East Asian region, while they both are outspoken about protecting democratic values, although they have little urge to take a position on the issue of sovereignty. At the same time, policies pertaining to Taiwan are closely connected to overall relations with Beijing. Given that Sino-European ties are moving towards an increasingly competitive relationship, Germany and Sweden may harness cooperation with democracies across the world in trying to strengthen its positions in its engagements with China. Thus, as value-based conflicts with China intensifies, they may be likely to adopt a warmer stance on Taiwan.

Finally, it is worth noting that growing sympathies with Taiwan are emerging in a context where many democratic countries in particular are increasingly wary about

a more authoritarian China becoming more powerful and influential. Likewise, Chinese influence activities in the examined countries are not only about Taiwan. They occur in a context where China seeks to influence domestic and international narratives on a range of issues, Taiwan being one among many.

Consequences

This study arrives at two main findings. The first is that the People's Republic of China (PRC) is pursuing coercive actions in the examined countries with the purpose of isolating Taiwan via the means described above. The second points to indications that the examined democracies in general are seeking to deepen their unofficial relations with Taiwan. A consequence indicated by these findings is that there is a dilemma that looks to be intensifying. On the one hand, Beijing is likely to ramp up its pressure on Taiwan, while its tolerance for other countries' engagement with the island is decreasing. On the other hand, sympathies and calls among many democratic countries for intensified engagement with Taiwan are likely to grow. Thus, conflicting positions about what is already a volatile issue are about to sharpen. As a result, the issue of Taiwan is likely to become increasingly relevant not only on the international scene, but also within democracies' domestic life.

From Taiwan's perspective, growing international support among democracies is of utmost importance. Taipei seeks deeper relations with democracies as a counterweight to Beijing's growing pressure. By tying itself closer to countries with significant diplomatic and economic influence, Taipei hopes that the PRC's own cost-benefit calculation for military actions against Taiwan recognises that the costs will be too high. Thus, if more regional partners deepen their unofficial ties with Taiwan, they strengthen Taipei's position vis-à-vis Beijing. For the PRC, closer ties between Taipei and countries such as those examined in this study are frustrating. The consequences include not only worsening relations with a greater number of countries, but also that Beijing's realisation of its long-term goal of unifying Taiwan with China becomes potentially more difficult. Given how important Taiwan is for Beijing, China is likely to step up its pressure and potential repercussions against countries who deepen their ties with Taipei.

For Japan and South Korea, the development of the situation in the Taiwan Strait will substantially test these two countries' balancing of interests between Beijing and Washington. Although Tokyo is on the road to deepening its ties with Taipei, Japan has no interest in going beyond an unofficial relationship with Taiwan. Tokyo will have to tread a fine line, facing intensified pressure from Beijing. Meanwhile, even though the United States might pressure South Korea to take more action, Seoul is likely to remain very cautious about provoking Beijing. Germany and Sweden face similar challenges to those of the two Asian countries, albeit with fewer immediate security implications. As Chinese actions to isolate Taiwan are likely to continue, an inclination to strengthen ties with Taiwan may further strain relations with the PRC. The Taiwan issue is likely to become

increasingly tense in the near future, with calls for stronger positions on questions of democracy and sovereignty finding their way to Europe.

Countries that seek to expand their engagement with Taiwan will most likely use a toolkit that intensifies yet remains within the realm of an unofficial relationship. This implies identifying the scope of the space available and selecting productive engagement with Taiwan. For those countries, numerous factors need to be accounted for and concrete actions are at hand, including the following: to anchor and distinguish its “One China” policy vis-à-vis Beijing’s “One China” principle; to push for concluding bilateral investment and free trade agreements between EU and Taiwan; to advocate for Taiwan’s inclusion in multilateral trading blocs, such as the CPTPP and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP); to insist on Taiwan’s participation as an observer in international organisations; and to seek informal groupings of like-minded democracies to advocate for these issues and include Taiwan in areas such as scientific and technology cooperation, media and health sectors, and people-to-people exchanges and interconnectivity. The latter is partly already happening within the framework of EU’s various dialogues with Taiwan. By integrating this approach of adopting various measures for further engagement with Taiwan with those of other democracies in the Indo-Pacific region, the cooperative and enhancing elements would be even stronger.

The examples above fall within the incumbent “One China” policy framework. Even so, many of these approaches will stir up reactions from Beijing. Thus, European and Asian countries will have to navigate among their options, while being prepared to face further pressure from Beijing to isolate Taiwan.

Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ADCG	Arbeitsgemeinschaft Deutscher-China Gesellschaften (Federation of German-China Friendship Association)
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Organization
BRIX	Belt and Road Institute in Sweden
BvF	Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz (Germany's domestic intelligence agency)
CAAC	Civil Aviation Administration of China
CAI	EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment
CAIFC	China Association for International Friendly Contact
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CCPPR	China Council for the Promotion of Peaceful National Reunification
CDU	Christian Democratic Union of Germany
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
CPAFFC	Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries
CPPCC	Chinese People's Political Consultative Congress
CPTPP	Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans- Pacific Partnership
CRKFA	China-Republic of Korea Friendship Association
CSN	Centrala Studiestödsnämnden (Swedish Board of Student Finance)
DPP	Democratic Progressive Party
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
EU	European Union
FCPAE	Federation of Chinese Professional Associations in Europe
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FDP	Free Democratic Party
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany
GCTF	Global Cooperation and Training Framework
GTAI	Germany Trade and Invest
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organization

IDS	Indigenous Defense Submarine
IEEE	Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers
INTERPOL	International Criminal Police Organization
KMT	Kuomintang (The Nationalist Party)
LDP	Liberal Democratic Party
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MP	Member of Parliament
NA	Nerikes Allehanda
NIDS	National Institute for Defense Studies
NWT	Nya Wermlands-Tidningen
NZA	Nordic Zhigong Association
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PRC	People's Republic of China
PSIA	Public Security Intelligence Agency
RCEP	Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership
ROC	Republic of China
ROK	Republic of Korea
SCNA	Swedish Chinese National Association
SPD	Social Democratic Party
SVT	Sveriges Television (Sweden's Television)
TAIPEI	Taiwan Allies International Protection and Enhancement Initiative
TAO	State Council's Taiwan Affairs Office
TECRO	Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office
THAAD	Terminal High Altitude Area Defense
TTF	Taiwan Trilateral Forum
UFWD	United Front Work Department
UN	United Nations
US	United States
WHA	World Health Assembly
WHO	World Health Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization

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1 Introduction

Officially known as the Republic of China (ROC), Taiwan has been governed independently of mainland China since 1949. The People's Republic of China (PRC) views the island as a breakaway province that must become an integrated part of the country again, but Taiwan has over the last decades gradually developed into a consolidated democracy, with a diminishing appetite for uniting with the mainland. While the PRC vows to retake Taiwan with force, if necessary, Taiwanese leaders state that the island is a sovereign state with its own constitution, democratically elected leaders, and its own armed forces.¹

Differences over Taiwan's status have always fuelled strong tensions between the two sides. To Beijing, the reunification with Taiwan is considered to be the most sensitive and important national core interest. However, in recent years, relations have become increasingly strained. Following two electoral victories, in 2016 and 2020, by President Tsai Ing-wen, leader of the DPP, which advocates a further distancing from the mainland, cross-strait relations have nose-dived. As President Tsai has stressed the sovereignty of Taiwan, China has intensified the pressure on it by stepping up its military presence and threats around the island, while also inundating Taiwan with political warfare and economic coercion.² The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is seeking to isolate Taiwan from international relations and intimidate the island into giving up its resistance. As a result, the region has become increasingly volatile. Tensions are spiking in one of Asia's major flashpoints.

Rising tensions in the Taiwan Strait have serious international ramifications. Taiwan is the most sensitive issue in US-China relations, and the most likely contention that could lead to a military confrontation between the two sides. The two great powers are embroiled in a rivalry that stems from foundational discordances in political as well as economic and military domains.³ These contentious areas are manifested in Taiwan, in which the United States has substantial strategic, economic, and normative interests. While a democratic Taiwan sits at a geographically strategic location, it is also a critical manufacturer of the most advanced semiconductors in the world. In the case of a Taiwan contingency, the United States would likely be compelled to back the island democracy. Other countries in the region, primarily Japan, would likely also be drawn into the conflict. Thus, the issue of Taiwan sits exactly at the intersection of power, territory, technology and ideology.

¹ In 2005, China promulgated the Anti-Secession Law, which formalised the PRC's policy of using military means against Taiwan independence if peaceful means become impossible. For more on the conditions for adopting military means, see: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2005–03–15.

² Maizland (2021); The Economist, 2021–10–09.

³ Almén et al. (2021).

It is an issue that also has consequences for other countries farther away. The disruption of the global economic supply chains that run through the East Asian region would have substantial implications for the global economy. Further, this also poses significant challenges regarding normative stances in international institutions that pertain to democratic values and issues of state sovereignty. The Taiwan issue will become even more strained in coming years, as Beijing is likely to double-down on its non-compromising stance against states' engagement with Taiwan. A central pillar in China's strategy against Taiwan is the adoption of various coercive actions and political warfare such as disinformation, propaganda, and economic pressures.⁴ However, increasing coercive actions to isolate Taiwan and undermine its status can also be seen in the global arena. Beijing conducts influence activities and exerts pressure in international institutions as well as inside other third countries.⁵ Thus, the issue of Taiwan is right on the doorstep, even for geographically distant countries. Democratic states will increasingly face an authoritarian and powerful major power – that is guided and governed by different principles on international relations – on its strongest core interest. In short, the acuteness of the Taiwan issue is rapidly paving its way to the desks of decision-makers, even of those farther away, in Europe.

Beijing's hardened stance prompts questions about how countries in the international community respond to China's efforts to exert pressure and isolate Taiwan via various types of coercive actions and outright threats. Indeed, Beijing has poached a significant number of Taiwan's few remaining diplomatic allies.⁶ However, more importantly for the development of cross-strait tensions, how do major democratic countries respond to Chinese efforts to isolate Taiwan? In recent years, the US has strengthened its support of Taipei. But what has been the response of other democratic countries in the region, such as Japan and South Korea, and, elsewhere, of Germany and Sweden, to Chinese pressures on the issue of Taiwan? The response among major democracies is crucial for the balance of power and Taiwan's international operational space, as Beijing is stepping up its efforts to isolate Taiwan, with the ultimate aim of bringing the island into its fold.

1.1 Aims and Research Questions

This study has two objectives. The first is to examine how Chinese coercive actions to isolate Taiwan have been carried out in democratic states. Four countries – two Asian states, and two European states – are examined: Japan, South Korea, Germany, and Sweden. The countries are selected based on the interest of understanding how China seeks to shrink Taiwan's operational space in democratic societies, as well as how democracies respond to China's influence activities. These countries are also

⁴ Cole (2020a).

⁵ Shattuck (2020).

⁶ Shattuck (2020).

regional powers having political and economic leverage, while they are at the same time among Taiwan's most important trade partners.⁷ Revealing how China pursues coercive actions to isolate Taiwan abroad in these countries sheds light on both the scope and the form of the challenges that Chinese pressure pose for states abroad. Secondly, the study also aims to examine how these democratic countries have responded to Chinese coercive actions and other efforts to isolate Taiwan, both within the countries themselves and on the international stage. Identifying how other democratic states respond to Chinese efforts to isolate Taiwan can help us to discern how potentially strong, or weak, the international response is. The time period for this study is from 2016, when President Tsai was elected and Beijing-Taipei relations further deteriorated, until present. It is around this time that China intensified its push to isolate Taiwan.

By looking at these cases, the study seeks to analyse both how Chinese influence activities to isolate Taiwan abroad are carried out, and the outcome, so far, of China's efforts to isolate Taiwan, especially in countries that are deemed to be of vital importance for Taiwan's international status. Indeed, Taiwan's relationship with its closest and most important partner, the United States, has strengthened during recent years. However, in the long term, the regional democratic powers are also of great significance for the future of Taiwan's status, but their responses to recent increases in cross-strait tensions are less clear. Thus, the purpose is to discern whether and how these countries have made concessions to Beijing, or supported Taiwan. Guided by these aims, the paper's research questions are as follows:

- How does China seek to isolate Taiwan through coercive actions that seek to pressure actors within the democratic countries – Japan, South Korea, Germany, and Sweden – and in the international community?
- How do these democratic countries – Japan, South Korea, Germany, and Sweden – respond to China's coercive actions and efforts to isolate Taiwan?

To address the first question, the study identifies various means that the PRC utilises in order to pressure actors in each specific country concerning Taiwan. In other words, the report examines how the PRC engages with actors, for the purpose of shrinking Taiwan's operational space, in the particular country.

The second question is addressed by looking into how Chinese coercive actions are responded to in the selected countries as well as what actions they take to support Taiwan's pursuit of a stronger international presence. Supportive actions can be both passive in terms of not conceding to Chinese demands and active as in

⁷ Sweden may not be considered as a "regional power". The selection of Sweden as a case study is explained below, under Section 1.5 Case selection.

taking steps that increase its engagement with Taiwan. For instance, passive support may include not disallowing Taiwanese presence in various fora despite Chinese demands of exclusion, or not succumbing to let Beijing conflate the PRC's "One China" principle with a state's own "One China" policy (more about this difference below). Active support may take its form in openly showing support for increasing Taiwanese participation in the international community, express concern for Taiwan's security, as well as actively strengthening economic and cultural ties or increase informal visits by individual elected officials. Indeed, it is important to point out the likely prevalence of silent concessions to Chinese pressure that many actors may undertake by practicing self-censorship. This way of complying with Chinese pressure to disengage from Taiwan is difficult to identify and consequently also to measure. The analysis will, to the greatest extent as possible, take this factor into account.

1.2 Previous Research

Over the years, an abundance of studies have been carried out on the issue of Taiwan. Much of the research examines tensions in cross-strait relations, while other research analyses the security implications of the Taiwan issue, as a dangerous powder keg that has the potential of triggering a larger war.⁸ There are also many studies devoted to examining the importance of Taiwan in an international context, and the role Taiwan plays in Sino-US relations.⁹

A number of studies focus specifically on Chinese influence in Taiwan. To this end, there is a growing body of research that looks into how the PRC conducts influence operations in Taiwan, as well as how Beijing seeks to integrate Taiwan by economic means or coerce the island through intimidation.¹⁰ While most studies examine Chinese actions in Taiwan, fewer studies tend to look into Chinese activities abroad. Although there is indeed a growing number of reports about general Chinese influence in foreign countries being produced, few of them focus specifically on activities pertaining to Taiwan.¹¹ Furthermore, while studies do exist on Chinese activities to isolate Taiwan on the international scene, most of them take either a broader global perspective or focus primarily on responses from the United States.¹² The present study includes both an examination of how China seeks to influence other countries' engagement with Taiwan within their own borders (important liberal democracies other than the United States) as well as their response to Chinese actions to isolate Taiwan.

⁸ See: Cole (2020a); Bush (2013); Easton (2017); Taylor (2019).

⁹ See: Rigger (2013); Brown and Kalley Wu (2019); Glaser et al. (2020); Lin and Roy (2011).

¹⁰ See: Cole (2020b); Hsiao (2019a); Blanchette et al. (2021); Shen et al. (2020); Chang and Yang (2020).

¹¹ See: Brady (2018); Joske (2020); Hamilton and Ohlberg (2020); Diamond and Scheel (2018).

¹² See: Glaser et al. (2020); Blanchette et al. (2021); Shattuck (2020).

1.3 The “One China” policy vs. the “One China” principle

The status of Taiwan and the policy-approaches of various countries are complicated. After the CCP proclaimed the establishment of the PRC in 1949, the Nationalist Party (the Kuomintang, KMT) withdrew to Taiwan and announced Taipei as the temporary capital of the ROC. Taiwan enjoyed international recognition as the ROC. However, in 1971, the PRC gathered enough votes in the UN General Assembly to remove Taiwan as the ROC and thereby switch to the PRC as China’s representative to the UN.¹³ Throughout the 1970s, numerous nations established formal diplomatic relations with the PRC, while maintaining unofficial relations with the ROC.

In the 1980s, the US formulation of a “One China policy” emerged.¹⁴ The formulation of a “One China” policy was a shift from prior designations referring to the “One China principle”, thus further distinguishing its stance from Beijing’s version of the principle. The PRC definition of the “One China” principle is that “there is only one China in the world, Taiwan is a part of China, and the government of the PRC is the sole legal government representing the whole of China.”¹⁵ Drawing from these principles, Beijing offers the formula of “peaceful reunification; one country, two systems” (和平统一，一国两制). The formula incorporates a reunification through peaceful means, such as economic integration and people-to-people exchanges, into a Hong Kong-like version of “one country, two systems”, in which Taiwan constitutes a special administrative region of China.¹⁶

Washington accepts only parts of the PRC’s “One China” principle, while it deliberately maintains an ambiguous position elsewhere. The United States has in various ways accepted the first point that “there is only one China in the world,” while it has consistently accepted the point that “the government of the PRC is the sole legal government representing the whole of China.”¹⁷ However, on the point that “Taiwan is a part of China,” the United States has adopted an ambiguous position. It does not state that it accepts PRC sovereignty over Taiwan, but merely that it “acknowledges” Beijing’s position that it is the sovereign government of Taiwan.¹⁸ In other words, Washington “recognises” – as in makes notice of – the Chinese position, but it has never “recognised” that Taiwan is a part of China. This

¹³ Center for Strategic & International Studies (n.d).

¹⁴ The “One China” policy derives from several documents, including three US communiqués, in 1972, -78, and -82; the TRA, in 1979; and the “Six Assurances” that President Reagan expressed to Taiwan in 1982. See Maizland (2021).

¹⁵ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of People’s Republic of China, 2004–05–17.

¹⁶ Norton (2016).

¹⁷ Bush (2017).

¹⁸ Funnell, 2018–11–08.

way, the United States does not resolve the issue of Taiwanese sovereignty, but allows for a diplomatic breathing space.¹⁹

To make things further complicated, there are several “One China” policies in the world. Other countries have their own policies, although they are in line with the American version.²⁰ Most other countries also use terms such as “acknowledges”, “understands”, “respects”, or “take note of”, with regards to PRC claims of sovereignty over Taiwan. However, the US remains the only state to express security commitments to it. Even so, the adopted “One China” policy leaves countries to pursue unofficial relationships with Taiwan. It is within this unofficial framework that states conduct their ties with Taiwan.

1.4 Methodology and sources

The units of the study are China (the PRC), Taiwan (the ROC), Japan, South Korea, Germany, and Sweden. These are represented by their respective governments, but other actors considered to influence or be influenced by government decision-makers, such as business leaders, advisors, media, and think tanks, may also be taken into account.

The study has two different focuses. The first is to analyse Chinese coercive actions to isolate Taiwan, while the second is the policies and practices of the four selected countries concerning the PRC’s actions on Taiwan. This second focus pertains to their responses both within their home countries and on the international scene. With regards to China, the study thus focuses on government-related actors and their coercive actions, while the analysis of Japan, South Korea, Germany, and Sweden sheds light on their policies and practices regarding Taiwan. These countries also consist of a wide range of units of analysis, depending on where the Chinese pressure has aimed its target, such as at authorities, media, universities, private enterprises, cultural outlets, and individuals. As for Taiwan, the units of study are also rather fluid, depending on the area in which influence operations take place.

The analysis is carried out on two levels, the international and domestic. The international level may for example involve issues such as Taiwanese participation in international institutions and organisations, or their existence in the global corporate world, depending on the efforts identified as taking place from the Chinese side. On the domestic level, the analysis may for example look into how Taiwan, and its representative function in the host country, have been affected by Chinese actions, or whether domestic media have experienced pressures on what to write about Taiwan, again depending on the type influence operations that occur in the particular host country.

¹⁹ Funnell, 2018–11–08.

²⁰ Funnell, 2018–11–08.

The report is based on textual analysis of primarily open sources, including media reports, academic publications, and official documents, as well as official statements and speeches. In addition, the report also draws on interviews and conversations with relevant actors from the selected countries. These sources provide important perspectives as well as insights and information about incidents and situations in those countries. They include scholars, journalists, and diplomats. Further, the sources utilised are primarily consulted in three languages: English, Mandarin, and Swedish. Occasionally, sources in other languages are used as well. In those cases, the author have used external help for interpretation. Hence, it is important to point out that the access to data may have varied between the cases. To this end, the findings of the study should not be interpreted as exhaustive information about each particular case. Rather, they ought to be interpreted as indications of Chinese actions and how countries respond.

1.5 Case selection

The study conducts case studies of four countries: Japan, South Korea, Germany, and Sweden. All four countries are liberal democracies, which makes them interesting for primarily three reasons. First, it is of great interest to examine how China operates in open and free societies to shrink the presence of Taiwan within them, given that the four countries are different from each other, but share the fact that they are democratic. As such, we can discern how China's methods fare in democratic societies. Second, by examining four liberal democracies, this provides us with insights into how democratic countries respond to Chinese coercive actions, both in their own countries and on the international scene. Third, considering how Taiwan appeals to the international community in its capacity as one of the global democracies, these four case studies not only provide indications of *how* democracies respond, but also indications of *to what degree* Taiwan finds international support.

There are also important dimensions of influence to factor in. The first three countries – Japan, South Korea and Germany – have also been selected on the basis of their roles as regional powers that are liberal democracies with significant political and economic sway in their regions, as well as their substantial economic relationships with Taiwan. Japan and South Korea are Taiwan's third- and fifth-largest trading partners, while Germany is Taiwan's largest European trading partner. Hence, these three regional powers are important and influential countries for both Taipei and Beijing to develop relations with. The fourth case, Sweden, is a strong Nordic country, with other aspects that make it an interesting case study (see below).

All four countries have individual particulars that make them interesting to study. Japan is a regional Asian power that is not only a treaty ally of the US, but also has historically close connections with Taiwan, yet highly complicated relations with China. Tokyo is traditionally a diplomatically cautious state, and thus closely attuned to the security dynamics in the Taiwan Strait. South Korea is also a US

treaty ally with complicated ties to Beijing. Its primary security concern, however, remains North Korea, whose connections with Beijing are close. Similar to Tokyo, Seoul is generally conservative in speaking out about international affairs. Both Asian powers are also geographically close to the Taiwan Strait. Germany is a European power that has professed to be a protector of democratic freedoms and rights. At the same time, however, Berlin has been cautious and pragmatic in its relations with Beijing, with whom it has strong economic ties. Finally, Sweden can be said to be a somewhat odd selection of a case to join the other three. However, it allows for significant data access, while also being an interesting representative of the case of a small state that has recently had difficult relations with Beijing. It is also a state that often prides itself on being vocal about issues of democracy and human rights.

Due to the variety in access to data sources and possible language barriers, there may be differences in the depth and breadth of the information for each case. Thus, some findings may rest on a stronger data foundation than others, while others might have a somewhat weaker case to draw conclusions from. However, the relevance of the case studies and identified data remains strong. Although the comparable dimension may become weaker, the relevance increases as the study allows for a larger variety of information, providing us with a larger whole of potentially identifiable patterns and indications.

Finally, it is important to point out that much of Germany and Sweden's foreign policies are coordinated and carried out via EU. This applies to both actions in Europe and in the international community, as well as on location in Taiwan. Much of the bilateral relations with Taiwan is a matter of policy coordination through the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). Up to 2019, European cumulative investments in Taiwan amounted to 48 billion euros, making it the largest source of the latter's FDI, accounting for 31 per cent of Taiwan's total inward FDI.²¹ At the same time, EU is Taiwan's largest trading partner after China, the US, and Japan.²² It is thus an important actor, through which Germany and Sweden formulate and implement much of their international engagement with Taiwan.

1.6 Definitions

This study employs the expression "coercive actions" as an overall term to describe the activities that China engages in as it seeks to put pressure on actors to isolate Taiwan. "Coercive actions" is a wide expression that includes both public diplomatic statements, as well as more covert methods, to influence actors. The intention in using it here is to seek to collect information about all kinds of

²¹ European Parliament, 2021-09-22.

²² European Commission, 2021-04-26.

activities that the Chinese side utilizes to compel various actors to act according to China's interests.

A narrower term employed in this study and that indicates activities of more covert nature is the term "influence operations". Throughout the years, myriad definitions of "influence operations" have emerged. Many of these definitions, however, put strong focus on military and state operations.²³ This report adopts a broader definition that goes beyond merely military and state aspects. Tom Welsh, British author and expert in cybersecurity issues, provides a useful definition that is largely inspired by RAND Corporation's, but with some minor modifications, as follows:

Influence Operations are the coordinated, integrated, and synchronised application of disruptive capabilities to influence, corrupt, or usurp the decision-making of a group or individual, to foster attitudes, behaviours, or decisions of the targeted audience that further the goals, interests and objectives of the instigating party.²⁴

This definition broadens the scope to also include non-military and non-state actions, both in terms of sender and receiver of the influence operation. It serves as a useful definition when looking into Chinese influence operations and how Beijing seeks to isolate Taiwan in a wide range of areas, from civil society and the private sector, to media and government officials.

1.7 Delimitations

This study mainly relates to the time period starting in 2016, when Tsai Ing-wen came to power in Taiwan, to end of January 2022. This is because it was around this time that China intensified its recent efforts to isolate Taiwan and increased the political warfare it targeted against the island. This makes the events that unfolded during this time period of greatest interest for study here.

Another delimitation concerns the number of case studies. Other countries that would be highly interesting to examine would be, for example, Australia, India and Canada. These countries have been subjected to Chinese influence operations in other areas (e.g., politics, education, high technology). Future studies would be well-served by examining these countries also. For this study, however, time and scope limitations restrict the report to a consideration of only these four selected countries.

Finally, it is worth reminding the reader that the scope of this study's examination of Chinese coercive actions is limited to Taiwan. The PRC is indeed subjecting other countries to coercive activities concerning other areas. In other words, Beijing's coercive actions reflect a growing pattern of the Chinese government

²³ Fecteau (2019); Larson et al. (2009).

²⁴ Influence Operations, 2021.

asserting its interests abroad. Taiwan is a crucial example of how CCP's tentacles of influence operates within the domains of many countries. Thus, although this report briefly mentions the PRC's general influence on each of those countries, the focus here is on Taiwan.

1.8 Outline of the Study

This paper is divided into seven chapters. Following this first introductory chapter, the second chapter provides a brief overview of how the PRC in general conducts influence operations directly against Taiwan, as well as its efforts to isolate it on the international scene. The purpose is to enhance the reader's general understanding of how Beijing is targeting Taiwan. Chapters 3–6 delve into the case studies in the following order: Japan, South Korea, Germany, and Sweden, with one chapter for each. Each divided into five overriding sections: 1. an overall view of the bilateral relationship with Taiwan; 2. the PRC's influence operations in the country; 3. incidents of PRC influence on Taiwan in the particular country; 4. reactions and engagement with Taiwan on the international scene; and 5. summary. Finally, Chapter 7 concludes with a summary and discussion of the study's main findings, as well as their potential consequences.

2 The PRC's influence activities and isolation of Taiwan

Few societies in the world have been targeted by as many disinformation campaigns as Taiwan. In 2019, a study by the V-Dem Institute, at the University of Gothenburg, found that Taiwan was the territory that was most exposed to foreign government dissemination of false information.²⁵ Among the objects of PRC's disinformation abroad, Taiwan is one of its main targets.

The use of information warfare as part of the CCP's overall influence campaigns against Taiwan is, of course, nothing new. China has been relying on political warfare to influence Taiwan for many decades, with the ultimate goal being to "reunify" the island with the PRC on the mainland.²⁶ However, as pointed out by Russel Hsiao, "over the past two decades, the CCP's efforts to influence the political process within Taiwan have become noticeably more subtle and sophisticated, but no less destabilising."²⁷ Following the election of President Tsai Ing-wen in 2016, Beijing's efforts to undermine Taiwan's political system and discredit the incumbent government have increased significantly.²⁸

Exacerbated by a politically polarised climate and wide usage of social media, dis- and misinformation have become increasingly problematic in Taiwan. As such, the PRC seeks to exploit this environment to advance its interests in Taiwan. Following an examination of various studies of Chinese influence operations in Taiwan, this paper finds that through its influence activities, China seeks to achieve six principal objectives:²⁹

- create a chaotic information environment by sowing confusion about the objective truth;
- sow divisions in Taiwanese society, and thereby intensify societal tensions and trigger political instability;
- promote a positive image of the PRC in Taiwan, in which the CCP seeks to burnish a narrative portraying closer cross-strait relations as generating economic prosperity for the Taiwanese people, while current Taiwanese policies are a threat to Taiwan's future;
- discredit and degrade the current DPP administration, while supporting actors and candidates that are aligned with the PRC's interests;

²⁵ V-Dem Institute (2019).

²⁶ Blanchette et al. (2021): 4; Cole (2020b): 4.

²⁷ Hsiao (2019a).

²⁸ Blanchette et al. (2021): 4; Cole (2020a): 4–5.

²⁹ Corcoran et al. (2019): 14; Blanchette et al. (2021): 9–10; Cole (2018); Cole (2020a): 12; Chang and Yang (2020): 331.

- delegitimise and undermine Taiwan’s democratic institutions, elections and values, as well as corrode public trust in the country; and
- intimidate and undermine the Taiwanese people’s morale, thus aggravating their sense of isolation and abandonment.

Ultimately, these objectives tap into the overarching aim to reshape the political, economic, and social landscape both in and outside of Taiwan, to achieve unification. As is described below, the CCP uses influence operations as well as a mixture of engagement and isolation to achieve these objectives.

The CCP’s overarching strategy for influence operations mobilises a plethora of various people and actors. Organised under the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Congress (CPPCC, 中国人民政治协商会议) Standing Committee, the strategy for Taiwan is set by the Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan Affairs Committee (港澳台华侨委员会).³⁰ This is subsequently implemented by a range of agencies, such as the State Council’s Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO, 国务院台湾事务办公室), the People’s Liberation Army (PLA, 中国人民解放军), various ministries, the United Front Work Department (UFWD, 统一战线工作部), and various actors and enterprises within society, including military and intelligence officers, diplomats, media workers, party elders, think tanks and academics, foundations, businesspeople, and private individuals.³¹

One of the strongest tools that Beijing uses in political warfare is the so-called “united front work” (统一战线工作). The united front system is a network of party and state agencies that works towards the CCP’s goals by influencing groups outside the party, such as civil organisations, religious bodies, business networks, research institutes, universities, and political individuals and organisations.³² Through means of influence, co-option, pressure, and persuasion, united front activities seek to use non-party individuals and organisations to legitimise and pursue interests aligned with the CCP, both inside and outside the PRC’s borders.³³

UFWD is responsible for coordinating much of the united front activities and reports directly to the CCP Central Committee.³⁴ UFWD has had a large focus on Taiwan for a long time. In December 2020, the CCP updated the CCP United Front Work Regulation. Notably, pertaining to the united front work on Taiwan, the new regulations expand the 2015 formulation from “broadly uniting Taiwan compatriots” (广泛团结台湾同胞) to “broadly uniting Taiwan compatriots at home and abroad” (广泛团结海内外台湾同胞).³⁵ Thus, the CCP stresses that the targets of united

³⁰ Cole (2020b): 10.

³¹ Cole (2020b): 10.

³² Joske (2020).

³³ Blanchette et al. (2021): 5–6; Brady (2017): 4.

³⁴ Blanchette et al. (2021): 6.

³⁵ Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, 2021–01–05.

front activities include Taiwanese in both Taiwan and the PRC, as well those residing elsewhere. There is indeed a large Taiwanese community, including business people and students, living on the mainland, but targets stretch far beyond China's borders. As such, the mission of united front work against Taiwan has expanded in scope.

2.1 PRC influence operations in Taiwan

The PRC seeks to influence Taiwanese society through a variety of both separate and interrelated means. Efforts to shape outcomes in Taiwan blend the spread of dis- and misinformation with economic incentives and coercion, as well co-option of individuals and organisations.

An important feature has been the utilisation of dis- and misinformation campaigns. In a 2019 report, Taiwan's Political Warfare Bureau of the Ministry of Defense (国防部政治作战局) and its National Security Bureau (国家安全局) listed four methods of disinformation against Taiwan.³⁶ The first method involves the CCP's creation of content about events in Taiwan, which is subsequently spread via various media channels and finally absorbed by Taiwanese media. A second method is that media on the mainland spins selected controversial events, and then floods social media with their own version through state-backed online commentators. In a third method, mainland Chinese media create untrue content and locate them on so-called content farms, thus waiting for these false news to be picked up by Taiwanese social media.³⁷ The fourth method includes the CCP's directing mainland media and pro-Beijing media in Taiwan to publish their content.

Thus, pro-PRC dis- and misinformation appears to be spread via traditional media ("pro-blue" media that is many sympathetic to KMT and "pro-mainland" such as CTV and CTiTV), open network social media and websites (e.g., Facebook and Professional Technology Temple (PTT)), and closed network social media (e.g., LINE, a private messaging application).³⁸ The intent is to undermine the support for the Tsai administration; promote "peaceful reunification" and "one country, two systems"; and infuse a sense of hopelessness and despair among the Taiwanese by propagating that Taiwan suffers from economic stagnation, global isolation and declining opportunities.³⁹

³⁶ Blanchette et al. (2021): 9.

³⁷ A content farm is a website that produces large quantities of text articles with thin or false content on a wide variety of topics (also called Clickbait), using keywords, so that they are placed high on search engines such as Google. In Taiwan, the primary example is the Mission content farm, which is important as its content is widely shared in Taiwan on Facebook, and much of its content seems to be disinformation.

³⁸ Corcoran et al. (2019): 15–16.

³⁹ Schmitt and Mazza (2019): 8; Cole (2020b): 19, 22.

The PRC also reportedly utilises manipulation tactics and espionage via cyber hacks and attacks.⁴⁰ According to Lt. Gen. Vincent W.F. Chen, the Deputy Director-General of the National Security Bureau of Taiwan, from 2016 to July 2019 the CCP launched over 21,000 cyberattacks against Taiwan.⁴¹ Targets included Taiwan's defense, foreign affairs, medical service, overseas service, firefighting and maritime institutes.

Another central feature in the CCP's efforts to influence Taiwan is the co-option of media. Companies and individuals with considerable business interests on the mainland own many Taiwanese media outlets. According to Taipei-based policy analyst J. Michael Cole, the Chinese state has provided extensive subsidies to some Taiwanese media outlets or their affiliated businesses.⁴² The number of Taiwanese media outlets participating in cross-straits media forums has reportedly increased. Since 2015, four "Cross-Strait Media People Summits" (兩岸媒體人峰會) have been held in Beijing. In 2019, more than 70 Taiwanese representatives from various media and publishing sectors attended the forum, up from 34 representatives in 2015.⁴³ During the summit, Wang Yang, the chairman of the National Committee of the CPPCC and member of the powerful CCP Politburo Standing Committee, underlined that media on both sides of the strait had the "responsibility" to "promote the peaceful development of cross-strait relations and promote the process of peaceful reunification of the motherland, and strive to realise the China dream".⁴⁴ Reportedly, several media organisations signed a number of cooperation agreements at the forum.⁴⁵

According to Cole, some Taiwanese media outlets have adopted editorial posturing and viewpoints that suggest a PRC influence.⁴⁶ Moreover, these media organisations allegedly pursue censorship, spread anti-government disinformation, and lend support to, as well as give excessive coverage of, Beijing-friendly political candidates.⁴⁷ Influence on media outlets can be subtle. For instance, advertisers with extensive business interests on the mainland can withdraw advertising. However, it may also be less subtle, with articles being directly paid by the PRC government for material supportive of PRC's interests.⁴⁸

Apart from media organisations, the CCP's co-option reportedly also occurs in terms of cultivating local networks. The capture may include local politicians, religious groups, sector representatives, cultural and grassroots organisations, retired

⁴⁰ Chang and Yang (2020): 329.

⁴¹ Chen (2020).

⁴² Cole (2020b): 20; Cole (2020c).

⁴³ Cole (2019).

⁴⁴ Cole (2019).

⁴⁵ Wang and Lu, 2019-05-11.

⁴⁶ Cole (2020b): 20.

⁴⁷ Cole (2020b): 20.

⁴⁸ Schmitt and Mazza (2019): 9.

ministers and generals, academics, school representatives and students, and so-called “influencers”, or “opinion leaders”.⁴⁹ It involves a large variety of associations with local counterparts in China, and is conducted, for example, through invitations to various forums on the mainland and via financial support from the PRC.⁵⁰ By developing ties with grassroots community and local leaders, Beijing can push its narratives and messages into local social networks. One way of cultivating its interests is by supporting political parties in Taiwan that promote unification between the PRC and Taiwan. Pro-unification parties include the China Unification Promotion Party, the New Party, and the Taiwan Red Party. Another potent way for Beijing to relay its interests is through Taiwanese businesspeople (Taishang) working on the mainland, among those who have close ties with local officials in the PRC or active in pro-Beijing politics in Taiwan.⁵¹

Finally, Beijing leverages its economic might, through a mixture of economic coercion and incentives, to draw Taiwan closer to the mainland. The PRC has weaponised trade and investment opportunities. For instance, Beijing has cut the quota of Chinese tourists allowed in Taiwan, and has recently blocked pineapple imports from Taiwan.⁵² Other examples include the PRC’s restrictive licensing, or customs inspections, to coerce Taiwanese companies to accept the “One China” principle, as well as selectively providing investment opportunities to municipalities in Taiwan that are not governed by the DPP.⁵³ Alongside these coercive methods, Beijing also provides economic sweeteners and various kinds of privileges to induce Taiwanese to relocate to the mainland, while also increasing the interdependence between the two sides.⁵⁴ In 2018, the TAO disclosed a list of 31 incentives, consisting of 12 that are business-related and 19 social- and employment-related, which apply to Taiwanese people. Among other things, the incentives announced are designed to loosen restrictions for highly educated Taiwanese professionals and to provide expanded market access for Taiwanese companies. For instance, Taiwanese enterprises are allowed to invest in Chinese state-owned enterprises and participate in various public innovation programs on the mainland. The incentives are part of an effort to not only deepen interdependence between the two sides, but also to capture attractive know-how and talent. Additionally, they also carry the hope that young Taiwanese will increase their identification with the mainland.

2.2 The international isolation of Taiwan

Beijing has long sought to exclude Taiwan from the international community. The strategy of isolating Taiwan has included efforts to compel countries to switch

⁴⁹ Cole (2020b): 12-13, 19, 22; Schmitt and Mazza (2019): 12.

⁵⁰ Corcoran et al. (2019): 13; Cole (2020b): 12-13, 19.

⁵¹ Cole (2020b): 17.

⁵² Cole (2020a): 27; South China Morning Post, 2021-03-24.

⁵³ Cole (2020b): 17-18; Chang and Yang (2020): 323-324.

⁵⁴ Cole (2020a): 57; Chang and Yang (2020): 321.

diplomatic recognition from the ROC to the PRC, and blocking Taiwan's participation in international organisations; coercing the exclusion of Taiwan in the private sector; and a general approach of seeking to erase Taiwan's international legitimacy. Isolating Taiwan not only reflects Beijing's stance that Taiwan is an integral part of China and therefore should be considered a domestic entity of the PRC, but also serves as a way to de-legitimise Taiwan and insert a sense of despair on the island. Since the election of Tsai Ing-wen in 2016, the PRC has intensified its efforts to isolate Taiwan on the international scene.⁵⁵

A clear example of this has been the poaching of Taiwan's diplomatic allies. Following the election of Tsai, Beijing ended eight years of an informal "diplomatic truce" under the Ma Ying-jeou presidency (2008–2016).⁵⁶ Since Tsai's election in January 2016, eight countries have switched diplomatic recognition from Taiwan to the PRC (as of December 2021), currently dwindling down to only 14 remaining diplomatic partners (13 countries plus the Holy See).⁵⁷ These diplomatic partners are themselves small and often impoverished countries in Central America or the Pacific.⁵⁸ The strategy of inducing countries to switch from Taipei to Beijing involves both carrots and sticks for the partner countries. By actively using the mixture of targeting, encouragement, and pressuring countries to switch recognition, Beijing exerts pressure on Taipei to adopt more PRC-aligned policies.⁵⁹ Indeed, editorials in Chinese state media, such as *People's Daily* and *Global Times*, have threatened that as long as the DPP persists with its current policies, the number of Taiwan's diplomatic partners is likely to become zero.⁶⁰

Recently, Beijing has stepped up pressure on the corporate world to coerce international companies to remove references on their websites and maps, or other products such as t-shirts, that suggest statehood for Taiwan.⁶¹ In 2018, the Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC, 中国民用航空局) ordered 44 international airlines operating routes to the PRC to review their websites, demanding that they modify any language that lists Taiwan as a country. To ensure that they were following the PRC's domestic laws and thereby avoiding commercial consequences, most companies complied with the regulations by referring to Taiwan with designations such as "Taiwan, Province of China", or "Taipei, CN."⁶²

⁵⁵ Glaser et al. (2020): 9, 25.

⁵⁶ Shattuck (2020): 334.

⁵⁷ Since 2016, eight countries have switched diplomatic recognition from Taipei to Beijing: the Republic of Kiribati, Solomon Islands, Dominican Republic, Burkina Faso, Republic of El Salvador, Republic of Panama, Democratic Republic of São Tomé and Príncipe, and Nicaragua.

⁵⁸ The 14 remaining diplomatic allies are: Guatemala, Honduras, Paraguay, Marshall Islands, Haiti, Palau, Nauru, Kingdom of Eswatini, Belize, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Tuvalu, and the Vatican City State.

⁵⁹ Shattuck (2020): 335.

⁶⁰ *Global Times*, 2020–11–10; Zheng, 2019–09–17.

⁶¹ Chan, 2018–01–17; Sui, 2018–06–29.

⁶² Cole (2020a): 38–39; Glaser et al. (2020): 27; BBC, 2018–07–25.

In January 2019, the Institute of Law of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (中国社科院法学研究所) and the Internet Development Research Institution of Peking University (北京大学互联网发展研究中心) jointly issued the “Blue Book on the Cyber Rule of Law in China” (网络法治蓝皮书).⁶³ The book demands that 66 multinational companies – including Apple, Siemens, Nike, and Amazon – must refer to Taiwan as “Taiwan, China” in order to comply with the “One China” principle (that there is only one China and Taiwan is part of China). It proposes that non-complying companies will have failed to respect its territorial integrity, and should therefore face criminal prosecution, resulting in their websites or apps being blocked in the PRC, revocation of their business permits, or paying fines.⁶⁴

Among Beijing’s isolating efforts, the most significant challenge for Taiwan is its exclusion from international institutions and organisations. Beijing’s veto against Taiwan in many such organisations constitutes one of the strongest constraints to Taiwan’s participation in the international community. Chief among those are UN-affiliated organisations, in which meaningful Taiwanese participation has been heavily limited by Beijing’s dictates. During Tsai’s presidency, Beijing has intensified this practice. In recent years, the most prominent examples are Taiwan’s exclusion from the World Health Assembly (WHA), which is the annual meeting of the members of the World Health Organization (WHO), and the triennial assembly of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). Since the election of Tsai, Beijing has blocked Taiwan from participating in these two organisations as an observer or guest, citing the “One China” principle for refusing Taiwan’s attendance.⁶⁵ As a *modus operandi* for barring Taiwanese participation in the UN, Beijing refers to UN General Assembly Resolution 2758 that restores the right of the PRC to recognise the legitimate representatives of China to the UN.⁶⁶ Following the global spread of Covid-19 and Taiwan’s praised response to the pandemic, the Taiwanese exclusion from the WHA in particular has stirred much debate.

There are several other recent instances of Taiwan, or Taiwanese individuals, being blocked from participation, or shut down, during meetings of organisations within the UN framework, or other international organisations.⁶⁷ Another notable

⁶³ Li and Zhi (2019).

⁶⁴ Sands, 2019–01–29.

⁶⁵ Shattuck (2020): 342.

⁶⁶ Shattuck (2020): 342.

⁶⁷ Other instances include: Abdus Salam International Centre for Theoretical Physics (December, 2020); BirdLife International (September, 2020); the World Meteorological Organization’s 18th World Meteorological Conference (June, 2019); Czech Republic Ministry of Industry annual meeting (March, 2019); 87th INTERPOL General Assembly (October, 2018); United Nations Climate Change Conference, Conference of the Parties 23 (November, 2017); 35th session of the Human Rights Council (June, 2017); International Labour Conference (June, 2017); Kimberly Process Intersessional Meeting (May, 2017); 61st session of the Commission on the Status of

example is the General Assembly of INTERPOL, to which Taipei's requests to participate in have been constantly rejected. There have also been plentiful occasions when Taiwanese individuals have withdrawn from events because of pressure from the PRC, including name changes, or Beijing's mounting its pressure on individual states to adhere to its "One China" principle.

Under various names, Taiwan has nonetheless been able to find a way to participate in some other significant international organisations. Their work is mainly related to economic issues, including the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and the Asia-Pacific Economic Organization (APEC). The participation in these organisations has mainly been the result of pressure from the US, although other states have also shown support.

A mainstay of Beijing's strategy of isolating Taiwan thus involves efforts to erase the name of Taiwan and shrink its international space. This involves a range of areas, from censorship of academic research about Taiwan to downgrading Taiwan's designation in various forums to that of a province, or preventing Taiwanese contacts with other countries. By consistently insisting that China shall have a veto over Taiwan's international activities, Beijing seeks to deepen Taiwan's international isolation on multiple levels.

Thus, in sum, China has been applying several methods to pressure Taiwan into resignation. It conducts influence operations that consist of various disinformation activities, including co-option of media as well as of organisations and individuals in political, economic and cultural spheres; targeting the island with cyberattacks; and blending economic coercion with incentives. In addition, the PRC seeks to isolate Taiwan on the global stage, by excluding the island democracy from international organisations and pressuring the corporate world. In the following chapters, we examine whether similar methods can also be identified in the individual cases of Japan, South Korea, Germany, and Sweden.

Women at the United Nations (March, 2017); tours at the United Nations (January-March, 2017); NGO Committee for Rare Diseases of the United Nations (November, 2016); the Committee on Fisheries of the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (July, 2016); the International Labour Conference (June, 2016); the Symposium on Excess Capacity and Structural Adjustment in the Steel Sector of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (April, 2016). See Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of China (Taiwan), *Instances of China's Interference with Taiwan's International Presence (2016 to 2021 documents)*, 2021–11–26.

3 Japan-Taiwan

This chapter examines how China seeks to isolate Taiwan in Japan, and Japanese responses to these efforts. It finds that the PRC is conducting coercive actions in Japan, most visibly by condemning Japanese actions that engage with Taiwan, but also covertly through pressure on various actors in Japanese society to disengage with Taiwanese counterparts. However, Japan has largely not conceded to Chinese pressure. On the contrary, Tokyo has been supportive of Taiwan's quest for a larger international presence, as it is seemingly moving towards a closer relationship with Taiwan.

3.1 Overview of Japan-Taiwan relations

Japan and Taiwan have a long and complex history of close engagement. The half century of Japan's imperial rule over Taiwan (1895–1945) has had impacts that remain today. Although Japanese rule was plagued by violence and oppression of the Taiwanese, Taiwan also benefited from Japanese investments in areas such as basic education, civil infrastructure, and public health. During the time of colonial rule, people-to-people exchanges deepened, as many Taiwanese received an advanced education in Japan, while even more Japanese came to Taiwan to govern the island. Thus, Japanese influence on Taiwan's culture can be seen in a wide range of areas, such as food, music, language, architecture, and values.⁶⁸

In 1972, Japan recognised the PRC government in Beijing as China's sole legal government. In the Japan-China Joint Communiqué, Tokyo acknowledges that it respects and understands the PRC's stance that Taiwan is an inalienable part of the territory of the PRC, but stops short of adopting that as its own position.⁶⁹ Since then, successive Japanese governments have largely adopted the same position of pursuing unofficial and non-governmental relations with Taiwan.⁷⁰ Tokyo and Beijing have reiterated their commitment on the Taiwan issue in the so-called "four basic documents", namely the 1972 Joint Communiqué, the 1978 Peace Treaty, the 1998 Joint Declaration, and the 2008 Joint Statement.⁷¹ As such, Tokyo's "One China" policy prevents it from dispatching ambassadors to Taiwan; consequently, in 1972, Japan established the Interchange Association, to act as Japan's unofficial embassy, while Taiwan set up the Association of East Asian Relations.⁷²

⁶⁸ Cole (2020a): 122–123.

⁶⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 1972–09–29.

⁷⁰ Fukuda (2019): 298.

⁷¹ The texts are available at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, *Japan-China Relations (Archives)*. 2021–04–05.

⁷² Hornung (2018).

Engagement between the two sides is primarily centred around economic and cultural issues. In 2020, Japan was Taiwan's third-largest trading partner, accounting for 11 per cent of Taiwan's total trade, while Taiwan's 6 per cent of Japan's total trade made it Japan's fifth-largest trading partner.⁷³ The majority of goods trade between Japan and Taiwan includes machinery, electrical equipment, and metal and chemical products.⁷⁴ Overall, the Japanese and Taiwanese economies have evolved with complementarity and interdependency in the electronics and IT sector. They both play important roles in global supply chains in high-tech sectors such as semiconductors, network equipment, and electronic devices.⁷⁵ Regarding investments, the products mirror much of the trade. The two sides mostly invest in machinery and equipment manufacturing, electronic parts, chemicals, and wholesale/retail trade.⁷⁶ Japan is the fifth-largest source of investment in Taiwan, while Japan is the sixth destination for Taiwanese investments.⁷⁷

Along with these economic figures, the people-to-people ties between Japan and Taiwan are robust and have strengthened in past years. Apart from, or partly due to, the result of historical links, there is a sense of common values and shared social solidarity with each other, particularly among the younger generations.⁷⁸ According to opinion polls, 80 per cent of Taiwanese and 66 per cent of Japanese respondents sustain a feeling of being relatively close to each other.⁷⁹ These close bonds have been boosted and solidified by extensive assistance and contributions from each other during times of crisis, for example during the COVID-19 pandemic or the 2011 earthquake and tsunami disaster in Japan.⁸⁰ Indeed, people-to-people contacts are accentuated by large flows of tourists in both directions. Before the pandemic, over 2 million Japanese tourists visited Taiwan per year, accounting for a staggering 18 per cent of total tourists in Taiwan, while the five million Taiwanese visitors to Japan made up 15 per cent of Japan's tourists.⁸¹

The strength of Japanese-Taiwanese relations is also driven by a shared sense of a security challenge stemming from a mightier China. Both Japan and Taiwan face a growing Chinese military presence that challenges their respective, immediate, security interests, which has resulted in both parts' viewing each other as strategic partners against the long-term threat from the PRC. Chinese behaviour in the East and South China Seas has pushed Japan to look for closer strategic partnerships in the region, thus also prompting closer ties with Taiwan.⁸² Military exchanges

⁷³ Waters (2021).

⁷⁴ Waters (2021).

⁷⁵ Koshino (2021): 47–48.

⁷⁶ Waters (2021).

⁷⁷ Waters (2021).

⁷⁸ Fukuda (2019): 304.

⁷⁹ Fukuda (2019): 304.

⁸⁰ Cole (2020a): 123; Fukuda (2021): 13.

⁸¹ Waters (2021).

⁸² Hornung (2018).

remain highly sensitive, as unofficial defense exchanges takes place at a low level, for instance through Track 2 dialogues and visits by retired Japanese Self-Defense Force officials.⁸³

Several contentious issues nevertheless complicate the Japan-Taiwan relationship. The ownership of the Senkaku/Diaoyutai islands, disagreement over Japan's claim to the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) around Okinotorishima, and the issue of "comfort women" during Japan's imperial advancements are all contentious disputes that divide the two countries. Another outstanding issue concerns Taiwan's remaining ban on imported food produced in prefectures that were exposed to radiation from the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, in 2011.⁸⁴ However, Japan and Taiwan have found ways to manage these thorny issues and not let them damage the relationship. For instance, Japan did not take Taiwan to the WTO regarding the food import ban as it did with South Korea, but have instead chosen to go through diplomatic channels.⁸⁵ The two sides have also signed a number of practical agreements to support the expansion of ties, for example the 2011 Japan-Taiwan Open Skies Agreement, which liberalised bilateral commercial aviation exchanges; the 2013 Japan-Taiwan Fisheries Agreement, which excluded territorial seas around disputed islands; and the e-commerce and tax agreements, in 2013 and 2015, respectively.⁸⁶ Thus, Japan and Taiwan seek to make full use of the ambiguities that come with an unofficial relationship. Cooperation, however, is often contingent on reactions from Beijing.

3.2 General Chinese influence in Japan

Japan would seem to be a highly suitable country for China to try to influence. However, as noted by a report by the Hoover Institute and the Asia Society, "the kinds of covert Chinese influence operations that have come to light in countries like the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and parts of Europe [...] are not easy to find in Japan".⁸⁷ Chinese influence in Japan has not made similar headlines, or left visible footprints, as it has in many other countries.

Even so, the presence of China looms large over Japanese international and domestic security. In its annual report, "Review and Prospects of Internal and External Situations", Japan's national intelligence agency, the Public Security Intelligence Agency (PSIA), devotes much ink to discussing China. The report asserts that amidst deteriorating US-China relations, Beijing has "sought to build a relationship with Japan's new administration from a strategic perspective".⁸⁸

⁸³ Fukuda (2021): 19.

⁸⁴ Hornung (2018).

⁸⁵ Hornung (2018).

⁸⁶ Fukuda (2019): 306; Koshino (2021): 47–48.

⁸⁷ Diamond and Scheel (2018): 165.

⁸⁸ Public Security Intelligence Agency, 2021–01: 39.

According to the report, it is expected that China will “strengthen its efforts to prevent Japan from becoming part of the ‘siege network against China’ through such actions as the resumption of various exchange programs and practical cooperation using the economy as a lever”.⁸⁹

The CCP is intent on influencing the Japanese government and public. There are significant business interests account for in Tokyo; 14 private universities in Japan have Confucius Institutes, which convey narratives acceptable to Beijing, while Chinese student associations at Japanese universities promote views that conform with the CCP’s.⁹⁰ In the political sphere, the Nikai faction (spurred by the ruling Liberal Democratic Party’s Secretary General, Toshihiro Nikai) is considered to be the most assuaging to the PRC.⁹¹ Additionally, it is believed that 80 per cent of the Chinese-language newspapers in Japan receive funds from mainland China.⁹² A recent study also shows that Chinese firms use Japanese news sites with veiled PRC links to spread pro-China news.⁹³ Using several Japanese news aggregator sites, they can reach a wider Japanese audience.

In Japan, united front organisations and affiliates also promote Chinese interests, including the Japanese branch of the key organisation, the China Council for the Promotion of Peaceful National Reunification (中国和平统一促进会, CCPPR); affiliated branches of CCPPR such as the All-Japan Overseas Chinese China Peaceful Reunification Council (全日本华侨华人中国和平统一促进会); the All-Japan Chinese Council for the Promotion of the Peaceful Unification of China (全日本华人促进中国平和统一协议会); and the Japan Overseas Chinese Federation (日本华侨华人联合会).⁹⁴ These organisations serve as vehicles for exchanges with Japanese civil society. Among various activities, they hold symposiums for study and discussion of Xi Jinping’s cross-strait policies and speeches on Taiwan, and churn out statements criticising Taiwan’s DPP-led government for not taking care of the Taiwanese people.⁹⁵

Two other influential organisations active in Japan are the Chinese People’s Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries (中国人民对外友好协会, CPAFFC), which primarily focuses on elite exchanges, and the China Association for International Friendly Contact (中国国际友好联络会, CAIFC), which hosts

⁸⁹ Public Security Intelligence Agency, 2021-01: 39.

⁹⁰ Fujita, 2021-06-06; Glosserman, 2020-08-11.

⁹¹ Glosserman, 2020-08-11.

⁹² Glosserman, 2020-08-11.

⁹³ Ichihara (2020).

⁹⁴ Hsiao (2019b).

⁹⁵ China Council for the Promotion of Peaceful Reunification, 2018-02-11; China Council for the Promotion of Peaceful Reunification, 2018-08-06; China Council for the Promotion of Peaceful Reunification, 2019-01-23; China Council for the Promotion of Peaceful Reunification, 2019-08-28; China Council for the Promotion of Peaceful Reunification, 2020-01-17; China Council for the Promotion of Peaceful Reunification, 2021-05-21.

exchanges spanning cultural and security-oriented actors.⁹⁶ There are also at least seven Sino-Japanese trade and friendship associations that loosely engage with the aforementioned CCP-backed organisations.⁹⁷

3.3 PRC influence on Taiwan in Japan: incidents 2016–2021

Beijing is primarily active in reacting to any types of advancements that prompt closer Japan-Taiwan ties. In order to limit Taiwan's space, Beijing is quick to spell out the red lines for Tokyo. China puts constant pressure on Tokyo, by policing and thereby seeking to constrain Japanese interactions with Taiwan. Apart from such reactions, it also pursues various coercive actions, such as contacting media and politicians to attempt to influence their activities regarding Taiwan. However, to the dismay of the CCP, in recent years the Japanese government has taken numerous steps that have strengthened Japan's ties with the Tsai administration. As is reflected in events during 2020 and 2021, described below, Japan and Taiwan seemingly deepened their ties. This development has generated strong protests from the PRC, which seeks to push back Japanese-Taiwanese engagements by quickly condemning actions by Japanese officials. Yet, despite drawing Beijing's ire, the Japanese-Taiwanese engagement reflects the tendency of Japanese officials to be increasingly vocal about Japan's moving closer to Taiwan, even though such moves are enveloped in much caution.

3.3.1 Japanese actions for closer ties with Taiwan trigger reactions from Beijing

Assuming power in 2016, the Tsai-administration got off to a good start with the Japanese government. This was underpinned by the fact that President Tsai and Japan's prime minister at the time, Shinzo Abe, enjoyed close personal ties. Upon Tsai's election in January 2016, Japan's then foreign minister, now current prime minister, Fumio Kishida, published a message congratulating Tsai for his victory and stressing the Japanese-Taiwanese partnership. This was followed by Abe himself, who made congratulatory remarks on Tsai's victory in the House of Representatives.⁹⁸ Marking the first time such senior Japanese officials communicated sentiments of this kind to an elected president in Taiwan, they were acclaimed as unprecedented.⁹⁹ The following year, Tsai reciprocated, by congratulating Abe and his party on their parliamentary election victory.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ Hsiao (2019b).

⁹⁷ Hsiao (2019b).

⁹⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2016–01–16; The Japan Times, 2016–01–16.

⁹⁹ Fukuda (2019): 311; Hornung (2018).

¹⁰⁰ Hornung (2018).

2017 witnessed the two sides undertaking important changes, which triggered the wrath of Beijing. Defying PRC pressure to refrain from using the name “Taiwan”, in January 2017 Japan renamed its de facto embassy in Taipei, from the “Interchange Association” to the “Japan-Taiwan Exchange Association”; a few months later, Taiwan changed the name of its office in Tokyo to the “Association of Taiwan-Japan Relations”.¹⁰¹ Shortly after Tokyo’s renaming of its representation in Taiwan, Japanese State Minister for Internal Affairs and Communications, Jiro Akama, visited Taiwan in his official capacity to promote Japanese culture and tourism. The visit marked the highest-level visit to Taiwan by a Japanese government official since 1972.¹⁰²

Both of these instances drew the ire of Beijing. Preceding Tokyo’s decision to rename its representation in Taiwan, the PRC’s foreign ministry spokesperson, Hua Chunying, expressed “strong dissatisfaction” with the Japanese move, warning Tokyo from undermining the Japanese commitment to avoid creating “two Chinas”, labelling the two sides’ respective name changes a “plot” to seek to upgrade relations.¹⁰³ Likewise, following Akama’s visit to Taiwan, Hua informed Japan that Beijing has lodged “solemn representations” criticising the Japanese government for being provocative and not abiding to its verbal commitments.¹⁰⁴ During a subsequent trip to Japan at the end of May, the PRC State Councillor, Yang Jiechi, more than once urged Japan to “uphold the good faith principle and handle the Taiwan question in an appropriate manner”.¹⁰⁵

At the end of 2017, Japan and Taiwan signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on maritime research and rescue operations, to allow the coast guards and ships from both sides to operate near the Okinotorishima atoll if an emergency arose.¹⁰⁶ In February 2018, warm relations between Japan and Taiwan again elicited anger in Beijing. Following the earthquake in the Taiwanese city of Hualien, Prime Minister Abe published a photo of a handwritten letter and a video of himself on his Facebook page. In the post, Abe remembered Taiwan’s assistance after the 2011 earthquake in Japan and expressed full support and assistance for Taiwan in the aftermath of the current disaster.¹⁰⁷ The PRC’s ministry of foreign affairs, however, accused Japan’s expression of condolences to President Tsai of being a public attempt to create two Chinas, and urged Tokyo to reverse its action to avoid damaging bilateral relations with Beijing.¹⁰⁸ Later, when Japan’s foreign

¹⁰¹ Chen (2017); Fukuda (2019): 312.

¹⁰² Chen (2017).

¹⁰³ Feng, 2017–05–18.

¹⁰⁴ The Japan Times, 2017–03–27; Mo, 2007–03–28.

¹⁰⁵ Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of China, *Instances of China’s Interference with Taiwan’s International presence, 2017*.

¹⁰⁶ Hornung (2018); Tang, 2017–12–21.

¹⁰⁷ Yang, 2018–02–08.

¹⁰⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of China, *Instances of China’s Interference with Taiwan’s International presence, 2018*.

ministry posted the message to its website, Tsai's name had been removed, but the ministry denied it was a concession to Beijing and that it was, rather, a case of addressing everyone in Taiwan.¹⁰⁹

The COVID-19 pandemic further deepened relations between Taiwan and Japan. In April 2020, Taiwan donated two million medical masks to Japan to help its neighbour fight the virus.¹¹⁰ The Japanese government returned the favour by donating 1.24 million doses of the Astra Zeneca COVID-19 vaccine to Taiwan in June 2021, which, at the time of writing, have subsequently been supplemented with five more batches.¹¹¹ The donation, however, did not pass without remarks from Beijing. The PRC foreign ministry spokesperson, Zhao Lijian, warned that “the Taiwan authorities’ attempt to seek independence by exploiting the issue of vaccines won’t succeed” and pointed out that Taiwan’s channels for obtaining vaccine from the mainland remained open.¹¹² Another spokesperson of the PRC’s foreign ministry, Wang Wenbin, accused Japan of exploiting the pandemic to “put on political shows” and “meddle in China’s internal affairs.”¹¹³ The Chinese Embassy in Tokyo reportedly made daily protests and pressured Japan’s foreign ministry to refrain from delivering the vaccine to Taiwan.¹¹⁴ Possibly fearing Chinese interference, Japan decided to send the vaccine directly to Taiwan, rather than going through the WHO’s global initiative COVAX (COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access).¹¹⁵

3.3.2 Japanese statements stressing Taiwanese security enrage Beijing

To Beijing’s frustration, recent years have seen a number of notable statements and moves by Japanese government officials referring to Taiwan’s status. Officials in Japan have increasingly emphasised the importance of Taiwan to Japanese security and the general outlook of Japan-Taiwan relations. Coupled with statements during the US-Japan summit and the G7 summit in 2021 (more about these two summits in the international section, below), a stream of comments and actions by Japanese officials reveals that Tokyo considers Taiwan to be a key part of the Indo-Pacific security domain. What previously may often have remained silent is now increasingly stated in public.

¹⁰⁹ South China Morning Post, 2018–02–14.

¹¹⁰ Kyodo News, 2020–04–21.

¹¹¹ Strong, 2021–10–26.

¹¹² Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, *Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian’s Regular Press Conference on May 28, 2021*.

¹¹³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, *Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Wang Wenbin’s Regular Press Conference on May 31, 2021*.

¹¹⁴ Liberty Times Net, 2021–06–05.

¹¹⁵ Cole (2021).

Well known for his close links with politicians in Taipei, Japanese Defense Minister Nobuo Kishi has made numerous remarks regarding the importance of Taiwan for Japanese and regional security. In late June 2021, Kishi directly linked Taiwan's security with Japan's, stating that "the peace and stability of Taiwan is directly connected to Japan and we are closely monitoring ties between China and Taiwan, as well as Chinese military activity".¹¹⁶ More than a month later, in an interview with the *Financial Times*, Kishi said that broad international pressure was crucial to avoiding a military confrontation against Taiwan, as he called on the international community to "pay greater attention to the survival of Taiwan".¹¹⁷ Later that same month, Kishi warned about how the "military gap between China and Taiwan was growing year by year", as he again emphasised that "the defence stability of Taiwan is very important, not just for Japan's security, but also for the stability of the world as well".¹¹⁸

Kishi is not, however, the only official who has been making remarks that conflict with what China wishes to hear. State Minister of Defense Yasuhide Nakayama has openly questioned whether it was right for Japan and other countries to adopt the "One China" policy, while stressing the necessity "to protect Taiwan as a democratic country".¹¹⁹ Prior to this statement, Nakayama had also made reference to the security of Taiwan as a "red line" in Asia.¹²⁰ In June 2021, the then prime minister, Yoshihide Suga, made a passing reference to Taiwan as a country, in a one-on-one parliamentary debate about pandemic measures.¹²¹ A month later, Suga's deputy prime minister and finance minister, Taro Aso, again connected Taiwanese security with that of Japan's, as he stated that a Chinese invasion of Taiwan may be interpreted by Tokyo as a "threat to Japan's survival".¹²² According to Aso, in such a scenario, Japan and the United States must defend Taiwan. In December 2021, former prime minister Shinzo Abe first commented that Japan and the US could not stand by if Taiwan was attacked, and later that same month stated that a military attack on Taiwan would "suicidal" by Beijing.¹²³

These statements have indeed triggered strong protests from Beijing. From the Chinese side, the efforts to constrain Tokyo from moving closer to Taiwan – and thereby seeking to limit the Taiwanese operational space or even the narrative about Taiwan's status – have primarily been centred around strong condemnations and protests against any perceived Japanese misstep. In other words, Beijing is trying to apply constant pressure on Tokyo.

¹¹⁶ Reynolds and Nobuhiro, 2021-06-25.

¹¹⁷ Harding and Lewis (2021), 2021-08-02.

¹¹⁸ Bagshaw, 2021-08-12.

¹¹⁹ Brunnstrom, 2021-07-01.

¹²⁰ Park, 2020-12-25.

¹²¹ South China Morning Post, 2021-06-10.

¹²² Osawa, 2021-07-06.

¹²³ Chen, 2021-12-17.

Following State Minister of Defence Nakayama's remarks on protecting Taiwan as a democratic country, the PRC's foreign ministry lodged solemn representations with the Japanese government over the use of the word "country", warning Tokyo to refrain from repeating the mistake. Spokesperson Wang Wenbing designated Nakayama's comments as "extremely treacherous, irresponsible and dangerous", and pointed out that the words had "violated Japan's long-standing promise not to regard Taiwan as a country".¹²⁴ Wang issued similar condemnations after Prime Minister Suga referred to Taiwan as a country, as Beijing again lodged solemn complaints with Japan, demanding clarification on the issue and "deplore[d] Japan's erroneous remarks".¹²⁵ In response, the Japanese government felt the need to clarify Japan's stance. Chief Cabinet Secretary Katsunobu Kato confirmed that Japan's relations with Taiwan remain unofficial and at the non-governmental level.¹²⁶ A similar pattern unfolded following the remarks of Deputy Prime Minister Aso, whereupon both Kato, and Aso himself, only mildly backtracked on the remarks, clarifying that Japan sought a diplomatic solution and that Tokyo's "One China" policy remained unchanged.¹²⁷ Nevertheless, the PRC's foreign ministry again lodged a diplomatic protest, as Spokesperson Zhao Lijian called the commentary "extremely wrong and dangerous", while warning of the PRC's strength for resolving and defending national sovereignty.¹²⁸ The Chinese Embassy in Japan also issued a complaint, accusing Japanese ministers of constantly crossing the line on the Taiwan issue, "which has seriously poisoned the atmosphere of Sino-Japanese relations."¹²⁹ Similarly, Beijing reacted with fury to Abe's remarks, as it threatened to reconsider bilateral relations with Japan.¹³⁰

3.3.3 Japan's security focus shifting towards Taiwan

Chinese worries about Japan's growing support for Taiwan are not occurring in a vacuum of statements by individual Japanese officials. In recent years, Tokyo has officially, albeit subtly and cautiously, signalled that Japan was gradually shifting towards a more inclusive and open stance towards Taiwan. In the *Diplomatic Blue Book 2020*, Japan's annual foreign policy report, Taiwan is referred to as an "extremely crucial partner and an important friend, with which it shares fundamental values", which was a notch up from the previous year's description of Taiwan, which lacked the word "extremely".¹³¹ In ascribing such symbolic weight, the report devotes twice as much space compared to the 2019 edition, while also highlighting

¹²⁴ Xing and Xu, 2021-06-30; Feng, 2021-06-29.

¹²⁵ South China Morning Post, 2021-06-11.

¹²⁶ South China Morning Post, 2021-06-29.

¹²⁷ Ryall, 2021-07-06.

¹²⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, *Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian's Regular Press Conference on July 6, 2021*.

¹²⁹ Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Japan, 2021-06-30.

¹³⁰ Chen, 2021-12-17.

¹³¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2020-10-21; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2019-10-17.

Tokyo's consistent support for Taiwan's inclusion into the WHO. That language was followed up in the 2021 edition, where Taiwan was again described as an "extremely crucial partner and an important friend", which prompted angry voices from Beijing.¹³²

Attracting further fury from the Chinese government, the 2021 edition of Japan's defense white book, *Defense of Japan 2021*, also contained formulations about Taiwan that dismayed the PRC. For the first time, the annual defense report touched on the issue of the Taiwan Strait. Connecting Japan's own security with the Taiwan Strait, the report stated that "stabilising the situation surrounding Taiwan is important for Japan's security and the stability of the international community. Therefore, it is necessary that we pay close attention to the situation with a sense of crisis more than ever before".¹³³ Also a first in the report, though perhaps more subtle, Taiwan appeared as an independent entity on a map. The report, which sounded great alarm over Chinese military modernisation and growing US-China tensions, triggered an angry response from Beijing. Spokesperson Zhao Lijian accused Tokyo of "grossly interfering" in the Taiwan question, which is "purely China's internal affairs", and described the report as being full of "Cold War mentality".¹³⁴ The Chinese Embassy in Japan was "strongly dissatisfied" and lodged solemn representations with Japan.¹³⁵ Fearing a more accepting Japanese position on Taiwan's independent status, Beijing has sought to reprimand Japan in order to prevent Tokyo from gradually opening up space for Taiwan. Even before the publication of Japan's defense white paper, the government in Beijing, after seeing a leaked draft of the report, had lodged a solemn representation to Tokyo.¹³⁶ However, Japan's concern about China remains. In December 2021, the new administration in Tokyo announced that it plans to set up a new position for a senior diplomat to handle maritime issues in the East China Sea and Taiwan.¹³⁷

As for security cooperation, the unofficial nature of Japan-Taiwan relations entails a general avoidance of formal commitments. In 2019, President Tsai proposed a Taiwan-Japan Security Dialogue to discuss regional security issues.¹³⁸ However, the Abe administration rejected the proposal and ensured Beijing that Tokyo's unofficial ties with Taipei remained unchanged. Yet, Japan has strengthened its defences in its southwestern islands. Tokyo's concern over Taiwan connects closely to the security of southern Japan, particularly Okinawa, where Beijing has tried to stir up anti-Tokyo and anti-US sentiment.¹³⁹ If conflict arises in the Taiwan

¹³² Wang and Xing, 2021-04-27.

¹³³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2021: 19.

¹³⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, *Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian's Regular Press Conference on July 13, 2021*.

¹³⁵ Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Japan, 2021-07-13.

¹³⁶ Global Times, 2021-05-14.

¹³⁷ Chen, 2021-12-17.

¹³⁸ Chang (2021a).

¹³⁹ Chang (2021a).

Strait, Okinawa, and thereby Japan, is likely to be involved. Reports suggest that in 2018, in what may have been preparations for a Taiwan contingency, Japanese naval vessels examined the naval routes around Taiwan.¹⁴⁰ There are also reports of unofficial Japanese support of Taiwan, such as informal support provided to Taiwan's indigenous submarine industry by Japanese experts.¹⁴¹ There are signs of a close resemblance between Taiwan's current indigenous models of defense submarines and those of Japan's Soryu class vessels, further indicating potentially significant unofficial Japanese cooperation.¹⁴²

Japanese statements on Taiwan also reflect currents of enhanced concern for Taiwan in Japan's domestic politics. In 2021, legislators from the ruling LDP set up a "Taiwan project team" to discuss how Japan can coordinate issues related to the security of Taiwan with the US. The team has called on Japan to enact a Taiwan Relations Act similar to the US example, and to establish a 2-plus-2 dialogue between Japanese and Taiwanese foreign and defense ministers, as well as to push for Taiwan's membership in the CPTPP.¹⁴³ Members of the LDP's Foreign Affairs Division and the Research Commission on Foreign Affairs have compiled a set of proposals for how the government should act in the event of a Taiwan contingency; these proposals state that a Chinese invasion of Taiwan would have direct implications for Japan's security.¹⁴⁴ The proposals include conducting simulations with other allies to enable coordination in such a crisis.

In August 2021, the ruling parties in Japan and Taiwan, the LDP and DPP, respectively, held their first-ever security dialogue in virtual format.¹⁴⁵ The talks, considered a party version of the 2+2 security dialogue conventionally conducted between governments, involved LDP's director of its foreign affairs division, Masahisa Sato, and National Defence Division Director Taku Otsuka. Both have previously held deputy and vice minister roles. The two sides reportedly discussed defense and security issues, resulting in an agreement to push for cooperation and joint drills between their coast guards. Further, in December 2021, Abe, who remains influential in the largest faction of the LDP, expressed that Japan would not stand by if China attacked Taiwan. The former prime minister said that "a Taiwan emergency is a Japanese emergency, and therefore an emergency for the Japan-US alliance".¹⁴⁶ Abe's comments sparked angry reactions from Beijing. Still, although there are a number of high-level officials in the Japanese government who have close ties with the Tsai administration, there are still many voices in the Diet, Japan's parliament, that call for caution.¹⁴⁷ Many LDP-

¹⁴⁰ Chang (2021a).

¹⁴¹ Wang (2019).

¹⁴² Wang (2019).

¹⁴³ Mizorogi, 2021-03-05; Mizorogi and Kato, 2021-02-06.

¹⁴⁴ Asian Poly Glot View, 2021-06-02.

¹⁴⁵ Chung, 2021-08-27.

¹⁴⁶ Wang, 2021-12-02.

¹⁴⁷ Fukuda (2021): 19.

members, such as those in the “pro-Beijing” Nikai fraction, remain hesitant to risk tensions with Beijing.

The flurry of Japanese actions seeking closer engagement with Taiwan has been coupled with Japanese criticism of other issues concerning China. This prompted the condemnation of Japanese officials by the Chinese Ambassador to Japan, Kong Xuanyou, who stated that, “Japan’s dismissive attitude towards Taiwan, Xinjiang and Hong Kong is especially apparent these days, and has seriously disturbed China-Japan relations.”¹⁴⁸ Chinese concerns are also manifested in Beijing’s requesting that Tokyo refrains from commitment to Taiwan. For example, since 2016 the PRC has been increasingly insistent that Tokyo joins it in issuing a so-called fifth joint statement to re-confirm Japan’s “One China” policy.¹⁴⁹ Supposedly, the statement pertains to Japan’s making a clear announcement of its policy and opposing Taiwanese independence, something that Tokyo has been reluctant to issue.¹⁵⁰ A more extreme reflection of Chinese worries about Japan-Taiwan relations could be seen in a video that circulated among various CCP officials and social media in July 2021. The video threatened to use nuclear weapons against Japan if the country intervened in a Taiwan conflict.¹⁵¹ The video was taken down a few days later.

3.3.4 Chinese pressure on Japanese local politicians over Taiwan

Chinese efforts to quell Japanese actions also take place at the local level in Japan. Reportedly, Chinese diplomats in Japan have pressured several prefectural government officials to stop sending resolutions to the Japanese government regarding human rights violations in Xinjiang and Hong Kong, as well as on their stance on Taiwan’s status.¹⁵²

A number of officials, such as those in Saitama and Chiba Prefectural Assemblies have said that they have received phone calls from Chinese embassy staff accusing them of “interference in China’s domestic affairs”.¹⁵³ In March 2020, the Kobe City Assembly adopted a resolution calling for Taiwan’s inclusion as an observer in the WHO and other international organisations. Shortly after the resolution, a person claiming to be the deputy consul general in China’s consulate general in Osaka called the mayor’s office and objected to the resolution, accusing them of “interfering in our domestic affairs and violating the ‘One China’ principle”.¹⁵⁴ A similar incident was reported in June 2016, after the Kamakura City Assembly in

¹⁴⁸ Lo Kinling, 2021-08-01.

¹⁴⁹ Fukuda (2021): 15.

¹⁵⁰ Interviewee No. 1. See Section 9. List of Interviews.

¹⁵¹ Cole (2021b).

¹⁵² Okuhara, 2021-07-19; Ryall, 2021-08-09.

¹⁵³ Okuhara, 2021-07-19. Ryall, 2021-08-09.

¹⁵⁴ Okuhara, 2021-07-19.

Kamagawa Prefecture passed a resolution condemning Chinese human rights violations and, in September that same year, adopted a resolution calling for Taiwanese membership in international organisations. After the resolution concerning Taiwan was passed, a representative from the Chinese embassy called the prefecture and protested that “as a third party, your city assembly has no right to comment on minorities within China”.¹⁵⁵ Moreover, according to an interviewee for this report, lawmakers who have met with Chinese representatives in Japan have been scolded for their views on Taiwan.¹⁵⁶

In an interesting note, in March 2021 the Ishigaki City Assembly, in Okinawa Prefecture, passed a resolution calling for the Japanese government to establish a “Japan-Taiwan Basic Relations Act”.¹⁵⁷ It is yet unclear whether the city has experienced any pressure from Chinese officials on the issue, although Beijing has made previous efforts to pressure the city, by restricting tourists who wish to visit Ishigaki, with regard to the issue of the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands.¹⁵⁸

3.3.5 Chinese pressure on Japanese media and reporting about Taiwan

Beijing is looking to discipline Japanese reporting and writing about Taiwan. In February 2017, the *National Institute for Defense Studies* (NIDS) of Japan’s Ministry of Defense published the *China Security Report 2017, Change in Continuity: The Dynamics of the China-Taiwan Relationship*. The report used Taiwan’s official name, the Republic of China, and referred to the two sides of the strait as two political entities. This caused anger in Beijing and, reportedly, in a meeting between the foreign ministers of the two countries, China’s Wang demanded that Japan’s Kishida arrange the withdrawal of the report.¹⁵⁹ Kishida then reiterated that Japan’s position on Taiwan remained consistent with the 1972 Japan-China Joint Communique, which stated that it did not support Taiwanese independence.¹⁶⁰

Beijing has also sought to correct Japanese media reporting about Taiwan. In June 2018, then Chinese ambassador to Japan, Cheng Yonghua, protested Japanese newspaper *Sankei Shimbun*’s publishing of interviews with Taiwan’s Minister of Foreign Affairs Joseph Wu, arguing that the article advocated Taiwanese independence and violated Beijing’s “One China” principle.¹⁶¹ Later in August, Beijing rejected the participation of one of the newspaper’s reporters in a pool interview of a China-Japan diplomatic meeting, which led Japanese reporters to collectively withdraw

¹⁵⁵ Ryall, 2021–08–09.

¹⁵⁶ Interviewee No. 7. See Section 9. List of Interviews.

¹⁵⁷ Eldridge, 2021-03-17.

¹⁵⁸ Eldridge, 2021-03-17.

¹⁵⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of China, 2017.

¹⁶⁰ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2017-02-17.

¹⁶¹ Japan Times, 2018-06-29; Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of China, 2018.

from the event and caused a Japanese government official to lodge a protest with the PRC.¹⁶² Moreover, in March 2020, the PRC's embassy in Japan issued a statement on its website accusing Japanese media of depicting "false information" regarding Beijing's willingness to accept Taiwan's participation as an observer in the WHO.¹⁶³

Reportedly, Chinese officials have also directly targeted Japanese media, trying to influence and shape their writing. In cities where Beijing have local consulates, sources suggest that Chinese officials work hard to influence local media to not write about Taiwan in positive terms.¹⁶⁴ Their general conduct has been to call the newspapers or invite journalists to dinner in order to exert pressure. Media outlets that have been named include *Sankei Shimbun* and *Manichi Shinbum*.¹⁶⁵

Chinese efforts to restrain Japanese journalists and media outlets from reporting on sensitive issues, among them Taiwan, are prevalent. In an interview with a Japanese journalist, it became clear that Beijing obstructs reporting by resisting from issuing, or making it difficult to renew, visas for Japanese journalists who apply to travel to sensitive areas.¹⁶⁶ According to the interviewee, the Chinese side have made a habit of directly telling them that their reporting must show that they are complying with the rules of the "One China" policy (or the "One China" principle, as Beijing more commonly refers to it) when applying for visa renewal. The interviewee added that there is an agreement between Beijing and Tokyo specifying rules on how to write about Taiwan. This includes, for instance, not referring to Taiwan as a country or as a government, but merely mentioning its authorities, as well as not showing the national flag of Taiwan. When these features do occur, the Chinese embassy are usually quick to lodge complaints to the Japanese side. The interviewee also conveyed how their team of journalists in Taiwan experienced eavesdropping and sabotage by the Chinese side, in the form of blocked communication lines and interference in text messages. Further, when conducting interviews with representatives from the Taiwanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Chinese embassy in Tokyo lodges complaints to the Japanese headquarters of the media outlets. Similar sabotage was reportedly experienced in Shanghai, where local authorities constantly troubled them with tax issues. Other instances of obstruction occur when Chinese delegations in Japan cancel press conferences when journalists known for being critical of the Taiwan issue are to attend.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶² Yang, 2018-08-30; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, *Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hua Chunying's Regular Press Conference on August 30, 2018*.

¹⁶³ Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Japan, 2020-03-31.

¹⁶⁴ Interviewees No. 4, 6 and 7. See Section 9. List of Interviews.

¹⁶⁵ Interviewee No. 6. See Section 9. List of Interviews.

¹⁶⁶ Interviewee No. 7. See Section 9. List of Interviews.

¹⁶⁷ Interviewee No. 7. See Section 9. List of Interviews.

In general, PRC influence via Japanese media still seems to be rather limited. Although Chinese state-linked actors are seeking inroads to the messaging about mainland China in Japanese media, reports suggest that the Japanese public has been highly resistant to these efforts.¹⁶⁸ This is consistent with perceptions that have been conveyed in conversations with other Japanese scholars and Taiwanese representatives in Japan. Similar perceptions have also been noted with regard to the impact of the various Chinese cultural and friendship associations that operate in Japan.

3.4 Japan's reactions on the international stage 2016-2021

On the international arena, Japan has in general been a steady source of support for Taiwan. Tokyo has become increasingly vocal about Taiwan's role in the international community. Although it primarily focuses on regional security and stability, Tokyo is also a positive force for increased inclusion of Taiwan in various organisations and institutions on both regional and global levels.

3.4.1 International organisations

The blocking of Taiwan's participation now extends to both international government organisations and non-governmental international organisations. As such, there are hundreds of various organisations from which Taiwan is excluded or manages to join through the use of different nomenclatures. They are too numerous to list and examine within the scope of this report. However, to discern Japan's role in Taiwan's quest to join international organisations, this section takes a brief look at Japan's stance in three prominent examples, WHO, ICAO and INTERPOL. These organisations have all attracted headlines in recent years for excluding Taiwan. They may provide preliminary indications of the potential support Japan gives to Taiwan.

World Health Organization (WHO): Taiwan has been excluded from participating as an observer at the WHO's annual meeting, WHA, for five consecutive years. For the past three years, from 2019 to 2021, Japan has voiced public support for Taiwan's participation in the assembly as an observer.¹⁶⁹ Indeed, the Chinese Embassy in Japan protested Japan's support of Taiwan.¹⁷⁰

International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO): Since 2016, Taiwan has been blocked from participating in ICAO's triennial meetings. In 2019, Japan joined in supporting Taiwan's bid, being part of a first-ever joint communique

¹⁶⁸ Ichihara (2020); Stewart (2020); Glosserman, 2020-08-11.

¹⁶⁹ Aspinwall (2019); Focus Taiwan, 2020-05-11; Japan Times, 2021-05-11.

¹⁷⁰ Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Japan, 2021-06-21.

from foreign ministers of the G7 nations in support of Taiwan's participation in the organisation.¹⁷¹

International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL): Taiwan has been denied participation in INTERPOL since 1984, due to the PRC's arrival. Ahead of the 88th INTERPOL meeting, in 2019, Japan was one of several countries that voiced support for Taiwan during the annual conference.¹⁷² The 89th General Assembly meeting in 2020 was postponed because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Reportedly, Japan is part of a democratic coalition that meets a few times a year to discuss policies for promoting Taiwan's participation in important international organisations.¹⁷³ Other countries include the United States, Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom, the EU, and some individual EU countries, such as Germany, France, and Italy. Finally, Japan now also formally endorses Taiwan's endeavour to join CPTPP. For the first time, in 2019, the Japanese government officially confirmed its support for Taipei's bid to join the trade bloc.¹⁷⁴

3.4.2 Japan's multilateral engagement with Taiwan

As many international institutions do not allow Taiwanese participation, Japan and Taiwan are deepening relations via other multilateral settings. A main platform for cooperation is the Global Cooperation and Training Framework (GCTF), which functions as a platform for Taiwan to share and exchange expertise with partners from multiple countries around the world. The platform brings together participants from governments, civil society, and the private sector. It provides a space in which to share information with Taiwan on a wide range of areas such as disaster relief, law enforcement, public health, cybersecurity, energy efficiency, media literacy, and good governance.¹⁷⁵ The United States and Taiwan launched the GCTF in 2015; Japan joined later, in 2019, as a full member. Together with the US and Taiwan, since joining, Japan has co-hosted all GCTF workshops and attended the annual joint committee planning meetings.¹⁷⁶

Japan also engages in various forms of trilateral cooperation involving Taiwan. In particular, this involves the constellation involving the United States, where the three sides explore cooperation in the fields of both economy and security. In 2020, under the GCTF, Japan, Taiwan and the United States held a virtual conference to discuss digital piracy prevention and protection of trade secrets.¹⁷⁷ In 2021, lawmakers from the three sides held the first edition of the Trilateral Strategic Dialogue, a closed virtual meeting, to discuss economic and security issues.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of China (Taiwan), 2019-10-05.

¹⁷² Chen, Kelvin, 2021-08-19.

¹⁷³ Glaser et al. (2020): 27.

¹⁷⁴ Taipei Times, 2019-02-15.

¹⁷⁵ Global Cooperation & Training Framework, *Mission*, n.d.

¹⁷⁶ Global Cooperation & Training Framework, *Mission*, n.d.

¹⁷⁷ Taiwan Today, 2020-10-16.

¹⁷⁸ Focus Taiwan, 2021-07-29.

Participating in the meeting, former prime minister Shinzo Abe called for solidarity among democratic countries in facing a rising China, and endorsed Taiwan's participation in international organisations and the CPTPP. On the security side, Japan, Taiwan and the United States have in 2020 participated in the Trilateral Indo-Pacific Security Dialogue, which involved an opening statement by President Tsai.¹⁷⁹ Reportedly, since 2017, the three militaries have agreed to share military aircraft codes to help distinguish friendly from potentially hostile aircraft.¹⁸⁰

In 2021, the three sides expanded their cooperation in the field of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief by adding the United Kingdom to the group.¹⁸¹ Japan also co-hosts or joins and involves more countries in cybersecurity training programs and cyber exercises with the United States and Taiwan.¹⁸² Finally, in a notable development, Japan and the United States have reportedly undertaken war games in joint military exercises pertaining to a possible Taiwan contingency.¹⁸³ US-Japan table-top war games and joint exercises have expanded beyond the South China and East China Seas to include the threat to Taiwan, in which the supposed goal is a coordinated war plan for the latter.

3.4.3 Statements in multilateral setting on Taiwan's security

As previously noted, the Suga administration has made several notable statements pertaining to the security of Taiwan. This has also occurred in Tokyo's multilateral engagements. In 2021, senior Japanese government officials committed to unusual joint statements concerning Taiwan's security. The first joint statement to include such language came in March, during the "2+2" meeting between US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, Japanese Minister for Foreign Affairs Toshimitsu Motegi, and Japanese Minister of Defense Nobuo Kishi. The two sides issued a joint statement that "underscored the importance of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait".¹⁸⁴ Reportedly, Minister Kishi confirmed during the meeting that Japan and the US would work closely together in the event of the use of military force against Taiwan.¹⁸⁵

A month later, then Prime Minister Suga and US President Joe Biden issued a similar statement, saying that the two sides "underscore the importance of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait and encourage the peaceful resolution of cross-strait issues".¹⁸⁶ This was the first time in more than half a century that Taiwan was mentioned in a joint statement by the leaders of Japan and the US. The following month, in May, Japan and EU issued a joint statement that included

¹⁷⁹ Office of the President Republic of China (Taiwan), 2020-12-08.

¹⁸⁰ Creery et al., 2021-07-01.

¹⁸¹ Eldridge, (2021).

¹⁸² Koshino (2021): 54.

¹⁸³ Creery et al., 2021-07-01.

¹⁸⁴ U.S. Department of State, 2021-03-16.

¹⁸⁵ Chang (2021a).

¹⁸⁶ The White House, 2021-04-16.

an identical mention of Taiwan, marking the first time the two sides jointly brought up Taiwan.¹⁸⁷ Only weeks later, the same phrasing showed up again in a joint statement following a meeting between the foreign and defense ministries of Japan and Australia, also the first time the two countries talked jointly about Taiwan.¹⁸⁸ For Japan, however, joint statements referring to Taiwan did not stop there. At the G7 summit in June 2021, the same reference to peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait arose in the group's communique, the first time in its history that concern was expressed over Taiwan. Apparently, Japan and the United States were driving forces behind the inclusion of the statement.¹⁸⁹ It is worth noting that leaders from South Korea, India, and Australia also participated in the G7 summit, and were thus also part of the communique referring to Taiwan. Furthermore, following a trilateral meeting between vice foreign ministers of the United States, Japan, and South Korea, the discussions reportedly also focused on the importance of not disrupting peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait.¹⁹⁰

The number of democratic countries that have expressed their concern for Taiwan must be regarded as a significant boost for its government. Considering the usual caution of Japanese diplomatic policy, especially on such a contentious issue as Taiwan, the diplomatic activity from Tokyo is exceptional. Unsurprisingly, the statements drew Beijing's ire on each occasion. Chinese embassies and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Beijing immediately accused Japan and their counterparts of "interfer[ing] in internal affairs" and undermining international peace and stability.¹⁹¹ Japan was called a "strategic vassal" of the United States.¹⁹²

3.5 Summary: Japan-Taiwan

Beijing's efforts to limit Japan-Taiwan ties revolve largely around constantly condemning Japanese actions that engage Taiwan in a positive manner. By vocally drawing red lines that it wants Japanese actors to respect, the PRC continuously exerts pressure on various sectors in Japan. Influence operations, such as covert exertion of pressure on media and local governments, indeed take place. Chinese actors are seeking not only to reduce the domestic support for Taiwan but also to oppose overarching Japanese-Taiwanese relations. Yet, influence activities that indirectly affect and shape the current space and status of Taiwan in Japan are seemingly not making deep marks there. Although they are present, they are seemingly thin and not nestled into the Japanese public's awareness. It is difficult to pinpoint the exact reasons for this, but two explanations may be found in the limited level of overseas Chinese in Japan, and the tense historical relationship

¹⁸⁷ European Parliament, 2021-05-27.

¹⁸⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2021-06-09.

¹⁸⁹ Wang (2021).

¹⁹⁰ U.S. Department of State, 2021-07-20.

¹⁹¹ Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Japan, 2021-03-17; Sharp, 2021-04-17; Xinhua, 2021-05-28; Kyodo News, 2021-06-09; BBC News, 2021-06-14.

¹⁹² Wong, 2021-03-17.

between China and Japan. To this end, Japanese society and institutions may have a high resistance against Chinese influence operations. Therefore, the most outstanding efforts of the CCP to isolate Japanese interaction with Taiwan consist of reacting angrily against Japanese moves and statements in attempts to pre-empt further engagements.

It is notable, however, that the recent flurry of Japanese statements in support of Taiwan have in turn mostly resulted in angry statements by various Chinese spokespersons. So far, Beijing has not orchestrated any sanctions on Tokyo for deepening its relations with Taiwan. This may indicate a cautious and hesitant approach on the part of the Chinese government, which may not want to push Japan even further away from Beijing and ever deeper into a global anti-Chinese coalition.

Beijing's efforts to constrain Japanese-Taiwanese relations have become frustrated. Recent years have seen a gradual but steady development towards robust, albeit still unofficial, Japan-Taiwan ties. Coming from the highest echelons in Tokyo, the succession of statements and moves that not only underscore the importance of Taiwan's security but also publicly connects it to Japan's own security is highly notable. Considering Japan's traditionally cautious approach in diplomacy, this development on such a sensitive issue as Taiwan makes it more exceptional. Tokyo's commitment to Taiwan is becoming increasingly visible both domestically and on the international scene.

This shift needs, of course, to be placed in context. It is part of a general tendency, where Japanese-Chinese relations are becoming increasingly tense, which is affected by growing frictions between Washington and Beijing. Deteriorating US-China relations have nudged Japan, one of the United States' closest allies, into an even more cautious approach in its opposition to Beijing. It also reflects growing anti-China sentiments in Japan, a development that is part of the LDP government's effort to move Japan in a more nationalistic direction. The previous Abe administration did try to harness ties with Beijing. But events including the detention of Japanese researchers on the mainland, growing Chinese assertiveness in the East China Sea, and Beijing's crackdown in Hong Kong and Xinjiang, have made the PRC increasingly unpopular in Japan. As such, Japan has increasingly been stressing democratic values and connecting them to the security of the Indo-Pacific. Japan's latter move has been years in the making. Japan's strengthening of its support for Taiwan is thus part of its overarching direction, as are the strong people-to-people ties that further underpin these shifts. In addition, these developments take place against the background of what are historically complicated and conflict-ridden Sino-Japanese relations. Thus, although economic ties between Japan and mainland China are substantial, the Japanese public and the country's various institutions are unsusceptible to China's efforts to propagate its own narratives.

To this end, Japan has in general a seemingly high resistance to the CCP's coercive actions. Coupled with a close affinity to Taiwan, a growing wariness towards the

PRC has only buttressed Japan in seeking deeper ties with the democratic island. Therefore, Beijing's pressure to limit Taiwan's presence in Japan has little to show for itself. The reported attempts to influence both media reporting and local politicians on the issue of Taiwan have seemingly been of no avail to Beijing. On the contrary, there are more moves to support Taiwan.

In conclusion, Japan's resistance to Chinese efforts to isolate Taiwan thus far seem to have rendered Beijing's efforts largely unsuccessful. Tokyo may instead have undertaken some careful calibration to signal its concern about Taiwan's security to both Beijing and Taipei. Tokyo has become more prone to openly acknowledging Taiwan's strategic role for Japan. This stance may stem from Tokyo's strategic calculation about its own security in the face of a growing sense of alert over a more powerful and authoritarian Chinese government, as well as from a general sense of concern for and affinity with a democratic partner that is right at its doorstep. There are nevertheless clear boundaries to how far Tokyo can go in its relations with Taipei. Japan is cautious and has little interest in altering the unofficial relationship with Taiwan. However, to the dismay of the CCP, Tokyo's recent discourse on Taiwan may be laying the foundation for future policy changes as it moves closer to it.

4 South Korea – Taiwan

The second case study chapter examines Chinese efforts to isolate Taiwan in South Korea, and the Korean responses to these activities. The Taiwan issue scarcely appears in South Korean politics. However, when it does surface, Chinese envoys maintain constant pressure on Seoul by condemning actions that provide operational space for Taiwan. Thus, similar to the case of Japan, China constantly police activities pertaining to Taiwan in South Korea. Yet, unlike Japan, the government in Seoul is in general much more reluctant to touch the Taiwan issue. South Korea has tiptoed around the issue and has often refrained from extending any explicit support to Taiwan. To this end, Seoul calibrates its interests between the United States and China.

4.1 Overview of South Korea-Taiwan relations

Taiwan does not enjoy the same sense of closeness with South Korea as it does with Japan. As is often the case, the shadow of the PRC looms heavily over the relationship. There are important economic exchanges between the two sides. Yet, although there are no deep conflicts marring their ties, a sense of distance runs through the relationship, starting with the diplomatic breakup in the 1990s and continuing with industrial rivalry as well as South Korean recently close, albeit ambivalent, engagements with the PRC.

South Korea and Taiwan, as the Republic of Korea (ROK) and the Republic of China (ROC), respectively, established formal diplomatic relations in 1948. Facing similar security threats, the two anti-communist governments cooperated closely throughout the Cold War. At the same time, the two communist regimes, the PRC and North Korea, also pursued close cooperation. The two sides signed a number of agreements in fields such as aviation, trade, and culture, as well as maritime and air transport.¹⁹³ During this time, the Korea Trade Investment Promotion Agency and the China External Trade Development Council held annual talks, while the Taiwanese and South Korean trade ministers met on a regular basis.¹⁹⁴

In 1992, Seoul normalised its relations with the PRC, thus ending official ties with Taiwan. This severely strained the South Korean-Taiwanese relationship. The Taiwanese public felt betrayed by the Korean side, causing strong anti-Korean sentiments in Taiwan.¹⁹⁵ Consequently, much of Taiwan's political and economic cooperation with South Korea ended. Bilateral trade slowed significantly, and

¹⁹³ Hahm and Song (2021): 223.

¹⁹⁴ Hahm and Song (2021): 223.

¹⁹⁵ Heo and Kim (2012): 72.

Taiwan undertook several negative actions against Korean products and companies. For instance, Taipei revoked the common Aviation Agreement, thus resulting in a substantial decline in Taiwanese visitors to South Korea.¹⁹⁶ Moreover, Taiwan increased its anti-dumping lawsuits against South Korean products, while excluding South Korean companies from Taiwanese subway construction projects.¹⁹⁷ In short, the overall South Korean-Taiwanese relationship deteriorated significantly.

However, Seoul and Taipei maintained a minimum of exchanges. In 1993, the two sides resumed contact by dispatching representatives to one another and thus established unofficial relations. Under the “New Relations Framework Agreement”, the Korean Mission in Taipei and the Taipei Mission in Korea were installed. Moreover, in 1996, Taiwanese and South Korean legislators set up an association of goodwill, and in 1999 Seoul sent a rescue team to assist Taiwan after an earthquake had hit the island.¹⁹⁸

Since the early 2000s, Taiwanese-South Korean relations have improved. Private-sector networks in economic, cultural, and educational exchanges have played an important role in this progress. To this end, the vast popularity of South Korean cultural products, such as music and TV dramas in Taiwan have contributed greatly.¹⁹⁹ In light of increased travel, the two governments re-established the Civil Aviation Agreement, in 2004. Today there are ten direct flights between major cities in South Korea and Taipei, while the number of mutual visitors between Taiwan and South Korea reached 2.5 million in 2019.²⁰⁰ Other indicators underscoring growing people-to-people exchanges include the 2012 agreement to extend the permitted length of stay without visa to 90 days, as well as the 2018 MoU to expand the Working Holiday Program quota from 600 to 800 people per year.²⁰¹

The expansion of trade flows also plays a key role in Taiwanese-South Korean relations. In 2019, total bilateral trade amounted to almost USD 35 billion.²⁰² This makes South Korea Taiwan’s fifth-largest trading partner, representing about 5.6 per cent of Taiwan’s total trade, while Taiwan is South Korea’s sixth-largest trade partner, accounting for 3 per cent of the total trade in South Korea.²⁰³ South Korea is Taiwan’s sixth-largest export destination, as Taiwan’s exports to South Korea reached almost USD 17 billion in 2019.²⁰⁴ Main exports include items such as integrated circuits, petroleum and oil (except crude oil) extracted from bituminous minerals, and transmission receivers used for radio broadcasts or televisions.²⁰⁵ As

¹⁹⁶ Poong, Hwei-luan (2012).

¹⁹⁷ Heo and Kim (2012): 72.

¹⁹⁸ Heo and Kim (2012): 72.

¹⁹⁹ Hahm and Song (2021): 224.

²⁰⁰ Hahm and Song (2021): 231; Taipei Mission in Korea, n.d.

²⁰¹ Hahm and Song (2021): 231.

²⁰² Ministry of Economic Affairs Bureau of Foreign Trade, 2020-05-18.

²⁰³ Ministry of Economic Affairs Bureau of Foreign Trade, 2020-05-18.

²⁰⁴ Ministry of Economic Affairs Bureau of Foreign Trade, 2020-05-18.

²⁰⁵ Ministry of Economic Affairs Bureau of Foreign Trade, 2020-05-18.

for imports, South Korea is Taiwan's fourth-largest source of imports, with a total worth of almost USD 18 billion.²⁰⁶ Main import items consist of integrated circuits, petroleum and oil derived from bituminous minerals (excluding crude oil), machines designed for manufacturing semiconductor crystals or wafers, semiconductor devices, and equipment used for integrated circuits and flat displays.²⁰⁷ As such, the inter- and intra-industry trade between Taiwan and South Korea is vast.

The investment flows between the two sides are modest. Since 1952, Taiwan's cumulative investment in South Korea has totalled almost USD 1.6 billion, while South Korean cumulative investments in Taiwan during the same period amounted to almost USD 1.3 billion.²⁰⁸ Here, too, the main sectors for investment often mirror each other, including electronic component manufacturing, finance and insurance, computer and electronics products, and optical products manufacturing.²⁰⁹

Overall, Taiwan and South Korea are two like-minded democracies with similar national developments. Yet, they are two democracies that have remained distant from one another with regard to political and security cooperation, notwithstanding their strong economic links and even growing cultural appreciation.

4.2 General Chinese influence in South Korea

Similar to the case of Japan, reports of Chinese influence activities in South Korea are scarce. In fact, noticeable Chinese efforts to mould narratives and policies in South Korea are reported even less than in Japan. The Chinese influence is nevertheless present, as Beijing keeps pushing South Korea to accommodate its interests.

When discussing Chinese influence in South Korea, it is impossible to avoid mentioning Seoul's experience of Chinese sanctions against it following the deployment of the US Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) anti-ballistic missile defense system on its soil in 2016. Beijing imposed bans and sanctions that cost the South Korean economy over USD 7.5 billion in economic losses.²¹⁰ The Chinese government closed numerous South Korean Lotte Department Stores (a Korean retail company) on mainland China, banned Chinese tour groups from travelling to South Korea, and restricted imports of South Korean products such as cosmetics, K-pop music, and automobiles.²¹¹ South Korea's uneasy experience over THAAD has made policymakers in Seoul palpably wary of further provoking Beijing.

²⁰⁶ Ministry of Economic Affairs Bureau of Foreign Trade, 2020-05-18.

²⁰⁷ Ministry of Economic Affairs Bureau of Foreign Trade, 2020-05-18.

²⁰⁸ Ministry of Economic Affairs Bureau of Foreign Trade, 2020-05-18.

²⁰⁹ Ministry of Economic Affairs Bureau of Foreign Trade, 2020-05-18.

²¹⁰ Chang (2021b).

²¹¹ Chang (2021b).

Less overt Chinese influence activities in South Korea are also taking place. The country's leading role in high-tech industries makes it an attractive target for Chinese actors seeking to enhance their capabilities. Their methods range from recruitment of skilled workers to cyber hacking of computer systems. Corporate espionage constitutes a major headache for prominent South Korean enterprises, with many attacks traceable to Chinese hackers.²¹² Reportedly, there is evidence that some of these hackers are linked to the Chinese government or are part of the PLA.²¹³ According to South Korea's National Intelligence Service (NIS), between 2015 and 2019, 123 technology leaks from South Korea were identified, of which 83 went to China.²¹⁴ Moreover, in its 2021 annual report, the NIS-affiliated National Cyber Security Center (NCSC) predicted that nation-state government-backed actors would "intensively steal information on South Korea's pending security issues and government policies" in the coming year.²¹⁵ Although not elaborating on which countries it was referring to, the NCSC also noted an increase during the first half of the year of attacks targeting private companies and research institutes in high-tech industries.²¹⁶

There are 22 Confucius Institutes in South Korea, which is more than in any other country.²¹⁷ As previously mentioned, these learning centres are controversial across the world for teaching discourses that are aligned with the Chinese government. They have drawn criticism in South Korea, where activists have raged against the cultural institutes as "brainwashing tools".²¹⁸ Coupled with the Confucius Institutes in South Korea are Chinese student associations who are propagating views consistent with the CCP's. Other means that Beijing uses to convey messages include publishing articles in South Korean media, as well as visiting local governments to hold lectures, which promote a positive view of the PRC for the South Korean public and its institutions.²¹⁹

United front organisations promoting Chinese interests are also active in South Korea. The key united front organisation, China Council for the Promotion of Peaceful National Reunification (中国和平统一促进会, CCPPR), operates a division in South Korea. This also includes affiliated branches, such as the Chinese Association for the Promotion of Peaceful Reunification of the Overseas Chinese in Seoul, South Korea (韩国首尔华侨华人中国和平统一促进会), the Hanwha

²¹² Ge, 2021-03-03.

²¹³ Ge, 2021-03-03.

²¹⁴ Ge, 2021-03-03.

²¹⁵ Ji, 2021-12-05.

²¹⁶ Ji, 2021-12-05.

²¹⁷ Park and Ryall, 2021-06-10.

²¹⁸ Park and Ryall, 2021-06-10.

²¹⁹ Consulate-General of the People's Republic of China in Gwangju, 2021-02-09; Consulate-General of the People's Republic of China in Gwangju, 2020-11-19; Consulate-General of the People's Republic of China in Gwangju, 2020-09-14; Consulate-General of the People's Republic of China in Gwangju, 2019-12-07.

China Association for the Promotion of Peaceful Reunification (韩华中国和平统一促进联合) and Korean Overseas Chinese and Chinese Association for the Promotion of Peaceful Reunification of China (韩国济州华侨华人中国和平统一促进会).²²⁰ Another influential organisation is the China-Republic of Korea Friendship Association (中国韩国友好协会, CRKFA), which is the South Korean branch of Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries (中国人民对外友好协会, CPAFFC).²²¹ Other organisations promoting Chinese-Korean ties include Korea-China Friendship Association (韩中友好协会), Korea-China Cultural Association (韩中文化协会), Korea-China Association for Cultural Exchange (韩中文化友好协会), Seoul Overseas Chinese Association (汉城华侨协会) and Korea-China Leaders Society (21 世纪韩中交流协会).²²² Thus, the PRC is indeed undertaking united front work in South Korea.

Finally, there are indications that Chinese influence operations are being carried out online in South Korea. Reportedly, there is a high prevalence of suspicions that Chinese “agents” are seeking to manipulate online opinion by spreading views and content that are supportive of China’s government and trying to sow social division among South Koreans.²²³ One strategy is to crowd ongoing debates in online communities in order to promote ideas aligned with the CCP.²²⁴

4.3 PRC influence on Taiwan in South Korea: incidents 2016–2021

There are very few reports of having identified PRC influence operations, in South Korea, in which Beijing seeks to constrain South Korean ties with Taiwan. Furthermore, unlike in Japan, where there have been several instances when both government and non-government representatives were pushing for closer ties with Taiwan, this has not been the case in South Korea. For reasons to be discussed below, the South Korean government is seemingly more careful than Japan’s in its approach to sensitive issues pertaining to China in general and regarding Taiwan in particular. Thus, Beijing has openly policed Korean actors’ engagement with Taiwan, in South Korea, in a few identified incidents. At the same time, pro-active influence activities to constrain the operational space that Taiwan has in South Korea also seem scarce, as if restrictions on Taiwanese support almost organically stay in check.

²²⁰ China Council for the Promotion of Peaceful National Reunification, 2008-10-22; China Council for the Promotion of Peaceful National Reunification, 2012-06-11; Korean Overseas Chinese and Chinese Association for the Promotion of Peaceful Reunification of China Website, n.d.

²²¹ Chinese People’s Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries, n.d.

²²² Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in the Republic of Korea, n.d.

²²³ Tae-jun Kang (2020).

²²⁴ Tae-jun Kang (2020).

Even so, it is worth highlighting those incidents in which the PRC has sought to police South Korean behaviour or actively promote Beijing's Taiwan policy in South Korea. An example of the latter occurred in January 2019, following President Xi's speech marking the 40th anniversary of issuing the "Letter to Compatriots in Taiwan". Both the Chinese Embassy in Seoul and the Consulate-General in Jeju arranged respective symposiums to commemorate its publication. In the Seoul symposium, then ambassador Qiu Guohong held a speech for several friendship association groups and media representatives.²²⁵ The attendees agreed upon the importance of advancing peaceful reunification of the motherland and fighting separatist activities, as well as the need to not only strengthen the overseas Chinese groups and the internal unity among Chinese citizens in South Korea, but also to strengthen the "Chinese heart" among the Taiwanese. In Jeju, similar types of attendees and topics were also present in the symposium arranged by the Consulate-General there. The participants emphasised the need for overseas Chinese in South Korea to strive for reunification with, and the great rejuvenation of, the Chinese nation.²²⁶

The Chinese Embassy in Seoul has also been active in monitoring publications in South Korean media. In August 2021, Ambassador Xing Haiming wrote an article in *The Korea Times*, refuting an article signed by Joseph Wu, Taiwan's Minister of Foreign Affairs, which the same newspaper had published a few days earlier and in which he called on South Korea to support Taiwanese participation in "international living space".²²⁷ Reflecting Beijing's opposition to Taiwanese activities abroad, Ambassador Xing designated the article a "blatant provocation of the internationally recognised norm of 'China'." The ambassador also pointed out for Seoul that the "Joint Communiqué on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Korea" constitutes the "basis for the development of political relations between China and South Korea".²²⁸ The article concludes with a message conveying a "hope that all sectors of the Korean society, including the media, will not forget the original intention of establishing diplomatic relations, adhere to the correct position on the Taiwan issue, jointly safeguard the political foundation of China-South Korea relations, and ensure that bilateral relations are stable, long-term, and better".²²⁹ Indeed, this can be interpreted as a veiled threat against Seoul's contemplation of venturing deeper into its engagement with Taipei. Korean media, however, has also published articles by Taiwanese representatives on other occasions. For instance, in

²²⁵ Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Korea, 2019-01-25.

²²⁶ Consulate-General of the People's Republic of China in Jeju, 2019-01-18.

²²⁷ Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Korea, 2021-08-31.

²²⁸ Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Korea, 2021-08-31.

²²⁹ Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Korea, 2021-08-31.

2019 and 2020, at least a handful of articles in which Taiwanese ministers advocate for Taiwan's increased international participation appeared in Korean media.²³⁰

Early in 2021, Ambassador Xing had made similar public remarks to the administration in Seoul. In February, Ambassador Xing convened a meeting with the Korea-China Friendship Association, in which he called upon the government in Seoul to respect China's position on Taiwan.²³¹ The statement came amidst growing US-China tensions, and functioned as a reminder to Seoul ahead of the May summit meeting between US President Joe Biden and South Korea's President Moon Jae-in (more about this summit in the international section, below).

Beijing has also intervened to correct actors who act on Taiwan, to the dismay of the PRC, in international events held in South Korea. In October 2019, for example, Seoul organised the International Conference on Computer Vision. During the event, Beijing pressured the event's organiser to revise a slideshow that enraged the Chinese side because Taiwan was listed as a country. Beijing demanded that the designation be switched from "country" to "country/region". The incident led the Taiwan Ministry of Foreign Affairs to protest against Chinese actions and request that the event's organiser, the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE), one of the largest associations of electrical engineers in the world, respect academic neutrality and resist Chinese intimidation, which only served the purpose of compromising Taiwanese sovereignty.²³² In December 2021, South Korea made a last-minute cancellation of a scheduled virtual speech by Taiwan's digital minister Audrey Tang at the Fourth Global Policy Conference in South Korea, just hours before she was expected to speak. The South Korean government's Fourth Industrial Revolution Committee said that "various aspects of cross-strait issues were taken into consideration" for the cancellation, clearly indicating Pressure from Beijing.²³³

Another area in which Beijing's pressure has been felt is in the widely popular South Korean entertainment industry. In the beginning of 2016, Chou Tzu-yu, a then 16 year old Taiwanese singer in the Korean pop band, *Twice*, held a Taiwanese national flag while performing on a Korean TV show. An immense pressure campaign followed, leading to a ban on Chou's presence in nearly all TV shows in mainland China, as well as demands from Beijing that her Korean management agency, JYP Entertainment, refund the losses from those TV shows.²³⁴ Chou was eventually made to read a scripted apology in the media in

²³⁰ Wu, 2019-09-05; Lin, 2019-09-18; Taipei Mission in Korea, 2020-05-11; Taipei Mission in Korea, 2020-09-22; Wu, 2020-09-15.

²³¹ The Korea Herald, 2021-02-02.

²³² Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of China, *Instances of China's Interference with Taiwan's International presence*, 2019.

²³³ Chung, Lawrence, 2021-12-21.

²³⁴ Chang and Yang (2020): 319.

which she tearfully accepted the notion of “One China”.²³⁵ JYP Entertainment also apologised and suspended the artist’s activities.²³⁶ Simultaneously, Korean mobile network operator LG Uplus halted its online commercials, featuring Chou, for Chinese Huawei’s Y6 smartphone.²³⁷ Following the turbulence, entertainment company CJ E&M, which holds the major South Korean Mnet Asian Music Awards, removed a section on its homepage that categorised Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau as independent countries, and by doing so succumbed to Beijing’s “One China” principle.²³⁸

Apart from these instances, frictions pertaining to the Taiwan issue are scarce in South Korea. Unlike Japan, the administration in Seoul has refrained from involving Taiwan in any national white papers. Neither have any motions in which politicians call for actions regarding Taiwan been detected in the South Korean parliament. However, in a conversation with a South Korean scholar working at a prominent university, suspicions surfaced that Chinese Embassy staff were in contact with members of the National Assembly in South Korea. The scholar believed that economically favourable deals nudged some politicians to enact policies in favour of China. Also, according to the scholar, the Chinese Embassy approaches South Korean researchers by offering them free travel to China, which in exchange “moulds” academics to write in a friendly manner about, or stay away from, sensitive topics such as Taiwan. Moreover, the same scholar also believed that the embassy asks some Chinese university students in South Korea to summarise certain lectures.²³⁹ Again, topics such as Taiwan are interesting for them to monitor.

4.4 South Korea’s reactions on the international stage 2016–2021

Seoul navigates carefully between Beijing and Washington in the international arena. Although South Korea remains a US treaty ally, the Korean government has increasingly come to calibrate its interests between the two major powers. This balancing act is also manifested in Seoul’s stance on issues involving Taiwan. Even though Seoul has participated in a few noteworthy statements pertaining to Taiwan’s security, the government has also gone out of its way to ensure that it avoids upsetting Beijing.

²³⁵ Chang and Yang (2020): 319.

²³⁶ The Korea Herald, 2016-01-20.

²³⁷ Kim, 2016-01-18.

²³⁸ Yoon, 2017-11-21.

²³⁹ Interviewee No. 9. See Section 9. List of Interviews.

4.4.1 International organisations

Here, we take a brief look into South Korea's stance on Taiwan's bid for participation in the same three prominent international organisations as those discussed in the chapter on Japan-Taiwan relations above. This provides us with preliminary indications of Seoul's role and potential support of Taiwan in international organisations.

World Health Organization (WHO): South Korea has declined to advocate Taiwan's participation as an observer in the assembly of WHO. In 2020, the US Congress asked Seoul to lend its support. However, reports suggest that South Korea was budged by a phone conversation between Xi and Moon one week prior to the annual meeting of WHA.²⁴⁰ One year later, in 2021, the G7 issued a communiqué calling for the resumption of Taiwan's observer status in the WHA. South Korea participated in the G7 summit as a guest, but was not part of the communiqué.²⁴¹

International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO): The ICAO convenes in triennial meetings. Taiwan has been declined participation in the meeting since 2016. In 2019, South Korea showed support for the inclusion of Taiwan in the ICAO.²⁴²

International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL): No reports have been identified that indicate that Seoul has given its support for Taiwan's inclusion in INTERPOL.

South Korea is not a member of CPTPP. Hence, it has not taken any position on Taiwan's bid to be part of the regional trade pact. In general, Seoul is relatively cautious in its international stances, particularly concerning Taiwan. For instance, unlike Japan, South Korea has seemingly not participated in the democratic coalition that convenes on a quarterly basis to discuss ways to increase Taiwanese participation in key global organisations in future.²⁴³

4.4.2 South Korea's multilateral engagement with Taiwan

Given Taiwan's broad exclusion from global institutions, its engagement with countries in other multilateral channels is key for the island's development. As mentioned above, the GCTF provides a useful platform for Taiwan to exchange expertise with a variety of actors in a wide span of areas. The platform's website lists South Korea among its 96 participating countries. It is difficult to discern the scope of South Korea's participation, but, at the very least, South Korean

²⁴⁰ Pulse News, 2020-05-15; Chang (2021b).

²⁴¹ Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, 2021-05-05; Kwon, 2021-06-13.

²⁴² Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of China (Taiwan), 2019-10-05.

²⁴³ Glaser et al. (2020): 27.

representatives have not only joined in workshops on issues such as anti-money laundering and IP protection, but likely in many other areas, also.²⁴⁴

In line with Seoul's cautious approach to Taiwan, we have not found that the Korean government has had much engagement with Taiwan in the international setting. On the contrary, Seoul seemingly refrains from engaging with Taiwan in multilateral forums in the way Japan has done. Apart from when the Taiwan issue is raised during summits with other countries (more on this below), no substantial multilateral engagement between South Korea and Taiwan, at least not publicly, has been found. Some reports suggest, however, that Taiwan's Indigenous Defense Submarine (IDS) project has involved more than 250 foreign advisors and engineers.²⁴⁵ Reportedly, apart from advisors and engineers from the United States, Germany, Italy, and Japan, South Korean engineers have also taken part in the submarine development project.²⁴⁶ It is not possible to verify these reports, but it can be speculated that South Korean participation may be in project and logistics management, related shipbuilding technologies, and education of personnel.²⁴⁷

4.4.3 Statements in multilateral setting on Taiwan's security

Although the South Korean government pursues its stance concerning Taiwan with much caution, the Seoul administration did take part in some notable statements in 2021. Indeed, the joint statement released after the US-ROK summit, in May 2021, between President Biden and President Moon drew the most attention. While not explicitly mentioning China by name, the two leaders addressed sensitive issues related to Beijing, including a stand on the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, also known as the Quad (a security dialogue that Beijing perceives as a US-led initiative to curb Chinese influence), and security in the Taiwan Strait. This was the first time a US-ROK joint statement included a reference to Taiwan.

In the statement, the two countries "acknowledge the importance of open, transparent, and inclusive regional multilateralism including the Quad".²⁴⁸ With little speculation needed about whom it refers to, the statement underlined that "the United States and the Republic of Korea oppose all activities that undermine, destabilise, or threaten the rules-based international order and commit to maintaining an inclusive, free, and open Indo-Pacific."²⁴⁹ It then moved on to state that "we pledge to maintain peace and stability, lawful unimpeded commerce, and respect for international law, including freedom of navigation and overflight in the South China Sea and beyond".²⁵⁰ Finally, it touched on the most sensitive topic by saying

²⁴⁴ Taiwan Today, 2021-05-27; Taiwan Today, 2021-06-18.

²⁴⁵ Hsu, 2020-09-03.

²⁴⁶ Hsu, 2020-09-03; Biz Hankook, 2020-05-25.

²⁴⁷ Hsu, 2020-09-03.

²⁴⁸ The White House, 2021-05-21.

²⁴⁹ The White House, 2021-05-21.

²⁵⁰ The White House, 2021-05-21.

that “President Biden and President Moon emphasise the importance of preserving peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait. As democracies that value pluralism and individual liberty, we share our intent to promote human rights and rule of law issues, both at home and abroad”.²⁵¹

Beijing did not officially respond until three days later, when Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Zhao Lijian noted the statement in a press conference. Zhao stated that “the Taiwan question is China’s internal affair,” and urged Washington and Seoul to “speak and act prudentially on the Taiwan question and refrain from playing with fire”.²⁵² On the same day, in Seoul, Ambassador Xing Haiming took issue with the statement targeting Beijing. Xing pointed out that “there was no mention of China, but it’s not that [Beijing] is unaware it is targeting China. For instance, the Taiwan issue is an internal Chinese affair, but that was brought up”.²⁵³

However, more interestingly, there were other remarks following the joint statement, which indicated a toned-down reaction from Beijing as well as significant tiptoeing around the issue from the South Korean side. Even the day before reactions came from Beijing, First Vice Foreign Minister Choi Jong-kun sought to downplay the statement. Choi emphasised that it merely “represents the two leaders’ recognition that maintaining stability and peace in the Taiwan Strait is very important”, and that “it is the expression of our view that stability and peace in Taiwan also have a direct impact on our national interest”.²⁵⁴ The following day, Choi continued to stress neutrality and the fact that China was not mentioned in the joint statement, saying that “we did not specify China, and at the end of the day, it contains phrases in generalities that the regional peace and stability is important. From China’s standpoint, they will highly assess the point that the Republic of Korea did not specify China”.²⁵⁵ The day afterward, South Korean Foreign Minister Chung Eui-yong followed suit, stating that “our government has refrained from making specific comments about China’s internal affairs”.²⁵⁶ According to Chung, “We [the ROK government] are fully aware of the unique relations between China and Taiwan. Our government’s stance has not changed”, he said. “We’d like to reiterate that regional peace and stability is the common wish shared by everyone in the region”.²⁵⁷

Seoul’s overtures seemingly paid off. In a TV appearance a day later, Ambassador Xing declared, “the South Korean side had explained this to us, but from our

²⁵¹ The White House, 2021-05-21.

²⁵² Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, 2021-05-24.

²⁵³ The Korea Herald, 2021-05-25.

²⁵⁴ The Korea Herald, 2021-05-23.

²⁵⁵ The Korea Herald, 2021-05-24.

²⁵⁶ The Korea Herald, 2021-05-24.

²⁵⁷ The Korea Herald, 2021-05-25.

perspective, this is China's internal affair".²⁵⁸ Still, he noted Seoul's efforts to not directly mention China and its striving to respect Beijing's position, while admitting that Seoul had made significant efforts to keep China out of the joint statement. According to a Blue House (presidential residence) source, Beijing had an understanding of Seoul's position.²⁵⁹ Reportedly, Seoul and Beijing had maintained close consultations ahead of the US-ROK summit. Citing diplomatic sources in Seoul, media reports claimed that "China had been told about most of the summit agenda ahead of time".²⁶⁰ In fact, the government in South Korea is reported to have reached an agreement with Beijing to stay away from human rights issues in Xinjiang and Hong Kong in exchange for mentioning the Quad in the joint statement.²⁶¹ To what extent Taiwan was part of this agreement, however, remains unclear. Still, that the wording in the US-ROK statement raised concern among some Korean observers over Chinese economic retaliation against South Korea, speaks to the sense of unease of rocking the boat with Beijing.²⁶²

Soon after the US-ROK summit, President Moon was invited to the G7 summit, in June 2021. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the adopted summit communiqué included wording critical of China and the security of the Taiwan Strait, stating that "we underscore the importance of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait, and encourage the peaceful resolution of cross-strait issues".²⁶³ It is indeed noteworthy that South Korea was part of a G7 summit that issued such a statement referring to security in the Taiwan Strait. However, the South Korean government soon distanced itself somewhat from the communiqué, as government officials clarified that South Korea as a guest country did not participate in the draft process nor sign it.²⁶⁴ Moreover, Second Vice Foreign Minister Choi Jong-moon pointed out that Seoul had signed parts that highlighted values of democracy and human rights, while issues related to China were discussed at a geopolitical session at which South Korea was not a participant.²⁶⁵

The Chinese side had seemingly also applied pressure on Seoul prior to the G7 summit. Ahead of the summit, Ambassador Xing again made remarks in which he hoped relations with South Korea would be unaffected by US-China rivalry. Thus, he said, Beijing would "like South Korea to take China's positions into account and be a little more considerate, regarding the issues of Taiwan and the South China Sea".²⁶⁶ According to Xing himself, this is a position Beijing continuously relays to Seoul. Moreover, prior to the G7 summit, the South Korean Minister of

²⁵⁸ The Korea Herald, 2021-05-26.

²⁵⁹ Onchi, 2021-05-29.

²⁶⁰ Onchi, 2021-05-29.

²⁶¹ Onchi, 2021-05-29.

²⁶² The Korea Herald, 2021-05-25.

²⁶³ European Parliament, 2021-06-11.

²⁶⁴ Korea JoongAng Daily, 2021-06-14.

²⁶⁵ News Naver, 2021-06-14.

²⁶⁶ The Korea Herald, 2021-06-10.

Foreign Affairs Chung Eui-yong and his Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi, also held a telephone call. Wang explicitly cautioned South Korea to not become entangled in the United States' confrontational "Cold War mentality", as he stressed the importance of "political consensus" with Seoul.²⁶⁷ In a clear signal to Seoul about their stances, Wang pointed out to Chung that "China and the ROK should know well the rights and wrongs, stick to the correct position, abide by political consensus and never be misled".²⁶⁸

The balancing act between Washington and Beijing, however, is an increasingly recurring focus for Seoul. On the one hand, the South Korean government insists on its alliance with the US, but on the other hand, it wants to avoid provoking the Chinese government. In September 2021, Seoul's diplomatic wiggling came to the fore again. When South Korea joined the US and Japan for a trilateral meeting at Vice Foreign Minister level, the discussions had yet again emphasised "the importance of preserving peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait".²⁶⁹ This was in addition to topics such as "an inclusive, free, and open Indo-Pacific", as well as issues concerning the South and East China Seas, all actions Beijing considers to be conflict-escalation and interference in internal affairs, particularly regarding Taiwan. Only a few days later, though, South Korean Foreign Minister Chung Eui-yong dismissed the idea of Asia's developing "a Chinese bloc" vis-à-vis "a non-Chinese bloc", designating it as the "mentality of Cold War", words that bear close resemblance to the rhetoric often coming from Beijing.²⁷⁰ Although Chung pointed out that the alliance with the US is South Korea's main pillar of foreign and security policy, he also emphasised the deep importance of China as a trading partner.

4.5 Summary: South Korea-Taiwan

The Taiwan issue is seemingly not making much of an impression on the domestic political or economic life in South Korea. Although matters concerning Taiwan at times do flare up, these occasions are scarce. Nonetheless, when the issue of Taiwan does surface in South Korea, representatives from Beijing – sometimes together with friendship association groups in South Korea – are sure to respond, thus maintaining constant pressure on Seoul. As such, Chinese efforts to isolate Taiwan in South Korea's domestic arena are relatively discrete, yet present.

Similar to the case in Japan, Chinese envoys are active in condemning actions that provide Taiwan any kind of space in South Korean life. Thus, here too, a large part of the strategy is to constantly police activities in South Korea regarding Taiwan,

²⁶⁷ Hankyoreh, 2021-06-11.

²⁶⁸ Hankyoreh, 2021-06-11.

²⁶⁹ U.S. Department of State, 2021-07-20.

²⁷⁰ Council on Foreign Relations, 2021-09-22.

and issue indirect warnings about what these activities may inflict on Sino-South Korean relations. By doing this, the South Korean government, as well as other actors, including private sector and media outlets, is continuously under pressure from the Chinese government to think twice before engaging with Taiwan. Indeed, similar approaches are used by the PRC on other sensitive issues such as Xinjiang or Hong Kong. Hence, it is part of Beijing's broader strategy that seeks to draw red lines for governments and other actors, and thus pressure them to refrain from touching what Beijing perceives as its core interests. As a result, Chinese policing of South Korean activities exacerbates Taiwan's isolation. It is difficult to gauge the scope and effect of the united front work that is present in South Korea. However, it is of interest to note that the Chinese Embassy as well as the Consulate-General in South Korea do gather with friendship associations to collectively push for Beijing's view of Taiwan. The symposiums in 2019 to introduce Xi Jinping's speech about Taiwan's reunification and the national rejuvenation of the motherland are a case in point.

The general reluctance among many South Korean actors to raise the Taiwan issue indeed contributes to the difficulties for the island democracy in improving its isolative situation. It is interesting to observe Seoul's participation in international summits that produce statements referring to security in the Taiwan Strait. These statements highlight the geopolitical context in which Seoul finds itself operating, where China is seen with increasingly wary eyes. At the same time, however, Seoul's tiptoeing around these statements also illustrates the geopolitical complications through which the South Korean government tries to navigate. As the events and incidents described in this chapter portray, Seoul has been notably quiet about the PRC's efforts to isolate Taiwan amidst the Sino-American rivalry. The Moon administration in Seoul has also gone to substantial lengths to avoid provoking Beijing.

China may be regarded as simply too close and too influential for Seoul. The cost of enraging Beijing is too high for it to bear. This could be ascribed to both deep Chinese-South Korean economic ties as well as the PRC's leverage in the North Korean issue. The threat from across the northern border overshadows any other security concern for Seoul. Thus, considering Beijing's close relationship with Pyongyang and its highly influential role in any resolution on the Korean peninsula, Seoul is wary of challenging China, particularly on a core interest such as Taiwan. Following the THAAD debacle, Seoul has been careful not to rock the boat with Beijing again. Additional reasons may also be South Korea's geographic proximity to China, as well as the complicated history of Korean dependency on China. Indeed, a powerful country that is also your immediate neighbour is likely to be more fearful. A number of issues illustrate this Korean hesitancy to provoke Beijing. For instance, the Moon administration has refrained from banning the procurement of Huawei's 5G-network equipment, despite requests to do so from

Washington.²⁷¹ South Korea is among the few democracies that has not expressed support for protesters' call for freedom and rights in Hong Kong, while the administration in Seoul has also declined to back Canada's Declaration Against Detention in State-to-State Relations, which was an initiative that sought to pressure Beijing to release two detained Canadian citizens and was endorsed by 57 other countries.²⁷² Seoul has also remained silent about potential sanctions against China for human rights violations in Xinjiang.²⁷³

Considering Seoul's deference on these issues, South Korea is unlikely to be a vocal advocate for Taiwan's interests, which constitutes a core interest for the PRC. If anything, general South Korean reluctance to support Taiwan's bidding for participation in international organisations may serve as a good indication. However, going forward, South Korea will find it increasingly difficult to navigate its interests pertaining to China and Taiwan. There are strong anti-Chinese sentiments in South Korea that create a mismatch between current foreign policy and popular views. In light of increasing Sino-US rivalry, pressure from its treaty ally to take a clearer stance against the PRC in many issues is also likely to grow. At the same time, a contingency in the Taiwan Strait certainly also affects South Korean national interests. It remains to be seen how the incoming president, Mr. Yoon Suk-yeol, will manage this balance. Taking these factors into consideration, Beijing's isolation of Taiwan may be an increasingly important issue for the government in Seoul.

²⁷¹ Kim (2021).

²⁷² Kim (2021).

²⁷³ Kim (2021).

5 Germany-Taiwan

Similar to previous chapters, this third case study chapter examines China's coercive actions to isolate Taiwan in Germany, as well as the German response to these efforts. As seen in Japan and South Korea, a central part of Beijing's strategy is to police activities involving Taiwan and constantly warn German actors about China's red lines concerning the island. Although the German government has in general been cautious not to irk Beijing, Germany has shown noteworthy support for increased Taiwanese participation in the international community. At least visibly, there is also not a significant compliance from the German side to Chinese pressure.

5.1 Overview of Germany-Taiwan relations

Following the Federal Republic of Germany's (FRG) establishment, in May 1949, it did not refrain from establishing diplomatic relations with either the ROC or the PRC. Not until after the United Nations General Assembly in 1971 did the FRG recognise the PRC as "the only lawful representatives of China," thus establishing diplomatic relations with the PRC government in Beijing, on 11 October 1972.²⁷⁴ Recognising the PRC as the only sovereign state in China reflects Germany's "One China" policy.

As such, Germany and Taiwan do not maintain diplomatic relations. Unofficial relations are managed beneath the level of diplomatic relations, mainly through specialist departments up to ministerial level, as well as deputy ministers. Because it does not recognise Taiwan as a sovereign state, Germany's policy is to abstain from having contacts between the highest representatives. On the German side, this includes the Federal President, the President of the Bundestag (the federal parliament), the Federal Chancellor, the President of the Bundesrat (the second federal legislative chamber), and the President of the Federal Constitutional Court.²⁷⁵ On the Taiwanese side, this implies the President, the Vice-President, the Prime Minister, the President of the Legislative Yuan, and the President of the Judicial Yuan.²⁷⁶ Additionally, there are no contacts between the Foreign Ministers nor the Ministers of Defense, while in the Federal Foreign Office and the Ministry of Defense, contacts are only allowed between officials on the working level. Other ministries, however, are free to conduct dialogues and engagements at minister level. Such exchanges do take place, depending on various factors, albeit not always publicly.²⁷⁷

²⁷⁴ Sinha and Talmon, 2019-12-18.

²⁷⁵ Interviewee No. 15. See Section 9. List of Interviews.

²⁷⁶ Interviewee No. 15. See Section 9. List of Interviews.

²⁷⁷ Sinha and Talmon, 2019-12-18.

Despite their unofficial relationship, the two sides are partners of common values, having sizable flows of exchanges roaming the unofficial relationship. Citing Germany's Federal Foreign Office, "Taiwan and Germany are important partners for each other; they share values and enjoy close and substantial economic, cultural, scientific and academic relations".²⁷⁸ According to a statement by the Federal Foreign Office, Germany wants to "maintain the status quo of our relations with Taiwan without any conditions", and it "reject[s] any unilateral change of this status quo".²⁷⁹

The German Institute in Taipei, which administers cultural and economic ties, represents Germany in Taiwan. However, interests in Taiwan are also addressed by the Goethe-Institut in Taipei, the German Trade Office Taipei, and a Germany Trade and Invest (GTAI) office.²⁸⁰ In Germany, Taiwanese authorities are represented by the Taipei Representation Office in the Federal Republic of Germany, and have missions in Berlin, Frankfurt, Munich, and Hamburg, as well as a science and innovation officer in Bonn.

Economic ties are of course an important feature of the relationship. In 2020, bilateral trade amounted to more than USD 16 billion, thus making Germany Taiwan's largest trading partner in Europe, while Taiwan is Germany's fifth largest trading partner in Asia.²⁸¹ Moreover, with USD 6 billion in exports and USD over 10 billion in imports, Germany ranks as Taiwan's largest export market in Europe as well as Taiwan's largest source of imports from the European continent.²⁸² Looking at bilateral investment, as of 2020, German companies have invested in 948 cases in Taiwan, for a cumulative value of more than USD 4 billion.²⁸³ Primary investment industries were in wholesale and retail, and manufacturing of electronic components. During the same period, Taiwanese enterprises invested in 255 projects in Germany, at a cumulative value of USD 521.9 million. Major industries include wholesale and retail, manufacturing of computer, electronic and optical products, and manufacturing of chemical materials.²⁸⁴

The two sides have also entered economic agreements and other forms of cooperation. Germany and Taiwan have entered bilateral agreements for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with respect to Taxes on Income, as well as arrangements with Taiwan on investment promotion cooperation.²⁸⁵

²⁷⁸ Federal Foreign Office, 2021-11-10.

²⁷⁹ Sinha and Talmon, 2019-12-18.

²⁸⁰ Federal Foreign Office, 2021-11-10.

²⁸¹ Ministry of Economic Affairs Bureau of Foreign Trade, 2021-05-19; Federal Foreign Office, 2021-11-10.

²⁸² Ministry of Economic Affairs Bureau of Foreign Trade, 2021-05-19.

²⁸³ Ministry of Economic Affairs Bureau of Foreign Trade, 2021-05-19.

²⁸⁴ Ministry of Economic Affairs Bureau of Foreign Trade, 2021-05-19.

²⁸⁵ Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of China, 2015-09-07.

There are about 300 German companies active in Taiwan, and around 320 Taiwanese companies present in Germany.²⁸⁶ Recent years have seen an intensification of cooperation in technology areas that both countries have expertise and experience in, such as semiconductors, 5G technologies, biotechnology and renewable energy.²⁸⁷ These are areas that both sides regard as having great potential for future cooperation. Germany and Taiwan also maintain active exchange in cultural, scientific and academic areas. In 2015, the two sides agreed to expand cooperation in the education sector. There are now more than 200 partnership agreements between German and Taiwanese universities and research institutions for the purpose of maintaining academic exchanges.²⁸⁸

5.2 General Chinese influence in Germany

The issue of Chinese influence has in recent years become increasingly debated in Germany. The PRC's influence has been revealed in various areas such as academia, cyber, elections, and the business community. The Chinese influence has thus been reported as having potential consequences in political as well as economic and military areas.

Germany's domestic intelligence agency, the *Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz* (BfV), has identified the PRC as one of the major espionage-conducting states with activities directed against Germany.²⁸⁹ The focus of Chinese intelligence services in Germany includes political espionage, for example on policy positions, as well as on Germany's industries, technologies, research, and armed forces. In its 2020 annual report, the BfV stated that Chinese influence activities are increasing and that "German entities are facing greater potential threats from state-sponsored cyberattacks originating in China."²⁹⁰ In the report, the intelligence agency warns of Chinese influence efforts conducted through strategic investments in Germany. So-called "weaponised" investments (investments that can be used for geopolitical leverage) and long-time close relationships between business leaders and Beijing representatives have been warily observed.²⁹¹ Further, in 2017, the BfV pointed out that Chinese intelligence agencies have used LinkedIn to gather personal information about German politicians and officials, and describe it as "a broadbased attempt to infiltrate, in particular, parliaments, ministries and government agencies."²⁹²

One area in which Chinese influence unfolds is in the academic world. Not only does intimidation of Chinese students and scholars by CCP representatives indeed threatens academic freedom, but there are also risks involved with the debatable

²⁸⁶ Sinha and Talmon, 2019-12-18.

²⁸⁷ Focus Taiwan, 2021-11-07.

²⁸⁸ Federal Foreign Office, 2021-11-10.

²⁸⁹ Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community (2018): 35-37.

²⁹⁰ Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community (2021): 42.

²⁹¹ Diamond and Scheel (2018): 163.

²⁹² Kampfner (2020).

notion of party-state funding of German universities.²⁹³ There are several examples of German universities receiving funds from PRC entities or companies such as Huawei. Reportedly, many degree programmes are critically dependent on PRC funding.²⁹⁴ Further, Beijing also exerts influence by rejecting the visa applications of, or denying Chinese interlocutors for, German scholars who are critical of the Chinese government.²⁹⁵ Coupled with this, there have been reports of Chinese pressure on the German publishing industry. A children's book publisher withdrew a book that mentioned China as the place where COVID-19 originated following complaints from the Chinese Consulate in Hamburg.²⁹⁶ In addition, China intensified pressure on German academics by sanctioning a German think tank, the Mercator Institute for China Studies (MERICS), and a German scholar, Adrian Zenz, who is known for his studies of the Xinjiang internment camps.²⁹⁷

Regarding academic circles, much concern is expressed over the prevalence of Confucius Institutes in Germany. Since 2006, 19 Confucius Institutes have opened there; at least two have been closed due to concern over “political influence and information leaks”.²⁹⁸ A major controversy involved the contract between the *Freie Universität* of Berlin and the Hanban organisation (which runs the Confucius Institutes). The agreement stated that Hanban's funding would be removed if any writings or activities countered Chinese law.²⁹⁹ As a result, Germany's education ministry, because it seeks to build up an “independent China competence”, has urged universities to cancel cooperation with the Confucius Institutes.³⁰⁰

The media sphere is another venue for Chinese influence. Chinese state media has made inroads into the German mainstream press. It is estimated that there are around a dozen main Chinese media channels operating in Germany and conveying CCP interests.³⁰¹ This takes its form in Beijing-sponsored content, such as advertisements and editorial features promoting Chinese interests, in media outlets.³⁰² By inserting its narrative into mainstream media, the CCP seeks to influence German public opinion. Another way of relating to media is to write open letters to protest against articles and journalists that are critical of China.³⁰³ This habit has been adopted elsewhere, as Chinese officials have sent letters to the interior ministries of

²⁹³ Fulda and Missal (2021): 8.

²⁹⁴ Fulda and Missal (2021): 8.

²⁹⁵ Diamond and Scheel (2018): 162.

²⁹⁶ Decker, 2021-04-28.

²⁹⁷ Timsit, 2021-03-23.

²⁹⁸ Zhang, 2021-07-03.

²⁹⁹ Kampfner (2020): 26.

³⁰⁰ Zhang, 2021-07-03.

³⁰¹ Tatlow (2019): 11.

³⁰² Mu, 2018-09-27; Diamond and Scheel (2018): 163-164.

³⁰³ Kampfner (2020): 12.

German federal states, asking communities to refrain from hoisting Tibetan flags on Tibet day.³⁰⁴

The PRC also targets politicians to influence them to accommodate its interests. According to the BfV's 2020 annual report, China had targeted various actors, including "well-networked active and former German politicians as 'lobbyists' for Chinese interests".³⁰⁵ For instance, it is reported that Chinese diplomats privately contacted German officials, asking them to support and spread the narrative of China's successful management of the COVID-19 pandemic.³⁰⁶ Another example is the establishment, in 2019, of "China-Brücke" (China Bridge), an elite networking club consisting of mainly anonymous and influential people in politics, business, academia, and industry in Germany.³⁰⁷ The club also includes high-ranking CCP members, such as Politburo member Wang Chen, Politburo Standing Committee member Li Zhanshu, and Qian Hongshan, a deputy director of the International Department of the CCP. Targets in Germany and Europe include current and former members of the Bundestag and the European Parliament.³⁰⁸

Finally, the UFWD has a presence in Germany as well. In 2019, journalist-researcher Didi Kirsten Tatlow identified at least 190 Chinese groups in Germany with direct ties to China's United Front bureaucracy.³⁰⁹ Tatlow also found another German organisation, the Federation of German-China Friendship Associations (*Arbeitsgemeinschaft Deutscher-China Gesellschaften*, ADCG), consisting of 37 affiliates that collaborate with CCP-linked organisations. Under the ADCG, many of the German organisations are partnering, directly or indirectly, with the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries (中国人民对外友好协会, CPAFFC), a CCP organisation that undertakes significant united front-style work.³¹⁰ Further, the Confucius Institutes and about 80 Chinese Student and Scholar Associations occasionally help the embassy push its narratives.³¹¹

Thus, united front work is ongoing in Germany. The organisations involved include Chinese chambers of commerce; German-Chinese friendship, culture, and economic societies; professional groupings working in Germany; and a "public diplomacy" association.³¹² Similar to the other countries in this study, the main united front organisation, the China Council for the Promotion of Peaceful National Reunification (中国和平统一促进会, CCPPNR) is also present in

³⁰⁴ Diamond and Scheel (2018): 183.

³⁰⁵ Tatlow and Rácz (2021).

³⁰⁶ Tatlow and Rácz (2021).

³⁰⁷ Tatlow and Rácz (2021).

³⁰⁸ Tatlow and Rácz (2021).

³⁰⁹ Tatlow (2019): 2.

³¹⁰ Tatlow (2019).

³¹¹ Tatlow (2019).

³¹² Tatlow, 2019-07-12.

Germany.³¹³ Several of the many other organisations active in the country include, for example, the Frankfurt-based Federation of Chinese Professional Associations in Europe (全欧华人专业协会联合会, FCPAE), the German Overseas Chinese Business Council (德国侨商会), the All-German Association of Chinese Associations (全德华人社团联合会), and the Overseas Chinese Service Centre 德国华人华侨互助中心).³¹⁴

5.3 PRC influence on Taiwan in Germany: incidents 2016–2021

Similar to what is described in the previous cases in this study, in Germany the PRC’s embassy seeks to discipline German actors from crossing Beijing’s red lines with regard to Taiwan. Mostly, the embassy’s actions and statements target German media, but the embassy also reacts to other actors, political as well as private and organisational who in one way or another engage with Taiwan in Germany.

5.3.1 The PRC embassy’s statements on Taiwan in German media

The Chinese Embassy in Berlin criticizes German media about its treatment of Taiwan. This is expressed via position statements on its website and articles published in German papers, as well as through direct contact with journalists. In November 2017, German broadcaster *Deutsche Welle* was contacted by the Chinese Embassy following an interview it had conducted with Minister Lee Ying-yuan, of Taiwan’s Environmental Protection Administration.³¹⁵ The Chinese side strongly protested against the article, since it addressed Mr. Lee as a Minister and displayed the ROC flag.

Similar to the situation in Japan and South Korea, the embassy in Germany posts statements on its websites to signal its grievances with what the media write. In 2018, the embassy reacted against an article about Taiwan published by the daily newspaper, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. In its news release, the embassy accused the paper of breaching the “One China” principle and providing a public opinion platform for “Taiwan independence” groups.³¹⁶ The statement concluded by voicing its expectation that Germany would respect China’s national reunification in the same way as China has supported German national reunification. A year later, in October 2019, the PRC’s embassy sought to clarify its position on Taiwan three times, following coverage of Taiwan in German media. On two occasions,

³¹³ German Council for the Promotion of Peaceful National Reunification of China Website, n.d.; China Council for the Promotion of Peaceful National Reunification, 2018-02-22.

³¹⁴ Tatlow (2019); Turbanisch, 2018-10-02.

³¹⁵ Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of China, 2017.

³¹⁶ Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in the Federal Republic of Germany, 2018-10-26.

the Chinese embassy criticised the tabloid newspaper, *Bild*, and German broadcaster *Deutsche Welle* for referring to the Taiwanese representatives as “ambassadors”, and accused the media outlets of violating the “One China” principle by allowing space for what is called “Taiwan independence separatist claims”.³¹⁷ The two news outlets were requested to “immediately correct . . . [their] mistakes”. Later the same month, in a column in response to letters by readers of the newspaper, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, the embassy described its position on Taiwan. The column emphasised that Taiwan is “an inalienable part of Chinese territory”.³¹⁸

The Chinese embassy has continued to publish its objections in German newspapers. In 2020, the German newspaper, *Die Zeit*, published a letter from the Chinese Embassy in Germany, where the embassy again outlined that the Taiwan issue is China’s internal affair, and that it expects the German government to support reunification.³¹⁹ In October 2021, the embassy revisited the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, once again writing to the newspaper to respond to what it argued were erroneous remarks on Taiwan. It concluded by pointing out that Taiwan has “bearing on China’s core interests and the national sentiments of the Chinese people”.³²⁰ In the same month, the embassy released a 17-page newsletter, in German, entirely devoted to the issue of Taiwan.³²¹ The special edition celebrated the 50th anniversary of the PRC gaining its seat in the United Nations via the adoption of UN General Assembly Resolution 2758, which Beijing argues constitutes the basis for the “One China” principle in the UN. In the newsletter, the embassy states why it claims the island is a part of the PRC.

5.3.2 Actions by China in Germany’s civil society and private sector

Chinese efforts to shrink Taiwanese space in Germany extend beyond the media sphere. They also target the private sector and various cultural events. When a Taiwanese team participated in the 2017 International Table Soccer Federation World Cup and World Championships in Hamburg, it initially played under the name Taiwan. Organisers had also placed a ROC flag at the venue’s entrance. On the second day of competition, however, the flag was requested to be removed, and was subsequently replaced by Taiwan’s Olympic flag, while the Taiwanese participants were referred to as “Guest, Taiwan.”³²²

³¹⁷ Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in the Federal Republic of Germany, 2019-10-03;

Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in the Federal Republic of Germany, 2019-10-22.

³¹⁸ Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in the Federal Republic of Germany, 2019-10-21.

³¹⁹ Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in the Federal Republic of Germany, 2020-08-13.

³²⁰ Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in the Federal Republic of Germany, 2021-10-20.

³²¹ Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in the Federal Republic of Germany (2021).

³²² Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of China, 2017.

Chinese efforts also sip into the university and scholarly world. In 2017, the University of Hannover's Taiwanese Student Association participated in the university's Third International Day. The mainland Chinese Student Federation demanded, however, that the Taiwanese association must attend the event under the name of Chinese Taipei, and share a booth with the mainland Chinese students.³²³ The university rejected the demands, and eventually the students participated under the originally registered name. Regarding universities, cooperation with Chinese universities is linked to certain demands. According to an academic in Germany, there are contracts among German universities that cooperate with Chinese universities to prohibit exchanges and contacts with Taiwanese counterparts.³²⁴ At the same time, though, the interviewee believed that German researchers were in general adopting an increasingly friendly attitude towards Taiwan, as there is a growing focus on the island.³²⁵

Furthermore, a Berlin think tank that organised a seminar involving the Taiwanese Representative in Germany and a Taiwanese scholar was subjected to pressure from the Chinese side in advance of the event. The embassy had contacted the think tank and requested them to in first case cancel the event; in the second case refrain from involving any Taiwanese officials; or at least ensure that there would not be any ROC symbols or any other features indicating Taiwanese statehood. In addition, the embassy extended a cooperation offer to the think tank. The organiser ignored the embassy's requests without any immediate reactions from the embassy.³²⁶

In 2018, Chinese authorities demanded that international airlines and a number of other types of enterprises change the designation of Taiwan on their websites. Similar to many other major enterprises elsewhere, German giants Lufthansa, Bosch, and Mercedes-Benz changed the designation listed on their websites to "Taiwan, China".³²⁷ In another kind of intervention, the Chinese embassy in Berlin has been demanding that hotels that host events involving Taiwan (e.g., trade shows) should not fly the ROC flag.³²⁸ In general, however, the receivers do not comply.

5.3.3 Chinese reactions against political events in Germany

The Chinese embassy in Germany has not shied away from voicing its displeasure with the German government or politicians with regard to Taiwan. For instance, in May 2018, prior to Chancellor Angela Merkel's travelling to Beijing, her office published a video online showing a map of China that omitted Taiwan. The map

³²³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of China, 2017.

³²⁴ Interviewee No. 13. See Section 9. List of Interviews.

³²⁵ Interviewee No. 13. See Section 9. List of Interviews.

³²⁶ Interviewee No. 12. See Section 9. List of Interviews.

³²⁷ Chan, 2018-05-05.

³²⁸ Diamond and Scheel (2018): 162-163.

upset Beijing, which caused the embassy in Berlin to lodge a protest with Germany's Federal Foreign Office.³²⁹

In 2020, events again irked the embassy. Taiwan's Representative to Germany, Shieh Jhy-wey, met with the bipartisan Committee for Human Rights and Humanitarian Aid of the German Bundestag to discuss various Taiwanese issues and the cross-strait relationship. Other Taiwanese officials also attended the meeting via video link, including the Digital Minister, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the Deputy Minister of the Mainland Affairs Council. The meeting provoked the embassy in Germany to protest the fact that German lawmakers had met with a Taiwanese envoy, and accusing them of interfering with what is regarded by Beijing as its internal affairs. In the statement, the embassy stressed that "adherence to the one China policy is an explicit political commitment of the Federal Republic of Germany, which also forms the basis of Sino-German relations".³³⁰ In a press conference, a spokesperson for the Federal Foreign Office issued a reassurance of Germany's position on Taiwan as part of its "One China" policy, but that "it is equally valid that within its "One China" policy Germany supports Taiwan's practical cooperation in international forums such as the World Health Organization".³³¹

Overall, the two larger and governmental political parties, the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the Christian Democratic Union of Germany (CDU), have been fairly cautious regarding China and Taiwan. The CDU, in particular, stands by its current carefully calibrated "One China" policy, keeping the presence of Taiwan at arm's length and being careful about all types of engagement with it.³³² According to an interviewee with particular insight, there has been frustration within parts of the German Foreign Ministry because Germany's ties with Taiwan have been too constrained.³³³ In a conversation with a government official in the German Foreign Ministry, the belief was expressed that the trend of downgrading the frequency of contacts with Taiwanese officials had gone "too far".³³⁴ Thus, although Germany's 2020 Indo-Pacific strategy aims to establish more multilateral partnerships and cooperation in the region, Taiwan is not mentioned in the policy guidelines.³³⁵ Indeed, Taiwan may be tacitly included in this approach, as the strategy seeks to comprehensively engage with the region, including through collaboration on security policy, diverse economic partnerships, and the strengthening of international law. Yet, the omission of explicit mention of Taiwan reflects Germany's cautious position. Likewise, when a German frigate set sail for

³²⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of China, 2018.

³³⁰ Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Federal Republic of Germany, 2020-10-20.

³³¹ Talmon, 2021-01-07.

³³² Vogel, 2021-09-24.

³³³ Interviewee No. 12. See Section 9. List of Interviews.

³³⁴ Interviewee No. 15. See Section 9. List of Interviews.

³³⁵ The Federal Government, 2020-09-02.

the South China Sea in September 2021, it avoided the Taiwan Strait after a warning from Beijing.³³⁶

In recent years, however, a change in tone about China can be discerned in Germany. Reportedly, German government departments increasingly approach China as a “systemic competitor”, while the German government has shared policy assessments of the European Commission’s strategic outlook on China in 2019, in which China is designated as a “systemic rival”.³³⁷ Similarly, leading German business representatives are said to have become more alarmed by China, to the point that they in turn encourage policymakers to increase Europe’s competitiveness against China’s state-led industrial development.³³⁸ However, the German business community have strong links with China, so any such steps truly remains to be seen.³³⁹

There has also been movement among political parties in the Bundestag to adopt more accommodating stances towards Taiwan. In 2021, the German-Taiwanese Society (*Deutsch-Taiwanische Gesellschaft e.V.*) conducted a pre-election survey of the Taiwan policies of the parties represented in the Bundestag.³⁴⁰ The parties placing most focus on Taiwan include the Free Democratic Party (FDP) and the Greens, both of whom have been advocating an intensification of Germany’s relationship with Taiwan. The FDP removed the “One China” policy from its campaign platform ahead of the 2021 national elections, while it expressed its support for Taiwan’s people to have the right to decide their own future.³⁴¹ In an online seminar, a member of the FDP proposed that democratic countries should establish forums devoted to preventing a military invasion of Taiwan.³⁴² In the same seminar, a member of the SPD, which won the German national elections, said that “the people of Taiwan should be able to determine their future on their own”,³⁴³ a statement that indicated a stronger inclination to favour Taiwanese narratives.

These steps may be manifested in coming government policies. In late 2021, the new coalition government, consisting of the SPD, FDP, and the Greens, outlined a *Koalitionsvertrag* (coalition agreement).³⁴⁴ In a striking change in tone, the agreement included strong language on China, touching on some of Beijing’s most sensitive issues, such as Xinjiang, Hong Kong, the South China Sea, and Taiwan, while clarifying that the EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment (CAI) is unlikely to be revived anytime soon. In a formulation that indirectly may incorporate Taiwan, it states that the government will seek cooperation with like-

³³⁶ Qin and Erlanger, 2021-11-10.

³³⁷ Weidenfeld (2020): 77.

³³⁸ Weidenfeld (2020): 77.

³³⁹ Hamilton and Ohlberg (2020).

³⁴⁰ Deutsch-Taiwanische Gesellschaft e.V., n.d.

³⁴¹ Madjar, 2021-05-19.

³⁴² Focus Taiwan, 2021-10-19.

³⁴³ Focus Taiwan, 2021-10-19.

³⁴⁴ SPD, Bündnis 90, Die Grünen, und FDP, 2021-11-24.

minded countries in order to reduce strategic dependencies, while it plans to build relations with Japan, South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand as part of its Indo-Pacific strategy.³⁴⁵ More explicitly on Taiwan, the government parties emphasise that the status quo in the Taiwan Strait must be resolved peacefully by both sides, and that the government, within the framework of EU's "One China" policy, is committed to supporting Taiwan's relevant participation in international organisations. There is no change in posture, but it is the first time that Taiwan is mentioned in a coalition agreement.³⁴⁶ The German statements prompted wary reactions from Beijing, which warned the new German government coalition from intervening in China's internal affairs, calling on Berlin to uphold the "One China" policy and "safeguard the political foundation for bilateral relations".³⁴⁷ Thus, *if* the new coalition government adopts a more value-based foreign policy, as has been proclaimed, there may be implications for the Sino-German relationship over issues such as Taiwan. However, given signs that the new government has had little appetite to back Lithuania against Chinese economic coercion, the adoption of this value-based foreign policy remains to be seen.³⁴⁸

5.4 Germany's reactions on the international stage 2016–2021

A sensitive issue such as Taiwan is tread with caution on the international scene. Nevertheless, while ensuring that it remains within its "One China" policy, the German government has shown support for Taiwanese participation in the international space. It has also conducted some international engagements with Taiwanese counterparts, though primarily via the EU. Germany's engagements with Taiwan are overall in line with the EU framework. At the very general level, this adheres to the 2016 EU Strategy on China, stating as follows:

The EU confirms its commitment to continuing to develop its relations with Taiwan and to supporting the shared values underpinning its system of governance. The EU should continue to support the constructive development of cross-strait relations as part of keeping the Asia-Pacific region at peace. Accordingly, the EU will use every available channel to encourage initiatives aimed at promoting dialogue, co-operation and confidence-building between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait. The EU should promote practical solutions regarding Taiwan's participation in international frameworks, wherever this is consistent with the EU's "One China" policy and the EU's policy objectives.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁵ SPD, Bündnis 90, Die Grünen, und FDP, 2021-11-24: 157-158.

³⁴⁶ Huang, 2021-11-25.

³⁴⁷ Bloomberg News, 2021-11-25.

³⁴⁸ Hanke Vela and Lynch, 2022-01-26.

³⁴⁹ European Commission, 2016-06-22: 4.

5.4.1 International organisations

During a Petitions Committee hearing in December 2019, a Federal Foreign Office representative stated Germany's position regarding Taiwan's participation in international organisations:

[...] Especially regarding world health, but also air traffic cooperation, we encourage that a useful involvement of Taiwan in international organisations is made possible – observer status or other forms of contribution. However, the fact is that participation in many international organisations is reserved for members of the United Nations and also granting observer status is dependent upon the approval of particular bodies, on which certain States sit. [...] Notwithstanding, we, as Federal Government, always

stand for facilitating a useful involvement of Taiwan in these areas. And where we cannot achieve this because, for example, another member voices its disapproval, we try to enable and strengthen cooperation at the bilateral level, in order to exchange views on these topics.³⁵⁰

The statement indicates an inclusive, albeit limited, approach to involving Taiwan in global organisations. It recognises the clear limits of Taiwan's possibilities, but at the same time points to efforts to involve Taiwanese exchanges. The position also makes explicit mention of the areas of world health and air traffic cooperation, that pertain to two of the three selected organisations looked into in this section, namely the WHO and ICAO. The third one is, as in previous chapters, INTERPOL.

World Health Organization (WHO): Germany supports Taiwan's striving to gain observer status in the WHO. Throughout the years, Germany has in various forums consistently shown its support for Taiwan's inclusion in the WHO. In 2018, Germany expressed support at the WHA for an observer role for Taiwan in the WHO, while Germany's top representative in Taiwan said that Germany supports Taiwan's participation in the WHO within the "One China" policy framework.³⁵¹ The year after, in 2019, the German Institute Taipei was again explicit in its support for Taiwan's joining the WHO as an observer. In Geneva, Germany voiced its support without mentioning Taiwan by name. It pointed out that "health for all also means there can be no white spots on the world map. Global health challenges do not stop at borders. Consequently, the WHO should be a forum for all relevant partners".³⁵² In 2020, the German Institute Taipei continued to be outspoken in its support for Taiwan, while the German government intensified its support by joining seven other countries in composing a letter to the WHO Director-General, requesting that the Director-General invite Taiwan to attend the virtual WHA.³⁵³ In 2021, Germany voiced support for Taiwan and urged the WHO to incorporate all parties, while also backing a G7 statement advocating Taiwanese participation in the WHO and WHA.³⁵⁴

³⁵⁰ Sinha and Talmon, 2019-12-18.

³⁵¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of China (Taiwan), 2018-05-25; Morgan, 2018-10-28.

³⁵² Talmon, 2020-05-26.

³⁵³ Talmon, 2020-05-26.

³⁵⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of China, 2021-06-05.

International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO): Similar to the case of the WHO, Germany supports Taiwan’s participation as an observer in ICAO. On its website, the Federal Foreign Office states that “Germany advocates Taiwan’s specialised participation in international organisations, for example the World Health Organization (WHO) or the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)”.³⁵⁵ Convening triannually, the latest ICAO meeting took place in 2019; during the meeting, the German Institute Taipei expressed Germany’s support for “the substantive participation of all active members of the international aviation community in ICAO forums. Excluding some of its members for political purposes compromises aviation safety and security”.³⁵⁶

International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL): Germany has also expressed support for Taiwan’s participation in INTERPOL, within the framework of its “One China” policy.³⁵⁷ In its 88th General Assembly annual meeting, in 2019, Germany voiced its support for Taiwan.³⁵⁸

Germany is also part of a democratic coalition that convenes a few times every year to discuss how to promote Taiwan’s participation in international organisations.³⁵⁹ Other participating countries include the US, Canada, Japan, Australia, UK, EU, and some individual EU countries.

5.4.2 Germany’s multilateral engagement with Taiwan

Germany’s multilateral engagement with Taiwan is primarily channelled via the EU, in ongoing policy coordination. This means that this activity is not strict multilateral engagement in the same sense as in the cases of Japan and South Korea. The EU and Taiwan maintain a structured dialogue. The two parts maintain annual consultations, in which various trade policy issues are discussed, such as WTO obligations and possible issues that are of bilateral concern.³⁶⁰ As such, the two sides pursue existing dialogues, such as the Industrial Policy Dialogue, the Digital Dialogue on Economy, and the EU-Taiwan Labour Consultation.³⁶¹ Additionally, Taiwan participates in forums such as the European Cluster Collaboration Platform and the Enterprise Europe Network.³⁶² As for the potential EU-Taiwan Bilateral Investment Agreement, the German government has not yet made a public statement on its position.³⁶³

³⁵⁵ Federal Foreign Office, 2021-11-10.

³⁵⁶ DeAeth, 2019-09-24.

³⁵⁷ Morgan, 2018-10-28.

³⁵⁸ Chen, 2021-08-19.

³⁵⁹ Glaser et al. (2020): 27.

³⁶⁰ European Commission, 2021-04-26.

³⁶¹ National Development Council, 2020-12-09; Taipei Representative Office in the EU and Belgium, 2019-06-28.

³⁶² European Cluster Collaboration Platform, n.d.; European Commission, n.d.

³⁶³ Interviewee No. 15. See Section 9. List of Interviews.

In 2021, Germany was also part of a string of first-ever multilateral statements stressing the importance of security in the Taiwan Strait. In June, the Summit Communiqué of the G7 included, also for the first time, the sentence, “We underscore the importance of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait, and encourage the peaceful resolution of cross-Strait issues”.³⁶⁴ The same sentence appeared again a few days later in the EU-US Summit Statement, this, too, for the first time between the two sides.³⁶⁵ Prior to these summits, however, the EU-Japan Summit Statement and the G7 Foreign and Development Ministers’ Meeting, in May, both included the same sentence.³⁶⁶ Reportedly, Germany, with France, sought to omit the statement in the G7 leaders’ communiqué, arguing that it had already been brought up in the Foreign Ministers’ statement, thus seeking to downplay the statement in fear of irritating Beijing.³⁶⁷ As such, Germany has backed some international statements pertaining to Taiwan, albeit sometimes somewhat reluctantly.

Another vehicle for engagement could be the GCTF. Germany has not itself acted as guest co-host alone, but it was a participant when the EU hosted a meeting in which the German representative in Taiwan participated.³⁶⁸ That was the first and only time the German envoy joined the CGTF. Another vehicle through which Germany further holds discussions with Taiwan via the EU is in forums such as the Taiwan Trilateral Forum (TTF). The TTF was established, in 2018, by the German Marshall Fund (GMF) and the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in the US (TECRO). The forum brings together policymakers, media, intellectuals, and business voices from Europe, the US, and Taiwan to discuss how Taiwan can contribute to Asian peace and security as well as international fora.³⁶⁹

Finally, as mentioned in previous chapters, unverified reports suggest that advisors and engineers from a number of countries, including Germany, have taken part in Taiwan’s IDS project.³⁷⁰

5.5 Summary: Germany-Taiwan

As is always the case, the relationship with the PRC overshadows much of the engagement between Germany and Taiwan. Similar to the cases of Japan and South Korea, the Chinese side signals its disapproval of Taiwanese activities in various ways, and seeks to influence and limit Taiwan’s space in Germany. As seen in previous chapters, policing activities and clarifying red lines for relevant

³⁶⁴ European Parliament, 2021-06-11.

³⁶⁵ Chang, 2021-06-16.

³⁶⁶ European Parliament, 2021-05-27; Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, 2021-05-05.

³⁶⁷ Wang (2021).

³⁶⁸ Lin, 2021-04-14.

³⁶⁹ The German Marshall Fund, n.d.

³⁷⁰ Hsu, 2020-09-03; Biz Hankook, 2020-05-25.

actors in Germany constitute a central part of Beijing's strategy. The German government has been cautious regarding such a sensitive issue as Taiwan; it is thus being careful not to irk Beijing and likely not utilising the full scope of its "One China" policy in terms of its relations with Taiwan. However, Germany has indeed shown support for Taiwan in international organisations, and has, albeit reluctantly, been part of international statements stressing the importance of security in the Taiwan Strait.

The Chinese embassy in Germany acts in a similar pattern as in Japan and South Korea. It reacts to what the media convey about Taiwan by making statements on its websites, as well as refuting certain narratives by writing its own articles, or in some cases contacting editors and journalists directly (although in this study this has not been found regarding Taiwan, but for other topics). Apart from demands that were raised against airlines and other companies, there were no veiled threats observed in other instances identified regarding Taiwan. However, considering that threats have been found concerning other issues and in other cases, it is likely to have happened in instances not known to the public (e.g., in potential contacts with journalists or business representatives). These actions all serve the purpose of drawing red lines for the German public in general, and the German media in particular, for what the PRC deems can be said and done with regards to Taiwan.

Similar actions and reactions by the embassy can be observed in both civil society and the private sector, as well as against politicians who engage with Taiwan. Thus, the embassy is policing a range of Taiwanese activities in Germany. It seeks to discipline German actors across various areas to make them shy away from engaging with Taiwanese counterparts. An unsurprising example is the strong objections to a meeting between German lawmakers and Taiwan's representative, while somewhat less overt attempts include demanding cancellations of academic seminars as well as putting pressure on university or sports events. As such, the Chinese side seeks to shrink the space for Taiwanese individuals, organisations and representatives in Germany.

It is doubtful to what extent the PRC is successful. In most of the aforementioned incidents, German actors did not comply with Chinese pressure. Rather, by sending out strong signals, Beijing may be able to establish self-censorship and thus prevent future engagements between Germany and Taiwan. But regarding these known incidents, Beijing has had limited success. Looking at Germany's consistent backing for Taiwan's role as an observer in international organisations, the German government has also provided support for Taiwan's bid for increased participation in the international community. Further, although there was some reluctance, which reflects Germany's careful approach, over multilateral statements expressing concern about the security situation in the Taiwan Strait, it

did after all join the statements. Beijing is not happy about these statements. Thus, Germany has lent its support for Taiwan within the framework of the “One China” policy.

Even so, German politicians have in general been reluctant to deepen their engagement with Taiwan over fears of provoking Beijing. The German government has been cautious and stayed well inside the boundaries of its “One China” policy framework and thus been rather conservative in its approach to Taiwan. A major cause of this is likely the combination of close economic ties and strong industry links between Germany and China. The business lobby in Germany has been strong on behalf of mitigating conflicts with the Chinese government, and the German government has in general been controlling and careful not to provoke Beijing. However, if there is growing rhetoric among German businesses of the need to create a more level playing field with China, this approach may change, although one must remember that economic ties remain strong. Meanwhile, the new coalition government is promoting a values-based foreign policy, which may also pave the way for changing dynamics.

Thus, in sum, although Germany has given significant support to Taiwan’s striving for participation in the international community, it has seemingly not been willing to expand the full scope of engagements that the “One China” policy may still leave room for. However, the new coalition government is signalling a potential change, given its first coalition agreement, which is much bolder on the issue of China and Taiwan compared to its predecessors. This follows the 2021 election platforms of both the FDP and the Greens, who proposed to intensify German-Taiwanese relations, while the SPD parliamentary group’s policy paper in the previous year argued for expanding relations with Taiwan.³⁷¹ Hence, it remains to be seen whether the new German government will maintain a hesitant approach or if it will pursue more active policies within the “One China” policy framework.

³⁷¹ Benner, 2021-11-10.

6 Sweden-Taiwan

This last case study chapter also examines how China seek to isolate Taiwan in Sweden, and Swedish responses to these efforts. Consistent with what has been identified in previous chapters, the Chinese side is actively seeking to influence and police Swedish engagements with Taiwan. By consistently drawing up red lines, this occurs both publicly via vocal protests and signalling and less publicly through intimidation. In general, the Swedish response has involved taking supportive steps towards Taiwan. Albeit within clear boundaries, Sweden has shown support for a widening Taiwanese role in the international community. There has also been an increase in support for Taiwan among actors in Sweden, although China has seen a few successful instances of shrinking the Taiwanese space in Sweden.

6.1 Overview of Sweden-Taiwan relations

On 9 May 1950, Sweden was one of the first non-communist Western countries to formally switch diplomatic recognition from the Republic of China to the People's Republic of China. Despite the absence of formal diplomatic relations with Taiwan, however, Sweden has developed substantial ties with it. In recent years, as the Sino-Swedish relationship has become increasingly strained, the attention that Sweden gives to Taiwan has seen an uptick.

Taiwan and Sweden have representative offices in each other's capitals. Taiwan set up the Taipei Trade, Tourism & Information Office in 1981, and in 1994 changed the office's name to the Taipei Mission in Sweden.³⁷² Sweden established its first representative office, called the Swedish Industries' Trade Representative Office, in Taipei in 1982. Following more than one reorganisation, that office became what is today Business Sweden in Taiwan.³⁷³ With its main purpose of helping not only Swedish companies in international markets, but also international companies seeking a presence in Sweden, Business Sweden is jointly owned by the Swedish government and Swedish industry. As Sweden's official representation in Taiwan, Business Sweden in Taipei also has the responsibility to assist in consular affairs. Sweden and Taiwan hold annual meetings through the Joint Business Council, which provides a high-level platform to enhance collaboration between the two sides.³⁷⁴ Business Sweden organises the meetings in partnership with the Chinese International Economic Cooperation Association.

The relationship is driven by economic and cultural exchanges. In 2020, total bilateral trade between Sweden and Taiwan was USD 1.25 billion, making Sweden

³⁷² Taipei Mission in Sweden, 2020-07-30.

³⁷³ European Chamber of Commerce Taiwan, 2019-01-18.

³⁷⁴ Minesto, 2019-11-27.

the latter's tenth-largest European trading partner.³⁷⁵ That same year, Taiwanese exports to Sweden reached USD 565 million, while Taiwan's imports from Sweden amounted to USD 683 million, thus making Sweden the tenth-largest export market in Europe for Taiwan, as well as the 10th largest source of imports for Taiwan on the European continent.³⁷⁶ On the investment side, as of 2020, Swedish companies had invested in a total of 157 cases in Taiwan, which amounted to a cumulative value of USD 574 million.³⁷⁷ Major industries included information and communication, wholesale and retail, machinery and equipment manufacturing, and electronic components manufacturing. Taiwanese companies, on the other hand, invested in merely seven projects, at a total value of USD 4.04 million, involving industries such as wholesale and retail, and manufacturing of chemical materials.³⁷⁸ There are today over 100 Swedish companies present in Taiwan, with the numbers increasing.³⁷⁹ Similar to Germany, Sweden has entered bilateral agreements with Taiwan, such as the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with respect to Taxes on Income, as well arrangements with Taiwan on investment promotion cooperation.³⁸⁰

Although economic engagements constitute the main pillar of the relationship, Sweden-Taiwan cooperation is also making inroads in other areas. Besides exchanges in areas such as trade and investment, the two sides also have contacts in culture and tourism, research and academic exchange, as well as in cooperation between political parties and NGOs.³⁸¹ As of 2018, there were 67 MoUs or agreements between Swedish and Taiwanese universities.³⁸² Moreover, there were 19 Swedish universities and colleges engaged in academic cooperation and exchange, with 26 Taiwanese counterparts.³⁸³ This cooperation involves research, exchange student programs, and exchange scholar programs.

Overall, Sweden and Taiwan share the central values of democracy, respect for human rights, freedom and rights, and rule of law. Sweden-Taiwan relations have developed in many areas throughout the years. For instance, the two sides have pursued Mixed Commission meetings on State Secretary level since the 1980s.³⁸⁴ In 2019, the Swedish Minister for Higher Education and Research received the Taiwanese Minister of Science and Technology.³⁸⁵ As is always the case with Taiwan, however, Beijing is a large obstacle for enhancing the relationship. Still,

³⁷⁵ Ministry of Economic Affairs Bureau of Foreign Trade, *Taiwan-Sweden Economic Relations*, 2021-05-19.

³⁷⁶ Ministry of Economic Affairs Bureau of Foreign Trade, 2021-05-19.

³⁷⁷ Ministry of Economic Affairs Bureau of Foreign Trade, 2021-05-19.

³⁷⁸ Ministry of Economic Affairs Bureau of Foreign Trade, 2021-05-19.

³⁷⁹ Business Sweden, *Taiwan*, n.d.

³⁸⁰ Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of China, 2015-09-07.

³⁸¹ Taipei Mission in Sweden, 2018-04-19.

³⁸² Taipei Mission in Sweden, 2018-04-19.

³⁸³ Taipei Mission in Sweden, 2018-04-19.

³⁸⁴ Sveriges Riksdag, 2020-11-20.

³⁸⁵ Sveriges Regering Utbildningsdepartementet, 2019-08-27.

given their often-shared values and exceptional or complementary qualities in areas such as electronics, medicine and biotechnology, and telecommunications, there are promising prospects for deepened and intensified engagements.

6.2 General Chinese influence in Sweden

Chinese influence has only recently begun to attract attention in Sweden. One reason for this is of course China's growing power and influence across the globe, entailing political and economic implications for Sweden. Other reasons include an increasingly authoritarian Beijing that is exerting stricter pressure in its external engagements, in addition to the stationing of a notably active and defiant Chinese ambassador to Sweden. These factors, coupled with the bilateral dispute over the jailed Chinese-born Swedish publisher, Gui Minhai, have prompted discussions about China's influence in Sweden.

Swedish intelligence services have highlighted China's increased activities in Sweden. In its annual report for 2020, the Swedish Security Service identifies China as one of the largest actors in conducting various espionage activities against Sweden.³⁸⁶ Reportedly, China seeks to acquire information from Swedish universities and research centres through means such as recruitment and influence efforts, Chinese citizens in Swedish universities and research centres, and strategic acquisitions, as well as cyber and industrial espionage. Activities have primarily targeted research and innovation in the technical and military domains, as well as dual-use products. Other activities highlighted include espionage against Chinese immigrants and dissidents in Sweden, pressure against decision-makers, researchers and public figures, and using diplomatic and journalistic credentials as cover for gathering intelligence. In its annual report for 2020, the Military Intelligence and Security Service in Sweden produced a similar assessment, also pointing out that China utilises a wide span of means to target its strategic interests in Swedish high-technology sectors and the Arctic.³⁸⁷

United front work is also present in Sweden. A variety of actors, such as cultural and friendship associations, media, and people within the research and private sector, help to convey the CCP's narrative in Sweden.³⁸⁸ The main united front organisation, the China Council for the Promotion of Peaceful National Reunification (中国和平统一促进会, CCPPNR), also operates a division in Sweden. The Swedish CCPPNR has on occasion organised support for Beijing in issues such as the South China and East China Seas and in expressing

³⁸⁶ Säkerhetspolisen, n.d.

³⁸⁷ Försvarsmakten, n.d.

³⁸⁸ Nyrén (2020a).

dissatisfaction over a comedy show on Swedish TV.³⁸⁹ In 2019, the organisation reportedly gathered Chinese individuals in Sweden to study Xi Jinping's speech about Taiwan.³⁹⁰

Leaders from the Swedish CCPPNR are affiliated with other organisations in Sweden, particularly the Swedish Chinese National Association (瑞典华人总会, SCNA), which has been described by the PRC's ambassador to Sweden, Gui Congyou (桂从友), as the "backbone strength" of the Swedish CCPPNR.³⁹¹ The two organisations appears to work in symbiosis, with the SCNA helping to spread messages for the Swedish CCPPNR. For instance, in January 2020, the SCNA published a statement for the Swedish CCPPNR about elections in Taiwan, warning of the dangers of the Tsai Ing-wen government.³⁹² In March that same year, they issued another statement objecting to the United States's Taiwan Allies International Protection and Enhancement Initiative (TAIPEI) Act, of 2019.³⁹³ Other organisations affiliated with leaders of the Swedish CCPPNR include the Sweden Cantonese Chinese Association (瑞典广东华人协会代表) and the Nordic Zhigong Association (北欧致公协会, NZA).³⁹⁴ Members of the NZA are primarily active in science and the private sector, and the organisation is associated with the Zhigong Party, which has linkages to influential people in the Chinese state apparatus. Another organisation in Sweden worth mentioning is BRIX (Belt and Road Institute Executive Group in Sweden). Brix pushes for Swedish participation in Beijing's global infrastructure project, the Belt and Road Initiative. Apart from these organisations, Chinese language media also operate in Sweden, including the Nordic Chinese Newspaper (北欧华人报) and Nordic Chinese Times (北欧时报).³⁹⁵

The PRC Embassy also openly seeks to influence the discourse and practice regarding China in Sweden. It has become increasingly active in publishing articles and making appearances in Swedish media to spread its narrative or push back against what it perceives as challenges to Beijing's interests. In recent years, the embassy has also resorted to rhetorical attacks and remarks, consisting of indirect threats and personal accusations, against individuals or organisations that have expressed criticism against the PRC and the CCP.³⁹⁶ Its targets have included media outlets and journalists, human rights activists, scholars, political parties and authorities.³⁹⁷ In 2021, Swedish scholar Björn Jerdén was among those European

³⁸⁹ Nyrén (2020a): 6.

³⁹⁰ Sveriges Kinesiska Riksförbund, 2019-05-27.

³⁹¹ Nyrén (2020a): 7.

³⁹² Sveriges Kinesiska Riksförbund, 2020-01-12.

³⁹³ Sveriges Kinesiska Riksförbund, 2020-03-06.

³⁹⁴ Nyrén (2020a): 7; Nyrén (2020b).

³⁹⁵ Nyrén (2020a): 11.

³⁹⁶ Jerdén and Bohman (2019); Oksanen (2020).

³⁹⁷ Jerdén and Bohman (2019).

individuals and entities that Beijing targeted with sanctions.³⁹⁸ A particularly hard line has been applied against people and organisations that have criticised the PRC regarding Gui Minhai, but also about issues such as Xinjiang, Tibet, Hong Kong and Taiwan.³⁹⁹ Less overtly, the embassy issues replies and letters to media outlets and individuals, including journalists, activists and politicians, who have written or acted in ways that criticise the PRC.⁴⁰⁰ These embassy reactions include language that can often be perceived as implicitly threatening unpleasant consequences for the individual or organisation involved.

6.3 PRC influence on Taiwan in Sweden: incidents 2016-2021

The PRC is relatively active in pursuing its interests in Sweden. As part of this, Beijing resorts to a number of ways of isolating Taiwan. These methods involve targeting both individuals and organisations who highlight the rights of Taiwan. As such, there is palpable Chinese pressure on Sweden to distance itself from Taiwan, at the same time as Swedish responses to the PRC's influence efforts have been numerous.

6.3.1 The Chinese embassy's remarks about Taiwan in Sweden

In recent years, the Chinese Embassy in Sweden has increased its reactions to Swedish comments and events that relate to China. This includes issues pertaining to Taiwan. One way that the embassy channels its grievances is to issue news releases on its website or to submit replies in Swedish newspapers to articles it deems provocative.

In September 2018, the PRC Embassy lodged a protest with the Swedish public service television company, *Sveriges Television* (SVT).⁴⁰¹ The reason was its broadcast of a comedy show called *Svenska Nyheter*, which the embassy found insulting. Part of what was perceived as a provocation included a reference to a map of China without Taiwan. On its website, the embassy demanded an apology and reserved the right to take further action. As previously mentioned, the Swedish CCPPNR also raised vocal protest against SVT in this matter. Later that same year, in November, the embassy's website issued another news release to protest an article in a local newspaper, *Nya Wermlands-Tidningen* (NWT).⁴⁰² The article's author refers to Taiwan as a country, while urging the international community to

³⁹⁸ Timsit, 2021-03-23.

³⁹⁹ Oksanen (2020).

⁴⁰⁰ Lehto and Oksanen (2021).

⁴⁰¹ Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Sweden, 2018-09-22.

⁴⁰² Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Sweden, 2018-11-14.

stand up for Taiwan's democracy.⁴⁰³ On its website, the embassy argued that the article "breaches the basic principle of Sweden's foreign policies", and "grossly infringes on China's sovereignty and territorial integrity". Apart from sending a letter to the NWT declaring its opposition (more on this below), it cautioned that the article will "cause negative impact on the friendship between China and Sweden", and urges the NWT to avoid situations where the "One China" principle is violated.

In 2019, the PRC Embassy's website issued three news releases criticising Swedish media for giving attention to Taiwan. Two of these occasions included reactions against op-eds written by Daniel TC Liao, Representative of the Taipei Mission in Sweden. In February, in an article on SVT, Representative Liao argued that the PRC seeks to undermine Taiwan's democracy and called for support for increased Taiwanese participation in the UN system.⁴⁰⁴ Following the publication, the PRC Embassy's website condemned the article, as the embassy was "strongly dissatisfied with *Sveriges Television* providing platform for 'Taiwan independence' separatist activities."⁴⁰⁵ In October, the story was repeated. This time, Representative Liao wrote an article in the Swedish newspaper, *Dagens industri*, in which he urged Sweden to resist conceding to Beijing's pressure to limit Taiwan's space in Sweden.⁴⁰⁶ The PRC Embassy's website was quick to issue a similar condemnation, accusing the article for "blatantly advocat[ing] 'Taiwan independence'", and regretting that the newspaper provided the Taipei Mission in Sweden with a platform.⁴⁰⁷ A third embassy news release featuring Taiwan involved remarks on an article published by the local Swedish newspaper, *Nerikes Allehanda* (NA).⁴⁰⁸ The article emphasises Taiwan's democratic system, while advocating Taiwan's participation in the WHO. The embassy protested the reference to Taiwan as a country, while urging the author of the article and the newspaper to "abide by the One China principle" and "immediately correct the mistakes".⁴⁰⁹

The Chinese Embassy also reacts to articles on Taiwan by writing replies it submits to Swedish media. In 2021, this happened at least three times. In April, members of Swedish parliamentary Liberal Party published an op-ed piece in the Swedish newspaper, *Svenska Dagbladet* (SvD) calling for deeper Taiwanese integration into the international community.⁴¹⁰ Following its publication, Chinese Ambassador Gui Congyou published a reply in the newspaper, accusing the politicians for politicising and manipulating the Taiwan issue.⁴¹¹ A few months later, in August,

⁴⁰³ Olsson, 2018-11-23.

⁴⁰⁴ Liao, 2019-02-27.

⁴⁰⁵ Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Sweden, 2019-03-02.

⁴⁰⁶ Liao, 2019-10-10.

⁴⁰⁷ Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Sweden, 2019-10-12.

⁴⁰⁸ Ströman, 2019-05-15.

⁴⁰⁹ Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Sweden, 2019-05-17.

⁴¹⁰ Karlsbo et al., 2020-04-09.

⁴¹¹ Gui, 2020-04-15.

a guest writer wrote an op-ed piece for SvD expressing support for Lithuania's invitation to Taiwan to establish a representation in the country, even though Beijing was exerting heavy pressure on it.⁴¹² The PRC's embassy wrote a reply in the same newspaper, accusing the author of false statements, and that the content violated international norms for international relations and the principles of Swedish foreign policy.⁴¹³ The embassy's third reply came in October, following an op-ed piece in the local newspaper, *Barometern*, that called on Sweden to support Taiwan against military threats from Beijing.⁴¹⁴ A week later, a reply was sent from the embassy and published in the same newspaper, stressing that Taiwan is "an inalienable part of China", thus marking what was likely the first letter the embassy sent to a media outlet after Ambassador Gui Congyong had left Sweden.⁴¹⁵

6.3.2 Letters to critics: journalists, media outlets and politicians

Apart from public condemnation, the PRC Embassy has also adopted the strategy of writing letters directly to individual journalists and politicians, and media outlets and other organisations, to express its dissatisfaction.

In 2018, the embassy dispatched a letter to the editorial staff at the local newspaper, NWT, addressed to the political editor and author of the article, Henrik L. Barvå. The letter claims that the article "breaches the basic principle of Sweden's foreign policies" and "infringes on China's sovereignty and territorial integrity".⁴¹⁶ The embassy concludes the letter with a hope that the newspaper will "take caution on Taiwan-related issues", thus implicitly leaving the receiver of the letter with a sense of potential future repercussions. Yet, Mr. Barvå published the letter in the newspaper.

Nerikes Allehanda (NA), the local newspaper mentioned above, has been subjected to letters from the embassy for writing about Taiwan on three occasions. The first instance occurred in 2019, while the second and third times were in 2020 and 2021. In 2020, the embassy confronted the editorial staff at NA, following the paper's publication of a guest author, Taiwan's Foreign Minister Joseph Wu. In the letter, the embassy expresses strong dissatisfaction with NA for publishing the article, while describing it as propaganda for Taiwan independence and separation of China.⁴¹⁷ The third time NA received a letter from the PRC's embassy was in 2021, after NA journalist Lars Ströman interviewed Vincent Yao, the Representative of the Taipei Mission in Sweden.⁴¹⁸ The interview prompted the embassy to clarify

⁴¹² Lucas, 2021-08-22.

⁴¹³ Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Sweden, 2021-08-30.

⁴¹⁴ Tolgfors, 2021-10-10.

⁴¹⁵ Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Sweden, 2021-10-18.

⁴¹⁶ Barvå, 2018-11-22.

⁴¹⁷ Nesser, 2020-09-30.

⁴¹⁸ Ströman, 2021-02-06.

that they “will continue to take all necessary measures to safeguard national sovereignty and territorial integrity”.⁴¹⁹ Another local newspaper that has drawn the ire of the Chinese Embassy is *Bergslagsbladet/ Arboga Tidning*. The editorial staff received an e-mail sent by the PRC Embassy late on a Friday evening, complaining about the publication regarding its reporting on Taiwan.⁴²⁰

There may indeed be other individuals and organisations who have received letters that have not been made known to the public. At the same time, drawing from conversations with representatives from some of Sweden’s major media outlets, this does not seem to be a systematic and widespread occurrence across all outlets interviewed for this study.⁴²¹ Although the Chinese Embassy had at some point contacted all the media outlets interviewed, it varied significantly in terms of scope and substance. One interviewee said that they occasionally received reminders from the Chinese Embassy about issues they think that the media should cover or portray.⁴²² Another representative described how the embassy had sent letters to both the journalist and the editorial staff, complaining and lecturing the outlet about a particular topic.⁴²³ Others somewhat concurred with that picture, having occasionally received an angry reply from the embassy when it had not appreciated the outlet’s portrayal of China.⁴²⁴ However, these reactions were believed to be mostly odd occurrences rather than a systematic and frequent habit of being approached by the embassy. Moreover, some interviewees had not experienced any angry reactions from Chinese representatives at all, while one interviewee said that the embassy had sought to make contact with them in other venues.⁴²⁵

The media outlets have different approaches to address reactions by the embassy. While some of them allow the Chinese representatives to counter at least once what they perceive as erroneous reporting, others did not want to provide them any space at all. It should also be pointed out that these major media outlets are often contacted by state representatives from other foreign countries, as well. However, according to one interviewee, China differed in the way it sought to lecture the media and by pointing to various Swedish laws and regulations.

The embassy in Stockholm has not only sent letters and e-mails to media outlets in Sweden, but also to individual politicians. In September 2020, Swedish member of parliament for the Christian Democrats, Hampus Hagman, received a letter in response to individual motions that Hagman had made to the parliament about Taiwan. The embassy objected against the reference to Taiwan as a country and

⁴¹⁹ Lehto and Oksanen (2021): 6.

⁴²⁰ Lehto and Oksanen (2021): 6.

⁴²¹ Interviewees No. 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, and 22. See Section 9. List of Interviews.

⁴²² Interviewee No. 20. See Section 9. List of Interviews.

⁴²³ Interviewee No. 19. See Section 9. List of Interviews.

⁴²⁴ Interviewee No. 17 and 22. See Section 9. List of Interviews.

⁴²⁵ Interviewee No. 18 and 21. See Section 9. List of Interviews.

urged Hagman to cancel the motions.⁴²⁶ Hagman's colleagues in the party, Jakob Forssmed, who is also a Swedish member of parliament, and David Lega, a member of the European Parliament, were also forced to discover the embassy's dismay. In February 2021, the PRC's embassy in Sweden wrote to the two politicians after an appearance they made on the news site, *Europaportalen*, when they had argued that EU should sign a free trade agreement with Taiwan.⁴²⁷

Half a year later, David Lega and three other Swedish members of the European Parliament – Charlie Weimers, of the Swedish Democratic Party, Evin Incir, of the Social Democrats, and Jytte Guteland, also from the Social Democrats – were again contacted by the Chinese Embassy. They each received a letter following their support of a proposition by the European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs to deepen relations between the EU and Taiwan.⁴²⁸ The letter demanded that the four politicians withdraw their support of the resolution, or else they would be held accountable for whatever consequences ensued. Around the same time, Ambassador Gui Congyou also wrote a letter to Kenneth G. Forslund, a Swedish Social Democrat who headed the Foreign Committee in the Swedish parliament, to protest Forslund's expression of support for Lithuania, when China was simultaneously applying pressure on the country for deepening its relations with Taiwan.⁴²⁹ Such actions, the Ambassador wrote, may disturb the development of China's relations with Sweden.

6.3.3 Potential Chinese pressure on Swedish authorities and name changes in Sweden

Attention to and support for Taiwan has seemingly been growing among journalists and politicians in recent years. Yet, there have been instances when Swedish authorities have changed the names designating Taiwan, in line with Beijing's preferences, as well as experienced other pressure from the Chinese Embassy in Sweden.

In 2018, it was discovered that both the Swedish Pension Agency and the Swedish Tax Agency had switched their designation of Taiwan from "The Republic of China (Taiwan)" to "Taiwan, province of China". When asked about the name change, a representative from the Tax Agency referred to a suggestion from the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs to follow the international standard of land codes, ISO 3166.⁴³⁰ Reportedly, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had received a "question from the public", and thereafter contacted numerous Swedish authorities.⁴³¹ The revelation stirred angry reaction. The Taipei Mission in

⁴²⁶ Lehto and Oksanen (2021): 9.

⁴²⁷ Lehto and Oksanen (2021): 9.

⁴²⁸ Lindvall, 2021-09-08.

⁴²⁹ Svenska Dagbladet, 2021-09-08.

⁴³⁰ Olsson, 2018-03-26.

⁴³¹ Olsson, 2018-03-26.

Stockholm expressed dissatisfaction, while the Taiwan Ministry of Foreign Affairs contacted Sweden's representative in Taiwan, calling the name change "unacceptable".⁴³² Critics, among them *Human Rights Watch*, believed the decision emanated from pressure applied by the PRC.⁴³³ The incident was highlighted by both Swedish and international media, as well as by a member of the Swedish parliament.⁴³⁴ In early 2022, it was discovered that the Swedish Board of Student Finance (Centrala Studiestödsnämnden, CSN) had also changed its designation of Taiwan from "The Republic of China (Taiwan)" to "Taiwan, province of China".⁴³⁵ Reportedly, the change was referred to information being sent to CSN by the Swedish Tax Agency.⁴³⁶

Another incident involving a name change occurred at Linköping University in 2019. At an International Day performance competition for students from various countries, the event's organiser, the International Students Association (ISA), changed Taiwan's designation to "Taiwan/Chinese Province of Taipei". According to the ISA, the name change was necessary due to Swedish law, but the Taiwan Ministry of Foreign Affairs suspected pressure from the PRC Embassy in Sweden.⁴³⁷

In October 2019, the embassy reportedly exerted pressure on the Sheraton Hotel in Stockholm to deny the Taiwanese representation the use of a venue to hold an annual National Day reception. According to the Representative of the Taipei Mission, the hotel was contacted by the Chinese Embassy, which questioned them for providing the Taipei Mission with a venue, upon which the hotel informed the Mission that it would not be suitable for them to celebrate at the Sheraton Hotel.⁴³⁸ The hotel denied these events, however. The Taipei Mission eventually moved its celebrations to the Swedish History Museum, which reportedly also received a telephone call from the Chinese Embassy. According to a representative at the museum, the embassy questioned their decision to host the Taipei Mission, while pointing out "in a mocking tone" that, without a real ambassador, Taiwan is not a country.⁴³⁹

6.3.4 Taiwan-related activities in the Swedish parliament

Chinese efforts to isolate Taiwan around the world and to exert pressure on actors in Sweden have prompted growing attention among Swedish politicians. Their concerns are visible not least in the Swedish *Riksdag*, the Swedish parliament, where members of parliament (MPs) have been raising the issue of Taiwan more

⁴³² Everington, 2018-03-05; Nylander, J2018-03-13.

⁴³³ Nylander, 2018-03-13.

⁴³⁴ Sveriges Riksdag, 2018-03-14.

⁴³⁵ Olsson, 2022-01-22.

⁴³⁶ Olsson, 2022-01-22.

⁴³⁷ Liao, 2019-05-17; Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of China, 2019.

⁴³⁸ Forsberg, 2019-10-03.

⁴³⁹ Forsberg, 2019-10-03.

often than before. An overview of activities in the Swedish parliament between 2016 and 2021 shows that MPs are increasingly giving attention to the situation of Taiwan. Among activities by MPs, including written questions, motions, interpellations, reports and statements of opinion from the parliamentary committees, Taiwan-specific concern and attention has seen a significant uptick in 2020 and 2021.⁴⁴⁰

Table 1 shows the number of activities in which Swedish MPs have specifically addressed issues pertaining to Taiwan. As illustrated in the table, recent years have seen a significant Swedish MPs increasingly focusing attention on Taiwan. While the years between 2016 and 2019 saw a total of between 6 to 12 occasions per year, in 2020 and 2021 this number increased to 41 and 34, respectively, with all of 2021 not yet accounted for. Swedish MPs have particularly raised the issue through written questions to ministers and submission of proposals in the form of private members' motions.

Many issues reoccur over the years, although 2021 witnessed a notably high number of inquiries about the government's actions to support Taiwan in what is considered as Chinese military provocations against the island. A dominating feature throughout the time period, albeit intensifying in recent years, has been inquiries and motions regarding Taiwan's participation in international organisations. Several motions and written questions to ministers have urged the Swedish government to be a force for expanded inclusion of Taiwan in the international community. MPs have been putting particular focus on Taiwan's participation in the UN system, primarily concerning the WHO. A large number of the motions raised call for Sweden to work for a free-trade agreement between the EU and Taiwan, as well as a bilateral investment agreement between the two sides. Regarding bilateral Swedish-Taiwanese relations, a common proposal is to expand Business Sweden's mandate in Taipei and upgrade its representation to that of a "House of Sweden". Motions have also been raised proposing to give the Taipei Mission in Sweden the status of an embassy, and some MPs advocate acknowledging Taiwan as a country. Following the Swedish Tax Agency's change of the name from "The Republic of China (Taiwan)" to "Taiwan, province of China", several MPs voiced questions in reaction to the move.

Thus, Swedish politicians have shown growing concern for Taiwan. Activities in the parliament reflect not only mounting demands for supporting Taiwanese participation on the global stage, but also a push towards deepening Swedish-Taiwanese unofficial relations. In October 2021, the Swedish green party, *Miljöpartiet*, which is part of the government coalition, said that they wanted to see Sweden, together with other EU countries, work towards a recognition of Taiwan as an independent and sovereign state.⁴⁴¹ Moreover, Swedish minister of foreign affairs, Ann Linde, has expressed support for a bilateral investment

⁴⁴⁰ Sveriges Riksdag, *Dokument och lagar*, n.d. (Accessed: 2021-11-05).

⁴⁴¹ Ströman, 2021-10-18.

agreement between EU and Taiwan, as well as Taiwan's inclusion into the WHO.⁴⁴² In a reply to an opposition member in the parliament in December 2020, Linde said that "difference of opinions between the People's Republic of China and Taiwan must be resolved in a peaceful way, and in a way that corresponds with the will of the Taiwanese population".⁴⁴³ Considering the low willingness among the Taiwanese to unify with the PRC, this becomes a fine line to thread along the "One China" policy. However, she has opposed a proposition from the EU Parliament calling for an upgrade of EU's office in Taipei, considering that this contradicts EU's "One China" policy.⁴⁴⁴

Table 1. Activities by Swedish members of parliament regarding Taiwan. (Source: Sveriges Riksdag, *Dokument och lagar*, n.d.).

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021 (31/10)
Written questions	0	3	7	5	26	17
Motions	4	6	0	6	14	14
Interpellations	0	3	0	0	3	0
Reports and statements of opinion from the Foreign Affairs Committee	1	0	1	1	0	1
Reports and statements of opinion from the Parliamentary Committee on Industry and Trade	1	0	1	0	1	2
Total	6	12	9	12	41	34

6.4 Sweden's reactions on the international stage 2016–2021

Similar to Germany, Sweden also pursues the bulk of its multilateral engagement with the island democracy via the EU. Being a cornerstone of Sweden's general policy on China, the "government's approach takes its cue from the 2016 EU Strategy on China".⁴⁴⁵ In line with the EU, Sweden stipulates that it will "continue to develop its relations with Taiwan", as it adheres to the same overall EU approach to Taiwan that was described in Chapter 5, regarding Germany (Section 5.4).⁴⁴⁶ Hence, the Swedish government has generally adopted a favourable approach to Taiwan's inclusion in international organisations. The government says

⁴⁴² Palme, 2021-09-03.

⁴⁴³ Sveriges Riksdag, 2020-12-30.

⁴⁴⁴ Palme, 2021-09-03.

⁴⁴⁵ Sveriges Regering, 2019-09-26: 13.

⁴⁴⁶ Sveriges Regering, 2019-09-26: 13.

it continuously supports, through coordination and information exchanges with other EU countries, Taiwan's possibilities to participate in international organisations such as the WHO.

6.4.1 International organisations

As for the cases in the previous chapters, this section briefly looks at Swedish support for Taiwan's bid for participation in three prominent international organisations: WHO, ICAO, and INTERPOL.

World Health Organization (WHO): Sweden has regularly shown support for Taiwan's strive to re-enter the WHA as an observer. In 2020 and 2021, both Sweden's minister of foreign affairs, Ann Linde, and the prime minister, Stefan Löfven, expressed support for including Taiwan as an observer in the workings of the WHO.⁴⁴⁷ Sweden has reportedly played a central role in coordinating EU countries that participate in a grouping of countries in Geneva that back Taiwan's bid to the WHO.⁴⁴⁸ Ann Linde also expressed support in 2019 for Taiwanese participation, while in 2018 Sweden had seemingly at least lent its support via the EU.⁴⁴⁹ In 2017, then Foreign Minister Margot Wallström also conveyed Sweden's support for Taiwan in the WHO.⁴⁵⁰

International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO): Sweden has been positive about including Taiwan in the ICAO. In 2017, then Foreign Minister Margot Wallström expressed support for Taiwan's attendance in ICAO, as did the Swedish government as a whole in 2019.⁴⁵¹ Foreign Minister Linde has continued to express Swedish support for Taiwanese attendance.⁴⁵²

International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL): No reports of Swedish support for Taiwanese bids have been found. However, in view of statements by Swedish ministers and government representatives, Sweden has generally maintained a positive approach to increased Taiwanese participation in international organisations.

6.4.2 Sweden's multilateral engagement with Taiwan

Similar to Germany, much of the Swedish multilateral engagement with Taiwan takes place via EU. As mentioned in the previous chapter on Germany, EU pursues

⁴⁴⁷ Sveriges Riksdag, 2020-11-04; Palme, 2021-09-03; Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of China (Taiwan), 2021-06-01; Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of China (Taiwan), 2020-02-09; Taiwan News, 2020-11-14; Sveriges Riksdag, 2020-11-20.

⁴⁴⁸ Interviewee No. 16. See Section 9. List of Interviews.

⁴⁴⁹ Sveriges Riksdag, 2019-09-02; Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of China (Taiwan), 2018-05-15.

⁴⁵⁰ Everington, 2017-12-27.

⁴⁵¹ Sveriges Riksdag, 2017-12-05; Everington, 2017-12-27; Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of China (Taiwan), 2019-10-05.

⁴⁵² Sveriges Riksdag, 2020-11-20.

various channels of dialogues and collaboration in which Taiwan participates. To this end, much of Sweden's bilateral relations with Taiwan, as well as its general multilateral engagement, falls rather within the policy coordination conducted through the CFSP, in Brussels.

Swedish members in the European Parliament have been relatively active in highlighting Taiwan's situation. For instance, in September 2021, the EU Parliament adopted an initiative report that recommended that the Commission and the High Representative for CFSP work with the member states to deepen EU-Taiwan relations in political, economic and scientific areas.⁴⁵³ The rapporteur for the document was a Swedish member of the European Parliament, Charlie Weimers. The report urges action in terms of a bilateral investment agreement and changing the name of the European Economic and Trade Office in Taiwan to the European Union Office in Taiwan. It also emphasises the necessity for increased Taiwanese participation in international bodies.

Apart from the EU framework, Sweden has joined as a guest co-host of the GCTF. In September 2019, the Swedish representation in Taipei, then called the Swedish Trade and Investment Council in Taipei, helped organise a workshop focusing on media literacy and democracy. This was the first time a European country participated in the GCTF.⁴⁵⁴ Since then, Swedish participants have attended GCTF workshops on other topics, for example women's empowerment.⁴⁵⁵

6.5 Summary: Sweden-Taiwan

Taiwan has historically not been a well-known place in the mind of the Swedish public. However, alongside growing cross-strait tensions, the issue of Taiwan has drawn an increasing amount of attention in Sweden's public debate. The PRC has noticed this, keenly signalling its disgruntlement to actors whenever the Taiwan issue is brought up. The Chinese side is actively trying to influence and police the Swedish engagement with Taiwan. Even though China has achieved a few successful instances of exerting its pressure, it is doubtful whether it is a productive approach to pursue in Sweden. In fact, Swedish actors have made numerous supportive moves in support of Taiwan.

The Chinese Embassy in Sweden has been active in trying to influence Swedish actions on issues concerning China. The issue of Taiwan has indeed not been an exception to this approach. As outlined above, the PRC Embassy in Sweden seeks to quell both politicians and journalists who write or act in positive terms on Taiwan. By sending direct letters to individuals and organisations and threatening consequences, Beijing attempts to police and silence voices that are vocal in

⁴⁵³ European Parliament, 2021-09-22.

⁴⁵⁴ Taiwan Today, 2019-09-11.

⁴⁵⁵ American Institute in Taiwan, 2021-10-27.

support of Taiwan. As such, it seeks to influence and control the discourse about Taiwan, as well as prevent any forthcoming actions that may create more presence for Taiwan in Sweden and thereby also globally. Activities by united front organisations seek to further strengthen these aspirations. Similarly, statements on the embassy's website also serve the purpose of disciplining the Swedish public about Beijing's "One China" principle, and ensure that these red lines are known and not challenged without potential consequences. As such, clear and frequent activities are undertaken by the Chinese side to isolate Taiwan and curtail its room to manoeuvre in Sweden.

China has experienced some degree of success in doing this. A case in point is when Swedish government authorities changed Taiwan's designation from "The Republic of China (Taiwan)" to "Taiwan, province of China." Allegedly, this stemmed from outside influence. The Sheraton Hotel's refusal to host the National Day reception of the Taipei Mission in Stockholm was also most likely a consequence of Chinese pressure. These are indeed examples of Taiwanese space being limited as a result of Chinese activities. In the long run, it remains to be seen whether Chinese pressure and policing of MPs, media outlets and the general public will be successfully exchanged for self-censorship and restraint in actions pertaining to Taiwan. Taking a long-term perspective, the adoption of those types of self-inflicted red lines would achieve Beijing's goal, which in turn would deepen Taiwan's international isolation and, ostensibly, push the Taipei government to negotiate with Beijing over its status.

Yet, so far, this seems to have been counterproductive, or at least lacking in effect. Media outlets defiantly publish letters that they have received from the embassy. While we do not know to what extent journalists and media organisations are *not* making contact with the Chinese public, newspapers continue to write about Taiwan, often in supportive fashion. Swedish politicians have also significantly increased their attention to Taiwan in the parliament in recent years. They mostly seek to enhance ties with Taiwan and deepen parliamentary support to the island. Much of the motions in parliament advocate strong support for increased Taiwanese space in international organisations. This pertains in particular not only to the WHO and the ICAO, but also to the international community and the UN system in its entirety. With regards to at least the WHO and ICAO, the Swedish government supports Taiwan's bid for participation as an observer. Indeed, all of this also applies to Swedish members of the European Parliament, who often strive for strengthening ties with Taiwan.

Thus, it is clear that there are Chinese influence operations and that they serve the purpose of affecting Swedish engagement with Taiwan. Publicly, this takes place through vocal protests and policing, while less publicly this also involves signalling and intimidation of actors that pursue Taiwan-friendly actions. By consistently drawing up red lines, the end goal is to isolate Taiwan's room for engagement. Although successful examples exist, Sweden seems, overall, to be

taking steps towards widening Taiwan's role abroad, rather than conceding to Chinese pressure. Indeed, clear boundaries and caution prevail in the Swedish government. Similar to the German case, Swedish statements and policies are consistently within the "One China" policy of Sweden and EU, and the country is unambiguous about pursuing diplomatic relations with the PRC. Sweden is also highly cautious to not stretch beyond the realms of the unofficial relationship. Yet, efforts for broadening Taiwan's space are on the rise, including strengthening bilateral Swedish-Taiwanese relations, as well as Taiwan's international engagement.

7 Summary and conclusions

This study set out to analyse Chinese efforts to go beyond its borders to isolate Taiwan. The PRC's coercive actions to isolate Taiwan in democratic countries, and how these democratic powers have responded to these isolation efforts, in their own countries and on the international scene, are examined. Drawing from these objectives, the report investigates two driving research questions:

- How does China seek to isolate Taiwan through coercive actions that seek to pressure actors within the democratic countries – Japan, South Korea, Germany, and Sweden – and in the international community?
- How do these democratic countries – Japan, South Korea, Germany, and Sweden – respond to China's coercive actions and efforts to isolate Taiwan?

7.1 Summary of Chinese coercive actions in the examined countries

Regarding the first question, it is clear that the PRC are conducting various types of coercive actions with the purpose of isolating Taiwan in all four of the countries examined. Data access varies between the four countries, but some of China's activities are visible in all cases. In short, China's means of isolating Taiwan in the four countries involve a range of methods: posting "disciplinary" public statements; publishing articles in media; contacting and intimidating media outlets, journalists, and politicians; and pressuring civil society, private enterprises, and academia to refrain from engagements with Taiwan.

Beijing's primary aim is to set out red lines for how actors in each country should approach Taiwan. The PRC seeks to push organisations and individuals to refrain from engagements with the Taiwanese, and to instill its "One China" principle as a universal stance that all countries must adhere to. This pressure occurs via means that are not only open to public view, but also through channels that are more covert, in both targeted and indirect ways. It uses both carrots and sticks, and not seldom these involve intimidation and threats. A major goal is thus to make actors practice self-censorship by avoiding engagement with Taiwan.

A common feature in all of the countries examined is the Chinese Embassy's habit of posting statements in reaction to events related to Taiwan. These statements serve the purpose of signalling Beijing's discontent, and publicly clarifying its red lines. Mostly, they have targeted media outlets for what Beijing perceives to be their mishandling of reporting on Taiwan, but many statements also target politicians, governments, and researchers. The impact of these statements is unclear, as the majority of the posts probably reach few readers in the particular

country. However, these statements occasionally include indirect threats of future consequences, which fills the signalling with intimidation. The risk is that organisations and individuals adopt self-censorship in speaking or writing about Taiwan. Indeed, this is also part of Beijing's strategy, which it seeks to instill in all the countries examined. As such, this comprises part of the greater effort to isolate Taiwan in various circumstances.

In all four countries, the Chinese Embassy has taken to publishing articles in the national or local media. The articles refute previous reporting about Taiwan, serving a similar purpose to the embassy's postings, namely, to clarify its red lines and disseminate its position on Taiwan. However, in at least three cases – Japan, Germany, and Sweden – the Chinese embassies have contacted editorial staff and the individual journalists, sometimes in an intimidating tone. In Japan, the Chinese Embassy has reportedly contacted local media by phoning or arranging meetings with them in order to exert pressure on what they should report about Taiwan. Apparently, certain rules are also imposed for how to report about Taiwan, while the Chinese side has refused visas and, in Japan, cancelled press conferences for journalists they believe have written too positively about Taiwan. These are all clear attempts to nudge and influence media towards downgrading their approach to Taiwan. By seeking to shape public reporting about Taiwan, it constitutes an important factor in shrinking Taiwan's manoeuvring space abroad. Moreover, while no reports of targeting individual journalists in South Korea have been identified, the phenomenon is likely to occur to some degree in all four examined countries.

China's nudging actors to shift their stance on Taiwan does not stop with the media. In all four countries, there were instances when the Chinese Embassy sought to influence actors such as scholars, universities, private enterprises, authorities, or politicians. In Germany, the Chinese side has pressured private outlets as well as organisers of sports and university events, while also demanding the cancellation of a scholarly seminar. Similar influence operations have been observed in Sweden, where private enterprises have also experienced pressure from the Chinese Embassy to act according to its interests regarding Taiwan. Swedish authorities have likely also been subjected to Chinese efforts to influence name standards, while Swedish members of parliament have received letters from the Chinese Embassy about their stances on Taiwan. In Japan, Chinese representatives have contacted local politicians to complain about their resolutions on Taiwan, while in South Korea influence operations about Taiwan also seem to be present, albeit more difficult to identify. In South Korea, the Chinese side has apparently applied pressure on international conferences as well as the entertainment industry, while suspicions have surfaced about close contacts with South Korean congress people, in addition to indications of Chinese pressure being exerted on the South Korean government ahead of international summits where the issue of Taiwan might be raised. Thus, the PRC has been active in seeking to

isolate Taiwan in these four examined countries by targeting a wide range of areas, organisations and individuals.

Finally, organisations associated with the united front work department have activities in all four countries. They actively advocate, of course, for unification of Taiwan with China. Yet, it is unclear to what extent they are successful. Most of the activities identified in this report have been limited to meetings, such as study sessions on Xi Jinping's speech about Taiwan, which would not seem to have much reach beyond its own closed sphere. The nature of united front work activities, however, is difficult to discern, as the activities might be a nudging force operating indirectly via venues in cultural, economic, as well as political areas.

In sum, all four of the cases the study examined show that the PRC is actively seeking to squeeze Taiwan's space. China conducts coercive activities to pressure and thereby dissuade various actors from engaging with Taiwan. Chinese influence efforts target a wide range of organisations and individuals, such as politicians, authorities, media outlets, journalists, civil society, private enterprises, and the general public. By criticising and intimidating actors who engage with Taiwan, China seeks to discipline them to refrain from doing so. Additionally, it also uses carrots and sticks to shape or nudge actors into acting according to Beijing's interests regarding Taiwan.

7.2 Summary of responses among the countries examined

The study's second question refers to how the examined countries have responded to Chinese efforts to isolate Taiwan. This pertains to both the domestic and the international situation. The findings indicate a somewhat mixed result. In general, Chinese efforts to influence or cancel various events have not been successful, but there are also occasions where actors have complied with Chinese pressure. In Sweden, name changes by authorities and a hotel's refusal to host Taiwan's National Day celebrations are examples of Chinese influence gaining ground at the expense of Taiwan's interests. Similarly, the success of Chinese pressure tactics is also indicated when German companies and organisers of sports events have changed Taiwan's designation. However, from a wider and more comprehensive perspective, the case studies reveal notable examples of the rise of social movements that are concerned for Taiwan. With the possible exception of South Korea, there are also indications that the countries are seeking warmer ties with Taiwan, albeit clearly within the scope of the current "One China" policy.

Apart from the US, Japan is probably Taiwan's most important partner. Japan has also taken some highly notable actions in recent years, indicating closer Japanese-Taiwanese ties. To Beijing's frustration, Japanese high officials have increasingly stated that the situation in Taiwan is linked to Japanese security. This has been backed up by highlighting Taiwan's importance in both the *Blue Book* and the

defense white book, while for the first time, in 2021, the ruling party, the LDP, engaged in security talks with Taiwan's ruling party, the DPP. In addition, symbolically significant moves, such as Japan's renaming its representative office in Taiwan and cooperating on COVID-19 vaccines have helped deepen Japan-Taiwan ties. These moves have been further strengthened by Japanese support for increased Taiwanese participation in international organisations, as well as its other multilateral engagement with and for Taiwan. Japan supports Taiwan's bid as an observer in the WHO, ICAO, and INTERPOL, while also backing its membership in the CPTPP. Japan also co-hosts GCTF workshops and with the US is reportedly preparing its military to be ready for a possible Taiwan contingency. As such, what has often been a diplomatically cautious Japan has lately shown noteworthy support for Taiwan.

South Korea, the other Asian power in this study, has on the contrary been highly reluctant to touch such a sensitive issue as Taiwan. Although President Moon joined US President Biden in a joint summit statement emphasising their concern for security in the Taiwan Strait (which reportedly preceded significant diplomatic negotiations with Beijing, as well as being followed up by assurances about not criticising China), the South Korean government has often refrained from showing support for Taiwan. While supporting Taiwan's bid for the ICAO, South Korea explicitly declined to support Taiwan's aspirations to join the WHO. Seoul's multilateral engagements with Taiwan are also scarce. Thus, the South Korean government is very careful to avoid crossing any red lines and provoking Beijing over the Taiwan issue.

The largest European power, Germany, has also been cautious on matters relating to China. However, although the government has ensured that it has stayed safely within the boundaries of the "One China" policy, it has shown support for Taiwan's striving to participate in international organisations. Germany has backed Taiwan's bids for joining the WHO, ICAO, and INTERPOL. German actors have also generally been non-compliant in the face of the Chinese influence operations unveiled in this study. Further, German parliamentary parties are moving to intensify relations with Taiwan. As such, although the CDU-led government has maintained a controlling and conservative approach within the scope of the "One China" policy, there are potential movements in Germany's new administration who may change its approach toward China and Taiwan.

The Swedish response to Chinese efforts to compromise Taiwan has generally indicated a growing sense of support for the Taiwanese presence abroad. Similar to the other cases, Swedish actions remain well within the confines of the "One China" policy. Even so, there are stronger undercurrents in support of increased for Taiwan. Recent years have witnessed how attention to Taiwan has increased, with more members of parliament calling for a deepening of the unofficial relationship with Taiwan. The Swedish government has adopted a general approach of supporting increased Taiwanese participation in international organisations. As

such, Stockholm has backed Taiwan's bid for participation in the WHO and ICAO, while the support for INTERPOL remains unspoken, even while keeping in mind the overriding stance that Sweden wants to see that Taiwan's global presence increases. In the GCTF workshops, it has also expressed support for advancing a bilateral investment agreement between the EU and Taiwan. Thus, Sweden, too, is a country that is taking a cautious but perhaps incrementally supportive approach to Taiwan.

7.3 Concluding discussion and consequences

The study shows how Chinese influence operations that seek to isolate Taiwan are present in all four of the examined countries. However, the countries' responses are both different and similar. These features have country-specific reasons that are often characterised by security-related concerns.

Considering the two Asian regional powers, Japan is moving closer to Taiwan, while South Korea is maintaining a significantly distant approach to the island democracy. In the case of Japan, it has serious security concerns about the issue of Taiwan. A Taiwan contingency is highly likely to draw Japan into the conflict. Its closest ally, the US, would almost certainly be involved in a military confrontation, which would also pull Japan into the heat. Further, given Taiwan's strategic location in the first-island chain, Tokyo has strong interests in not seeing the PRC overtake the island. Additionally, there are close affinities between the Japanese and Taiwanese people. Historically, Japan has close ties with Taiwan, at the same time as anti-Chinese sentiments are very high, reflecting complicated historical Sino-Japanese relations as well as growing unease over an increasingly authoritarian PRC. Thus, there is an array of factors that, combined, are pushing Tokyo to adopt a more favourable stance towards Taipei, while taking cautious measures against an increasingly powerful Beijing. That said, Tokyo will remain careful, and has no interest in changing its course on Taiwan's diplomatic status. But, for the moment, it seems set on gradually deepening its ties with Taipei.

Seoul comes from a similar yet still different place in its security concerns about Taiwan. For the South Korean government, the North Korean threat looms large over its relations with the PRC. Beijing holds significant sway in any resolution on the Korean peninsula, which always constitutes Seoul's primary security concern. In addition, not only may historically complicated Sino-Korean ties affect South Korea's conservative approach towards China, but also their close geographic proximity is likely to impact on Korean hesitance to push Beijing's red buttons. Thus, coupled with strong economic ties with China, Seoul is perhaps more reluctant than any other country in this study to provoke Beijing. Hence, although there is likely much sympathy for the Taiwanese people, Taiwan is not an issue that is prioritised enough for Seoul to cross Beijing over. This helps

explain the somewhat distanced and cautious approach Seoul takes regarding Taiwan. Even so, it is an issue that South Korea may become increasingly compelled to take a position on. Following increasingly tense US-China relations, Seoul might find itself in the crossfire. Moreover, considering that there are also growing anti-Chinese sentiments in South Korea, Seoul's balancing act on Taiwan may only intensify going forward.

The European cases in this study are less exposed to the immediate security implications of a possible Taiwan contingency. However, both Germany and Sweden have large economic interests, not only in China and Taiwan in particular, but foremost in a peaceful and stable East Asian region. They are also outspoken about protecting democratic values, at the same time as they have little desire to take any position on the issue of sovereignty. These are the quandaries riddling Germany and Sweden and that may also explain the current situation, in which the incumbent governments maintain cautious approaches, while parliamentary sentiments call for deepening ties with Taiwan. Even so, Germany and Sweden are both part of Europe's growing unease over China's global influence. The character of the recent warm rhetoric about Taiwan is certainly also a reflection of their wariness of China. As Germany and Sweden feel intimidated and pressured by an authoritarian Beijing that pushes its own interests, the issue of Taiwan's democratic system is eliciting growing sympathy among policymakers and society as a whole. As such, policies pertaining to Taiwan are likely to be closely connected to Germany and Sweden's overall relations with Beijing. Given that Sino-European ties are moving towards an increasingly competitive relationship, countries such as Germany and Sweden may harness cooperation with democracies around the world. As a result, they are also likely to adopt warmer stances towards Taiwan in future.

It is important to point out that all four countries are highly reluctant to alter the unofficial status of their relationship with Taiwan. The question of potentially deepening ties with Taiwan is rather about using more of the wiggle room that is present within the present boundaries of the "One China" policy. Further, growing sympathies within many of these countries do not arise in a vacuum. They emerge in a context where suspicions and unease are growing about an increasingly more authoritarian China becoming more powerful and both directly and indirectly affect these countries' domestic politics and foreign affairs. Most, if not all, of these four examined countries have experienced souring relations with Beijing, with little prospect of less tension in the near future. Likewise, Chinese influence activities in these countries are not only about Taiwan. They occur in a context where China seeks to influence domestic and international narratives on a range of issues, where the Taiwan issue is only one among many.

7.3.1 Consequences from the findings

The study arrives at two main findings. The first finding is that the PRC is pursuing coercive actions in the examined countries, for the purpose of isolating Taiwan via means such as the posting of “disciplinary” public statements; publishing articles in the media; contacting and intimidating media outlets, journalists, and politicians; and pressuring civil society, private enterprises, and academia. Beijing’s principle aim with these actions is to draw clear red lines for how actors can engage with Taiwan and consequently make individuals and organizations practice self-censorship concerning Taiwan. The second finding points to indications that the democracies examined here in general are seeking to deepen their unofficial relations with Taiwan.

These two findings result in a dilemma that is about to rapidly intensify, and that bears consequences that will become increasingly more palpable for all involved parties. On the one hand, Beijing views Taiwan through the prism of strict national security, which is coupled with deep sentiments of nationalism. The PRC is ramping up its military, diplomatic and economic pressure on Taiwan, while its tolerance for other countries’ engagement with Taiwan is wearing increasingly thin. On the other hand, along with more deeply running tensions between many democracies and Beijing, sympathy for Taiwan and calls for intensified engagement with Taipei are likely to grow among many democratic countries, such as those examined in this study. Further, as Sino-American tensions continue, the Taiwan issue is only likely to become more precarious. Thus, conflicting positions on a very volatile issue are probably about to intensify. As a result, the sensitive issue of Taiwan is likely to become increasingly relevant not only on the international scene, but also in democracies’ domestic life.

From the Taiwanese perspective, a growing amount of international support among regional powers such as Japan and Germany is of importance. The Tsai administration has called for deeper relations with democracies around the world, as a counterweight to the growing pressure from Beijing. Of course, Taiwan’s relations with the US remain its most crucial relationship. Nonetheless, by tying itself closer to countries and regions with diplomatic and economic influence, Taipei’s hopes are that the PRC’s own cost-benefit calculation of taking military action against Taiwan recognises that the costs will be too high. Indeed, Japan is a key partner for Taiwan, but the weight of South Korea and European countries such as Germany and Sweden is also of great significance for Taipei. Thus, the consequences of successful Chinese efforts to isolate Taiwan abroad have a detrimental effect on Taipei. However, if more regional partners seek to deepen their unofficial ties with Taiwan, its position vis-à-vis Beijing is strengthened.

Beijing is likely to continue pushing ahead to pressure other countries to refrain from engaging with Taiwan. For the PRC, closer ties between Taipei and countries such as those examined in this study are frustrating. The consequences for China are not only worsening relations with a greater number of countries, but also that

it may be more difficult to realise its long-term goal of unifying Taiwan with China. Given the great importance that the PRC attaches to Taiwan for achieving its overarching goal of national rejuvenation, Beijing is likely to step up its pressure and the potential repercussions against countries who deepen ties with Taipei.

For regional powers in Asia such as Japan and South Korea, Taiwan is likely to become an increasingly contentious issue. Unstable development in the Taiwan Strait will substantially test these two countries' balancing of interests between Beijing and Washington. Indeed, the consequences of a conflict in the Taiwan Strait would be severe for both Japan and South Korea. Tokyo is seemingly already on the way to deepening its ties with Taipei. However, as Japan has no interest in going beyond an unofficial relationship with Taiwan, it will have to tread a fine line, potentially facing intensified pressure from Beijing. Seoul seeks to distance itself from the issue of the Taiwan Strait. Although the US might mount more pressure on Seoul to take action, it is likely to remain very cautious not to provoke Beijing.

Finally, looking more closely at potential consequences for European powers such as Germany and Sweden, they face challenges similar to those of the aforementioned Asian powers, albeit with lesser immediate security implications. As Chinese actions to isolate Taiwan are likely to continue, an inclination to strengthen ties with Taiwan may cause further tensions with the PRC. The issue of Taiwan is likely to become increasingly tense in the near future, and this will prompt reactions from European countries. Not only are economic interests dependent on a peaceful and stable Taiwan Strait, but calls for stronger positions on questions of democracy and sovereignty will find their way to Europe. Indeed, developments in the Taiwan Strait are already attracting increased attention among politicians and the public in general.

European countries seeking to expand their engagement with Taiwan within the set framework of the "One China" policy will therefore have to deem what the best means are for them doing so. They will have to use a toolkit that intensifies yet remains within the realm of an unofficial relationship. This implies identifying the scope of the space and selecting productive engagement with Taiwan. It involves forward-thinking about their engagements, asking, for example, how best to implement bilateral trade and investment agreements, deepen exchanges in areas such as education and science and research, develop parliamentary party cooperation, and where and how to develop ministerial exchanges. A central part of the Chinese approach is to set out red lines for other actors on how to engage with Taiwan. It is therefore important not to fall into the Chinese trap of self-censorship, but rather pursue and develop ties with Taiwanese counterparts.

For those states seeking to further their support and expand their ties to the island democracy, numerous factors need to be accounted for and concrete actions are at hand. An important start is to anchor and distinguish a state's "One China" policy

vis-à-vis Beijing's "One China" principle. Beijing often intentionally conflates the policy and the principle, to the advantage of the PRC narrative in international institutions. Another concrete way of strengthening Taiwan's position is to increase and enhance Taiwan's integration in regional economies. For the European countries, pushing for a conclusion of both a bilateral investment agreement and a free trade agreement between EU and Taiwan are actions that would be supportive of Taiwan. In Asia, advocacy for Taiwan's inclusion in multilateral trading blocs such as the CPTPP and RCEP constitutes similar measures. As Beijing pressures countries to refrain from signing trade agreements with Taiwan, doing so will put governments in the crossfire.

Taiwan's inclusion in international bodies is of great importance to it. Insisting on Taiwan's participation as an observer in international organisations constitutes the kind of issue that is likely to come to the fore for many member states. Democratic states may want to seek informal groupings of like-minded democracies in advocating these issues. Likewise, informal groupings of countries to collectively push for and include Taiwan on overarching issues such as scientific and technology cooperation, people-to-people exchanges and interconnectivity, are also approaches that democratic states may seek to pursue. Cooperation in fields such as media, health, and high-tech is indeed possible. This is already happening, in part, within the framework of EU's various dialogues with Taiwan, for example the EU-Taiwan dialogue on digitalisation. By integrating this approach with that of other democracies in the Indo-Pacific region, the cooperative and enhancing elements would be even stronger. Deepening various research activities and exchanges within the GFTC is another way to move forward, but also on a bilateral level.

Looking forward, future research will benefit from exploring how these means for strengthening ties can be constructed in a most successful way. For instance, by examining the output of various fields of cooperation between Taiwan and its counterparts, studies can assess its efficiency and subsequently also formulate improvements. Further, given the findings of this report that shows how China seeks to isolate Taiwan in third countries, future research should also consider looking into more cases where Beijing seeks to exert its influence to curtail Taiwanese manoeuvring space. A case in point is Lithuania, which has been subjected to significant economic coercion by Beijing due to the country's deepening approach to Taiwan. It would be interesting to examine the effects of Beijing's measures on the Lithuanian economy and the overall European response to the coercion, as well as what it means for Taiwan's general operational space. Other interesting case studies for future research would be large and influential European countries such as France and the UK.

Thus, in conclusion, advancing ties with Taiwan will require ways of finding actions that strengthen the glue that holds the relations together. Countries need to gauge the engagements that are provided within an unofficial relationship, while

still being productive and helpful for both sides. The examples above are far from providing sufficient support for Taiwanese independence, and fall within the prescribed “One China” policy framework. Even so, many of these approaches will stir up reactions from Beijing, even though they may be within the bounds of its incumbent “One China” policy. Strengthening parliamentary cooperation and finding ways to conduct ministerial exchanges are politically complicated and sensitive activities. Yet, they are fully feasible methods for strengthening important engagement. Thus, European countries will have to navigate among their options, while being prepared to face Beijing’s further pressure to isolate Taiwan.

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9 List of interviews

Interviewees	Date
Interviewee No. 1: Japanese professor at research institute in Japan	2021-06
Interviewee No. 2: Japanese professor at research institute in Japan	2021-08
Interviewee No. 3: Japanese professor at university in Japan	2021-06
Interviewee No. 4: Japanese professor at university in Japan	2021-06
Interviewee No. 5: Japanese professor at university in Japan	2021-09
Interviewee No. 6: Official from the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in Japan	2021-08
Interviewee No. 7: Japanese journalist at Japanese media outlet	2021-09
Interviewee No. 8: Japanese journalist at Japanese media outlet	2021-09
Interviewee No. 9: South Korean professor in South Korea	2021-10
Interviewee No. 10: South Korean researcher	2021-10
Interviewee No. 11: Official from the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in Germany	2021-06
Interviewee No. 12: German scholar at research institute in Germany	2021-11
Interviewee No. 13: German scholar at research institute in Germany	2021-12
Interviewee No. 14: German professor at university in Germany	2021-11
Interviewee No. 15: Government official at German Government Offices	2021-11
Interviewee No. 16: Official from the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in Sweden	2021-06, 2021-10
Interviewee No. 17: Swedish journalist in Swedish media outlet	2021-11
Interviewee No. 18: Swedish journalist in Swedish media outlet	2021-11
Interviewee No. 19: Swedish journalist in Swedish media outlet	2021-11
Interviewee No. 20: Swedish journalist in Swedish media outlet	2021-11
Interviewee No. 21: Swedish journalist in Swedish media outlet	2021-11
Interviewee No. 22: Swedish journalist in Swedish media outlet	2021-11

In recent years, the situation in the Taiwan Strait has become increasingly strained. China has intensified its pressure on Taiwan, stepping up its military presence and threats, while exerting economic coercion and political warfare, against and around the island. At the same time, Beijing's efforts to isolate Taiwan also occur in the global arena, both within the international community and the internal affairs of numerous third countries.

Based on an analysis of official documents, media reports, academic publications, and interviews, this study examines how China pursues coercive actions to pressure actors in four democratic countries – Japan, South Korea, Germany, and Sweden – to refrain from engaging with Taiwan. It also investigates how these four states have responded to Chinese efforts to isolate Taiwan, both at domestic and international levels. By closely considering Chinese actions, the analysis identifies how China uses various overt and covert means to set out red lines for how these four countries engage with Taiwan. With the possible exception of South Korea, it also finds that the response among the examined countries has been to move closer to and support Taiwan, although keeping within the confines of their unofficial relationships. Consequently, frictions over the sensitive issue of Taiwan are likely to grow, as the dilemmas it arouses are becoming increasingly relevant both beyond the Taiwan Strait and making their mark in the domestic life of other countries.