

## Time for EU to back Taiwan directly

Written by Michael Danielsen  
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In foreign policy we should act when we can stop something bad from happening without compromising our own morals, but do not expect the EU to assist Taiwan soon with regard to increasing Chinese pressure, because the EU's Taiwan policies lack substance and it tends to focus on political statements with poor or no real political value.

The problem with the EU is well known. We are witness to the classic dilemma that the EU is an economic superpower with no coherent foreign policy. Consequently, its high ambitions in promoting human rights and democratic values cannot compete with Chinese trade and investments in Europe.

Chinese pressure on Taiwan has over the past two years reached an unreasonably high level. Under such circumstances it is not enough to talk. Actions are required.

When will the EU start delivering results that significantly benefit Taiwan?

The EU can deliver if its members agree to it. For instance, EU nations continue to praise Taiwan's efforts in promoting health internationally as European Economic and Trade Office Director Madeleine Majorenko did in August, but it has failed to deliver on Taiwan's invitation to the World Health Assembly for the past two years. When will Taiwan get an invitation?

The EU also wants Taiwan to be a part of the global discussion, but continues to block Taiwan's top five government officials from traveling to the EU. When will Taiwan's president, vice president, premier, minister of national defense and minister of foreign affairs be able to visit the EU for global discussions?

Taiwan needs military equipment to defend itself against an increasingly assertive China. When will the EU allow military sales to Taiwan? The US is the sole provider of military equipment to Taiwan, making defense more expensive for taxpayers.

The list is much longer and includes an investment agreement that is being looked at in parallel

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with a Chinese agreement. Why is a parallel agreement with China necessary?

The lack of substance in the EU's actions is even more surprising knowing that delivery on these areas does not violate the EU's so-called "one China" policy. In the EU's "one China" policy, the EU prefers to maintain the "status quo" between Taiwan and China, and supports Taiwan's meaningful participation in international organizations that do not require statehood.

If the EU cannot dream up its own ideas, it can find inspiration in the US, which has introduced the Taiwan Travel Act and the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2019.

Historically, the EU has been reactive rather than proactive toward Taiwan. Consequently, it would require a significant change of mindset to move the bloc in a more proactive direction. For instance, the EU established its representative office in Taiwan in 2003 after Taiwan's accession to the WTO and many years of investment by the private sector without official support. Taiwan's visa exemption for the EU was only introduced after the Lisbon Treaty when unanimity was no longer required. The UK was ahead of the EU on this.

On the other side of the equation, Taiwan continues praising the EU's symbolic talk because it appears afraid of being accused of being a troublemaker.

Taiwan's foreign policies make sense on many levels, but tend to lock Taiwan and the EU in a hopeless situation only benefiting China. For the EU, foreign policy should not always be about what is rationally best for the union in all cases.

In relation to Taiwan, the EU needs to place values higher than economics. So, when it rightly criticizes Taiwan for recent executions, it needs to look at itself in a broader human rights and democratic perspective.

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