

# **The European Union and the Two Sides of the Taiwan Strait (1996-2009) – A Content Analysis**

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*The author uses content analysis to examine the European Union's (EU's) policy on relations between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait from 1996 to 2009. During this period, the EU devoted increasing amounts of attention to this flashpoint in East Asia. For geographical reasons, the EU has fewer strategic interests in this region than the United States. Therefore trade and economic interests are high on the EU agenda. Nonetheless, these interests can only be secured if there is peace and stability between the two sides of the Strait. The entry of new member states into the EU since 2004 may have influenced its policy on cross-Strait relations. The firm adherence to democratic values among EU member states is the main reason behind the incessant friction between these states and China. This culminated in the abrupt canceling of the eleventh Sino-EU summit meeting by Beijing in protest at the Dalai Lama's tour of Europe in 2008. Thanks to the change of government in Taipei in May that year, a new era of reconciliation with Beijing has begun. This gives China a free hand to tackle other issues of interest. Also, China has suffered much less from the recent global financial crisis than either the United States or Europe. Yet there is too much at stake for both China and the EU for them to be at odds with each other in the long run.*

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Ten East European and Mediterranean countries joined the European Union (EU) on May 1, 2004. Romania and Bulgaria also became EU members on January 1, 2007. With the addition of Poland and the three Baltic states, the Baltic Sea has become a domestic "lake" of the European Union. The membership of Romania and Bulgaria brought the expansion of the EU into the Black Sea and Slovenia's membership will involve the EU more actively in Balkan affairs. Cyprus and Malta have extended the influence of the EU to the Middle East and North Africa.

This enlargement means that the EU must pay closer attention to international affairs in general. Additionally the U.S.-led war against Iraq in 2003 opened up a division between the old and the new Europe. This gave the administration of President George W. Bush more room for maneuver in its EU policy. Against this backdrop, I shall examine changes in the EU's policy toward the issue of relations between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait.

### **Research Scope, Theory and Method**

The period 1996-2009 has been chosen for this study because these were landmark years in cross-Strait relations and in the development of the EU, respectively. It was in 1996 that the People's Republic of China (PRC) conducted missile tests in the Taiwan Strait in reaction to Taiwan's first direct presidential election, while the Lisbon Treaty came into effect on December 1, 2009, marking a new era in the development of the European Union.

This article examines the EU's external policy with emphasis on its first pillar, the European Community (EC), and its second pillar, the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). In addition, the EU's enlarge-

ment to the East in 2004 is the most significant enlargement in recent years, so the EU's stance on cross-Strait issues before and after that watershed will be examined.

Interaction between the EC and the CFSP will be examined using a neo-functionalist approach.<sup>1</sup> The author will try to evaluate the importance of the EU's policy toward the two sides of the Taiwan Strait in its external relations as a whole. Due to the lack of diplomatic relations between Taiwan and the EU, there is little relevant material available for this analysis from Taipei. The sources used will therefore consist of official declarations and statements from the EU and the PRC. These materials will be subjected to content analysis from both a quantitative and a qualitative perspective.<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, the author will try to clarify the interests and tactics of the EU in its dealings with cross-Strait issues from a neo-realist perspective.<sup>3</sup> This is because structure and security are the major concerns of neo-realism. This perspective is particularly well-suited to the EU's stance in this region. It can also help establish the major interests of the EU where cross-Strait relations are concerned.

### **The Main Aspects of the European Union's Foreign Policy**

As the development of the European Community stagnated in the 1960s and 1970s, neo-functionalism, the theory upon which the EC was

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<sup>1</sup>Ernst Haas, *Beyond the Nation-State: Functionalism and International Organization* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1964); Leon Linberg, *The Political Dynamics of European Economic Integration* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1963); Amitai Etzioni, *Political Unification. A Comparative Study of Leaders and Forces* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965); Hans J. Michelmann and Panayotis Soldatos, eds., *European Integration: Theories and Approaches* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1994); Paul R. Viotti and Mark V. Kauppi, *International Relations Theory: Realism, Pluralism, Globalism and Beyond* (Boston et al.: Allyn and Bacon, 1999): 212-14.

<sup>2</sup>Klaus Krippendorff, *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology*, 2nd ed., (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 2004).

<sup>3</sup>Viotti and Kauppi, *International Relations Theory*, 55-198; Gottfried-Karl Kindermann, *Grundelemente der Weltpolitik*. (Munich: Piper Verlag, 1986); Kenneth Waltz, "Realist Thought and Neo-Realist Theory," *Journal of International Affairs*, 44, no. 1 (1990): 21-37.



founded, faced severe criticism. Even its originator, Ernst Haas, considered it to be obsolete.<sup>4</sup> However, since the second half of the 1980s, and especially in the post-Cold War era of the 1990s, the EC/EU moved forward rather swiftly, and as a consequence neo-functionalism came to the fore again. The key concept of neo-functionalism, the spillover effect, is still an adequate means of explaining the EU's structure regarding its foreign policy.

One important characteristic of the EU is its pillar-type structure, with its separate and independent functions. It began with the supranational European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in the early 1950s and developed through the European Single Market to the European Union of today.<sup>5</sup> However, the EU's external relations have been chiefly focused on the sphere of foreign trade.

Political and intergovernmental integration in the EU has run into many difficulties.<sup>6</sup> After some failed attempts starting in the 1950s, the European Political Cooperation (EPC) was launched in 1970, operating separately from the EC for fear of disturbing the latter's functions. The integration of the EPC and the EC started with the establishment of the European Council directly after the entry of the United Kingdom into the EC in 1974. The European Council did not become a part of the Community until the Single European Act of 1986. Finally, with the signing of the

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<sup>4</sup>Ernst Haas, *The Obsolescence of Regional Integration Theory* (Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, University of California, 1975); Ben Rosamond, "The Uniting of Europe and the Foundation of EU Studies: Revisiting the Neofunctionalism of Ernst Haas," *Journal of European Public Policy* 12, no. 2 (April 2005): 237-54; John Gerard Ruggie et al., "Transformations in World Politics: The Intellectual Contributions of Ernst B. Haas," *Annual Review of Political Science* 8 (August 2005): 271-96.

<sup>5</sup>Elke Thiel, *Die Europaeische Union* (Munich: Bayerische Landeszentrale für Politische Bildungsarbeit, 1994), 11-68; Hazel Smith, *European Foreign Policy: What It Is and What It Does* (London: Pluto Press, 2002), 34-104.

<sup>6</sup>It started with the European Defense Community and the European Political Community in the 1950s, which were followed by the two Fouchet Plans for setting up an intergovernmental structure proposed by President Charles de Gaulle of France in the 1960s. But these proposals all failed due to fears of French domination among the smaller member states. See Panayiotis Ifestos, *European Political Cooperation: Towards a Framework of Supranational Diplomacy?* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1987), 133-35; Brian White, *Understanding European Foreign Policy* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 5.



Maastricht Treaty in 1993, the three-pillar structure of the EU took shape, with special connections between the EC and the CFSP.

The connection between and integration of the EC and the CFSP is the best example of interaction between intergovernmentalism and supranationalism. The EC also contributed a lot to the development of the EPC as a kind of economic base thanks to the momentum of integration among European countries. In the international arena, economic sanctions against other countries are frequently a useful means to achieve various goals. In addition, the policies of the EPC have also enhanced the development of the EC through close cooperation among member states on international issues.

According to M. E. Smith, the convergence in voting behavior of the EC states in the United Nations (UN) General Assembly increased from 30-40 percent in the 1970s to 80 percent in the 1980s. Their voting in the Conference of Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) is even closer.<sup>7</sup> Besides this, the EPC's numerous common declarations, economic aid programs, and the economic sanctions that were decided by the EPC and carried out by the EC certainly helped to raise the status of the EC. Although the EPC/CFSP and the EC operate separately, they compensate for each other and interact as if they were two sides of the same coin. This spillover effect between the two pillars served as a driving force for the development of the European Union as a whole.

Because of the different structures of the first and second pillars of the European Union and the various connections between them, the EU's foreign policy as a whole has shown much diversity. As Mueller-Brandeck-Bocquet indicates,<sup>8</sup> there is the intergovernmental type of the second pillar, shared sovereignty by means of qualified majority voting, "Brusselization" led by the CFSP High Representative, and finally the type of supranation-

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<sup>7</sup>Michael E. Smith, "Rules, Transgovernmentalism, and the Expansion of European Political Cooperation," in *European Integration and Supranational Governance*, ed., Wayne Sandholtz and Alec Stone Sweet (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 311.

<sup>8</sup>Gisela Mueller-Brandeck-Bocquet, ed., *Europäische Außenpolitik: GASP- und ESVP-Konzeption Ausgewählter EU-Mitgliedstaaten* (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 2002), 9-27.

alism in the first pillar which is mainly operated by the Commission and the European Parliament.

According to Article 12 of the Amsterdam Treaty, the European Council can formulate so-called common strategies unanimously upon the proposition of the Council. One of the best examples is the common strategy toward Russia in 1997. This is the highest level of decision making in the EU. Accordingly, the Council can form common positions in a unanimous way and take common actions to implement them.

The civil war in Yugoslavia in the 1990s strengthened the will of the EU member states to cooperate. In order to enhance the efficiency of the CFSP, qualified majority voting was introduced by the Amsterdam Treaty. Although under this treaty the Council still makes decisions unanimously, dissent should be solved by the European Council.

The creation of the post of CFSP High Representative also boosted interaction with the EC. Thanks to Javier Solana, High Representative from 1999 to 2009, who enjoyed a harmonious relationship with Chris Patten, the EU Commissioner for External Affairs from 2000 to 2004, as well good relations with the European Parliament, the CFSP and the EC were brought closer together. Solana soon became known as the EU's highest ranking—diplomat and the profile of the CFSP was raised accordingly. This is additional evidence of the development of the EU's fledgling foreign policy which allowed more scope for the High Representative to play a personal role.

The European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP), the military element of the CFSP, always operates under the auspices of the United Nations and/or the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). It has hardly anything to do with Taiwan, both because of China's role in the UN and the fact that the OSCE is mainly concerned with Europe.

### **The Development of the EU's East Asian/China Policy**

The PRC established diplomatic relations with the European Community in 1975. Owing to the PRC's insistence on the one-China principle



and the longstanding political deadlock between the two civil war rivals, there was no EU representative office in Taiwan until 2003, when the European Economic and Trade Office was set up. There are still no official relations between Taipei and Brussels, and this makes the EU's policy toward the two sides of the Strait unique.<sup>9</sup>

In the Cold War era, the United States was actively involved in East Asian affairs, while the European countries withdrew in succession from the region. However, with the beginning of the East Asian economic boom in the 1980s, and process of integration in Europe, a new era in East Asian-European relations began.<sup>10</sup>

When the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum was founded in 1989, the EC/EU was excluded.<sup>11</sup> Then in 1996, the loosely structured Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) was initiated, in which the United States was not even permitted observer status. ASEM was mainly seen by the EU countries as a counter-balance to U.S. influence in East Asia. In the U.S.-EU rivalry in East Asia, it is definitely the EU that has stood firm.

In October 2000, the third Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM 3) was held in South Korea. It was through the efforts of this meeting that many EU countries established diplomatic relations with North Korea.<sup>12</sup> This not only contributed to détente on the Korean Peninsula but also enhanced the EU's confidence in handling East Asian disputes. Although Taipei had

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<sup>9</sup>Wang Wanli, *Taiwan yu Oumeng* (Taiwan and the European Union) (Taipei: Wunan, 2002); Tang Shaocheng, "EU's Taiwan Policy in the Light of Its China Policy," *Asia Europe Journal* 1, no. 4 (December 2003): 511-25.

<sup>10</sup>Clive Archer et al., *The European Union and Asian Countries* (London and New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 1-16; Julie Gilson, *Asia Meets Europe: Inter-Regionalism and the Asia-Europe Meeting* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2002), 65-106; Christopher Dent, *The European Union and East Asia: An Economic Relationship* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 40-42.

<sup>11</sup>Roger Strange, Jim Slater, and Corrado Molteni, eds., *The European Union and ASEAN: Trade and Investment Issues* (London: Macmillan, 2000), 14-15; Dent, *The European Union and East Asia*.

<sup>12</sup>Yeo Lay Hwee, *Asia and Europe: The Development and Different Dimensions of ASEM* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 44-46; Jung Chang-Hwa, *Kooperation Zwischen der Europaeischen Union und Ostasien am Beispiel der Neuen Asiatisch-Europaeischen Zusammenarbeit im Rahmen des ASEM (Asia-Europe Meeting)* (Marburg: Tectum Verlag, 2002), 126-32.



applied for ASEM membership from the beginning, adherence to the one-China principle still denies representation to the 23 million people on Taiwan. Against this backdrop, the EU has had to find its own way to tackle the cross-Strait issue.

### **The EU's Policy on Cross-Strait Issues**

As mentioned above, all the means at the disposal of the EU's foreign policy are derived from four origins.<sup>13</sup> Where Taiwan is concerned, the lack of official relations and the island's limited significance to Europe mean that policy is restricted to EU declarations and political dialogue between the EU and China. Although there are declarations of the European Council concerning Taiwan, there are no legally binding regulations contained in any of the EU treaties. Therefore, like political dialogue, in the form of the China Europe Joint Statement, it can only be seen as pure political expression. Also the European Parliament and the Commission play a role in the EU's policy toward Taiwan and China.

#### *European Council*

According to statistics published on the EU website and retrieved in December 2009, the EU Council issued twenty-seven statements concerning cross-Strait issues between 1996 and 2009, including statements of the EU-China summits (see table 1). As relations between the European Union and China began to improve in the beginning of the 1990s, Europeans began to pay much more attention to the situation in the Taiwan Strait.

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<sup>13</sup>See note 8 above. Werner Weidenfeld and Wolfgang Wessels, eds., *Europa von A bis Z. Taschenbuch der Europaeischen Integration* (Bonn: Bundeszentrale fuer politische Bildung, 2002), 225-30. These means include: common strategy; common position; joint action; international agreement, declaration, or political dialogue; collective voting in international organizations; démarche; special envoy; treaty and agreement; election observers; and military and civil crisis management mechanism.

**Table 1**  
**Statements of the Council of the European Union on the Taiwan Issue**

No.	Date	Content
1	March 8, 1996	China—Military exercises off Taiwan Coast
2	July 20, 1999	Taiwan—Principle of one China
3	September 5, 2001	4th EU-China Summit, Brussels
4	September 24, 2002	5th EU-China Summit, Copenhagen
5	October 30, 2003	6th EU-China Summit, Beijing
6	December 8, 2004	7th EU-China Summit, The Hague
7	February 4, 2005	Establishment of cross-Strait direct flights over the Lunar New Year (welcome)
8	February 16, 2005	Solana meets with Chen Yunlin (陳雲林), director, PRC Taiwan Affairs Office
9	March 16, 2005	China—Anti-Secession Law (concern over non-peaceful means)
10	March 17, 2005	Joint press briefing, Solana and Li Zhaoxing (李肇星), PRC foreign minister
11	September 5, 2005	Joint Statement, 8th EU-China Summit, Beijing
12	January 20, 2006	Direct cross-Strait flights over Lunar New Year (welcome)
13	March 6, 2006	Decision of Taiwanese leader regarding National Unification Council (disagree)
14	June 15, 2006	Additional direct cross-Strait passenger flights during holiday periods (welcome)
15	September 11, 2006	Joint Statement, 9th EU-China Summit, Helsinki
16	March 7, 2007	Comments by Solana on the importance of Taiwan Strait (warn of stability)
17	September 11, 2007	Solana meets with Chen Yunlin
18	October 25, 2007	Solana, concern about Taiwanese leaders' comments on Taiwan's application for UN membership
19	December 3, 2007	Joint Statement, 10th EU-China Summit, Beijing
20	March 10, 2008	Declaration on cross-Strait relations (against referendum)
21	March 31, 2008	Cross-Strait relations (welcome election results)
22	June 4, 2008	Declaration on cross Strait relations (welcome dialogue)
23	September 19, 2008	Declaration on Taiwan (no support for Taiwan's membership in international organizations)
24	November 4, 2008	Solana on cross-Strait relations (welcomes agreement between Chiang Pin-kung (江丙坤), head of Taiwan's Straits Exchange Foundation, and Chen Yun-lin, head of PRC's Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits)
25	November 12, 2008	Declaration on Taiwan (welcome Chiang-Chen agreement)
26	May 20, 2009	Joint Statement, 11th EU-China Summit, Prague (nothing on Taiwan)
27	November 30, 2009	Joint Statement, 12th EU-China Summit, Nanjing (support peaceful development in relations across the Taiwan Strait)

**Source:** EU Council website, [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/cms3\\_Applications/applications/search/metaDoSearch.asp](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/cms3_Applications/applications/search/metaDoSearch.asp).

In March 1996, in reaction to Taiwan's first popular presidential election, China test-fired missiles into the Taiwan Strait toward Taiwan, although no damage was done to the island. The European Council promptly passed a resolution expressing deep regret for Beijing's actions and reminding the Chinese leaders that they should tackle the Taiwan issue through peaceful means.<sup>14</sup> This was the first crisis in the Taiwan Strait since the beginning of the 1990s and the first time the EU had reacted to such a crisis. Directly after the advocacy of a "two states theory" (兩國論) in July 1999, the EU released another statement emphasizing its support for the one-China principle, the use of peaceful means, and constructive talks between the two sides to solve disputes.<sup>15</sup>

Examining these two statements, the EU's desire to see a peaceful solution to the dispute between Taiwan and China is evident, and in the first one, the Europeans were clearly trying to discourage any overreaction to the presidential election by Beijing. The 1999 crisis was triggered by Taiwan's strong tendency of separatism through the advocacy of a "two states theory" (兩國論) by President Lee Teng-hui with regard to Taiwan and China, which was perceived by the EU as provocative to China. There-

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<sup>14</sup>The text of the statement was as follows: "The EU deeply regrets the firing by the PRC of missiles, beginning in the morning of March the 8th, into test zones in Taiwan Strait. The planned weeklong exercises could lead to further tension in the region and increase the possibility of any miscalculation eventually leading to confrontation. The EU, recalling the pledge always made by the PRC to stick to its fundamental policy on the Taiwan issue, which is seek a peaceful solution, calls on the PRC to refrain from activities which could have negative effect on the security of the entire region and urges an early resumption of the cross-strait talks." *China/Military exercises off the Taiwan Coasts, CSFP Presidency Statement: Brussels* (August 31996) — Press: 54 Nr: 5514/96, "Declaration by he Presidency on Behalf of the European Union on China's Military Exercise off the Taiwan Coasts," [http://ue.eu.int/newsroom/LoadDoc.asp? MAX=1001&BID=73&DID=43184& LANG=1](http://ue.eu.int/newsroom/LoadDoc.asp?MAX=1001&BID=73&DID=43184&LANG=1).

<sup>15</sup>The text of this statement is as follows: "The European Union notes with concern recent developments concerning relations across the Taiwan Strait. The EU supports the principle of 'One China.' It underlines the necessity of resolving the question of Taiwan peacefully through constructive dialogue. The EU hopes that every effort will be made to clarify misunderstanding and to maintain constructive dialogue. It urges both sides to avoid taking steps or making statements [that will] increase tension." See "Taiwan: Principle of 'One China'," *CFSP Presidency Statement: Brussels* (July 2, 1999) — Press: 232 Nr: 10256/99, Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on Taiwan, [http://ue.eu.int/newsroom/LoadDoc.asp? MAX=561&DID=58429&LANG=1](http://ue.eu.int/newsroom/LoadDoc.asp?MAX=561&DID=58429&LANG=1).



fore, in the second statement more blame was apportioned to Taiwan.

Hence, from a neo-realist perspective, it is clear that the EU is not only concerned about stability in the Taiwan Strait but also distinguishes between the reasons for both crises. In the EU's eyes, elections in Taiwan should not be treated as a justifiable excuse for retaliation, but any signs of creeping independence for the island are unacceptable. Although these are only declarations from the EU, its role as mediator between the two sides is obvious, although it has only limited capacity and influence.

*China EU Joint Statement:* Right after ASEM 2 in 1998, China and the EU set up a bilateral summit meeting mechanism. The first summit took place the same year and a Joint Statement was released, but there was no mention of Taiwan.<sup>16</sup> Nonetheless, this summit may be seen as a new start in Sino-European relations after the rift created by the Tiananmen Square (天安門廣場) incident of 1989.

When the Chinese embassy in Belgrade was bombed by forces of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in May 1999, Sino-European relations suffered a serious setback. Moreover, President Lee's announcement of his "two state theory" in July that year and Taiwan's presidential election the following March also caused tension in the Taiwan Strait. These events could be behind the absence of any joint statements after the second and third EU-China summits, which indicates the fragility of bilateral relations.

However, from 2001 to 2009,<sup>17</sup> there were regular joint statements after each summit meeting. They covered a broad range of issues from international flash points to cultural exchanges, and each time there was a section on Taiwan. The Taiwan related paragraph in 2001 reads:

The EU side reaffirmed that it would continue to adhere to the one-China principle and hoped for a peaceful resolution of the Taiwan question through con-

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<sup>16</sup>"China-EU Summit, Joint Statement, London," April 2, 1998, <http://www.people.cn/BIG5/shizheng/252/6249/6304/20010901/549264.html>.

<sup>17</sup>See table 1. The 11th Sino-EU Summit scheduled for December 1, 2008, was canceled by Beijing because of the meeting between President Nicolas Sarkozy of France and the Dalai Lama. See above.

structive dialogue. The Chinese side appreciated the EU's commitment to the one-China principle and reiterated its principled position on the settlement of the Taiwan question in accordance with the basic principle of "peaceful reunification and one country, two systems (和平統一，一國兩制)." <sup>18</sup>

Thus the EU's stance on the one-China principle and its support for negotiations between the two sides remained unchanged. It is worthy of note that China alone reiterated its policy of "peaceful reunification and one country two systems" whereas there was no mention of this by the EU. That clearly demonstrated the limit of support from the European side. If this phrase had been mentioned by the Europeans, it would have represented a substantial concession to Beijing's reunification policy.

In the 2002 Joint Statement a new sentence appeared, namely: "The European side noticed the recent change of the situation in the Taiwan Straits as the Chinese side introduced." <sup>19</sup> The rest of the statement remained the same. This additional sentence could very possibly refer to the crisis caused by President Chen Shui-bian's (陳水扁) "One country on each side [of the Strait]" theory (一邊一國論), announced at the beginning of August 2002. Beijing's reaction to this was furious whereas the EU did not react at all, very possibly because it was the summer vacation in Europe. When the fifth summit took place in September that year "the change of situation" was accepted by the European side. <sup>20</sup> Readers of this statement who were not aware of what had taken place the previous month would have been puzzled as to what this "change" was. Again the European side did not actually repeat what China demanded.

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<sup>18</sup>"4th China-EU Summit, Joint statement, Brussels," *Xinhua Net*, September 5, 2001, [http://big5.xinhuanet.com/gate/big5/news.xinhuanet.com/ziliao/2002-09/15/content\\_562099.htm](http://big5.xinhuanet.com/gate/big5/news.xinhuanet.com/ziliao/2002-09/15/content_562099.htm). The EU side reaffirmed that it would continue to adhere to the one-China principle and hoped for a peaceful resolution of the Taiwan question through constructive dialogue. The Chinese side appreciated the EU's commitment to the one-China principle and reiterated its principled position on the settlement of the Taiwan question in accordance with the basic principle of "peaceful reunification and one country, two systems." Comparison between the English and Chinese texts reveals no difference in meaning.

<sup>19</sup>"5th China-EU Summit, Joint Statement, Copenhagen," *People's Daily*, September 25, 2002, <http://www.people.com.cn/BIG5/paper464/7334/706399.html>.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*



The contents of the 2003 Joint Statement were the same as that of 2001, but from 2004 to 2006 the phrase "peaceful reunification, one country two systems" was absent (see table 1). This coincided with the passage of the Anti-Secession Law (ASL) in China. Since then, Beijing's policy toward Taiwan has had a legal basis. In the recent statement, that of the 10th EU-China Summit in 2007, the European side clearly expressed its concern over the Taiwan authorities' proposal for a "referendum on UN membership in the name of Taiwan" which it said could lead to "a unilateral change of the status quo in the Taiwan Strait." This was a clear sign of mutual consent and an unambiguous expression of the European side's view on a Taiwanese domestic issue.

In sum, judging from all these statements, it is clear that over this period the EU showed increasing willingness to cooperate with Beijing regarding its policy toward Taiwan. The unclear phrase "the change of situation" used in 2002 was a clear sign of the EU's views. In addition, the unilateral inclusion of "peaceful reunification and one country, two systems" in the 2001-2003 communiqués and its absence from those issued in 2004-2007 seems to be another indication of the EU's limited support for Beijing. However, the author would argue that it could be a trade-off between Beijing and Brussels over the ASL. The intention of using "non-peaceful means" toward Taiwan (Article 8, ASL) runs counter to the EU's aspiration for peace and stability in the region. Therefore, the Europeans refused to endorse its counterpart as they had previously. Since the passage of the ASL, Beijing has been much more determined in its policy toward Taiwan. Beijing is content as long as the EU does not openly protest against the ASL. Ever since Taiwan's UN referendum of 2007/08, Brussels has declared its opposition *expressis verbis* (see table 1). This gesture must be well received by Beijing.

#### *European Commission*

In September 2001, there were only fourteen lines of text on one page of the official European Commission website concerning its Taiwan policy. At the very beginning of the website it reads:



The EU recognizes Taiwan as a separate customs territory, not as a sovereign state.<sup>21</sup>

Since November 2003 this has been changed to:

The EU, like other countries, follows a one-China policy and thus has no diplomatic relations with Taiwan. However, it recognizes Taiwan as an economic and commercial entity, and has solid relations with Taiwan in non-political areas, such as economic relations, science, education and culture.<sup>22</sup>

Compared to the previous text this sounds much more moderate and shows that the European Commission has adopted the stance of other countries on the Taiwan issue. On the other hand, it is notable that there is no further mention of relations between Taiwan and China. Communiqués issued when states establish diplomatic relations with China often contain statements that Taiwan is a part of China or even a part of the PRC.

In the eyes of the Commission, Taiwan's status has now morphed from that of "a separate customs territory" into "an economic and commercial entity." The title of "separate customs territory, Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu" is used by Taipei in the World Trade Organization (WTO), while that of "economic and commercial entity" was created by the EU.

This change could be interpreted as a friendly gesture by the Commission toward the island. At least "entity" sounds more independent than "territory." The implication of Taiwan's independent statehood is clear. A comparison of the two statements above is obviously a sign of the Commission's increasing support for Taiwan.

The Commission stresses the significance of bilateral trade because Taiwan has for some years been the EU's thirteenth largest trading partner. According to the Commission's statistics, bilateral trade in 2007 was worth €39 billion with a deficit of €13 billion on the EU side.<sup>23</sup> The June 2007 version of the website was the first one on which the EU did

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<sup>21</sup>[http://europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/taiwan/intro/index.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/taiwan/intro/index.htm).

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup><http://www.deltwn.ec.europa.eu/upload/rte/eeto-052808-factfile%20-%20webfile.pdf>.

not support Taiwan's bid to join the WHO unless it accepted the status of "health entity."<sup>24</sup> This can be seen as a negative reaction to President Chen's declaration in 2006 that the National Unification Council would cease to function.

On the most recent version of the website, updated on December 12, 2009, the formulation was once again changed.<sup>25</sup> Instead of not supporting Taiwan's bid to join the WHO, the EU now "supports Taiwan's practical participation in international organizations where this does not require statehood." A positive expression has been derived out of a negative expression. For the first time the ROC flag appears on the Commission's website, a further friendly gesture toward Taiwan.

To sum up, for political and geostrategic reasons, since the end of the Cold War China and the European states have not felt threatened by each other. Therefore, economic and trade interests have been given priority in their bilateral relations and peace and stability are the best guarantees of Europe's interests in East Asia. Since 2004, the EU has been China's biggest trading partner<sup>26</sup> and to this day China remains the EU's second largest trading partner.<sup>27</sup>

From a realpolitik perspective, thanks to the rise of the PRC in recent years, Beijing has become more and more actively involved in almost

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<sup>24</sup>"In line with its one-China policy, the EU does not recognize Taiwan as a sovereign state and has no diplomatic or formal political relations with Taiwan. The EU, therefore, also does not support Taiwan's efforts to become a member of international forums if such membership implies statehood, such as, for example, the WHO. Taiwan was able to join the WTO because that organization accepts separate 'customs territories' as members. On the basis of this WTO precedent Taiwan has been lobbying for WHO membership, proposing that it could enter as a 'health entity.' The EU has instead adopted a more pragmatic approach and proposed in May 2004 that the WHO invite Taiwanese experts to engage in 'practical cooperation on technical issues'." The former page of EU's website is at: [http://ec.europa.eu/external\\_relations/taiwan/intro/index.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/taiwan/intro/index.htm).

<sup>25</sup>"In line with its one-China policy, the EU does not recognize Taiwan as a sovereign state and therefore has no diplomatic or formal political relations with Taiwan. The EU does, however, support Taiwan's practical participation in international organizations where this does not require statehood." See: [http://ec.europa.eu/external\\_relations/taiwan/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/taiwan/index_en.htm).

<sup>26</sup>"7th China-EU Summit, Joint Statement, The Hague," *People's Daily*, December 30, 2004, <http://www.people.com.cn/BIG5/shizheng/1026/3042144.html>.

<sup>27</sup>[http://ec.europa.eu/trade/issues/bilateral/countries/china/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/trade/issues/bilateral/countries/china/index_en.htm).



all significant international and regional conflicts, from North Korea and Myanmar to Iran, Iraq, and Africa, to name just a few. Especially on the issue of Iran, China's cooperation could be very useful to the EU. Nonetheless, from the perspective of upholding democratic values, the EU still sympathizes with Taiwan. This could also be another reason why the EU seems reluctant to take sides in any possible Taiwan Strait crisis.

### *European Parliament*

Between 1996 and 1999, the European Parliament passed various resolutions supporting Taiwan during the Taiwan Strait crisis,<sup>28</sup> including a reminder to China to refrain from using force against Taiwan, and one supporting Taiwan's accession to the WTO. In the EU's eyes Taiwan had become a full-fledged democracy after the 2000 presidential election.<sup>29</sup> After 2002 the Parliament also supported Taiwan's bid to join the World Health Assembly, the assembly of the WHO, and rejected the removal of the arms embargo against China. The Parliament even encouraged the removal by China of missiles aimed at Taiwan and supported the establishment of direct air links between the two sides. When President Chen Shui-bian was prohibited from visiting EU countries in 2005, EU parliamentarians conducted a video conference with him.

The friendly resolutions were proposed by EU parliamentarians from most political factions, although the anti-communist Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) was the main source of support.<sup>30</sup> Due

<sup>28</sup>Lan Yuchun, "The European Parliament and the China-Taiwan Issue: An Empirical Approach," *European Foreign Affairs Review* 9, no. 1 (2004), 115-40.

<sup>29</sup>Parliament resolution on the situation in Taiwan, adopted on April 13, 2000. For the content, see: <http://europa.eu.int/abc/doc/off/bull/en/200004/p106064.htm>; <http://europa.eu/bulletin/en/200004/p106064.htm>; <http://europa.eu/bulletin/en/200110/p109002.htm>; <http://europa.eu/bulletin/en/200203/p106090.htm>; <http://europa.eu/bulletin/en/200305/p109001.htm>; <http://europa.eu/bulletin/en/200004/p106064.htm>; <http://europa.eu/bulletin/en/200605/p133025.htm>; <http://europa.eu/geninfo/query/resultaction.jsp?Page=2>; <http://europa.eu/bulletin/en/200106/p106079.htm>; "Europe-Asia partnerships. European Parliament resolution on the Commission Communication on Europe and Asia: A Strategy Framework for Enhanced Partnerships," COM (2001) 469-C5-0255/2002-2002/212-(COS), <http://europa.eu/bulletin/en/200601/p125026.htm>.

<sup>30</sup>Tang, "EU's Taiwan Policy in the Light of its China Policy," 511-25.



to the limited function of the European Parliament in the EU's decision-making process, they did not have much impact on foreign policy.

In contrast, there are more than six hundred European Parliament releases on China, including resolutions and statements.<sup>31</sup> The most frequent topics have been: human rights, for example, the awarding of the Sakharov Prize for the dissident Hu Jia (胡佳);<sup>32</sup> Tibet and the Dalai Lama;<sup>33</sup> dangerous toys; the arms embargo issue; climate change; and Africa (e.g. dissuading China from supporting Zimbabwe and urging Beijing to be more active in Darfur). In contrast to the Parliament's resolutions on Taiwan, most of these statements are critical of China. Moreover, on the occasion of the unrest in Tibet in March 2008, the Parliament even passed a resolution calling on EU leaders to boycott the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games in Beijing.<sup>34</sup> In December 2008 the Dalai Lama delivered a speech in the European Parliament and was warmly received by its members.<sup>35</sup> All these activities must have made the European Parliament a thorn in Beijing's eye.

In sum, it is interesting to observe that the European Parliament differs in its positions on Taiwan and China from the other EU organs. The author would argue that, apart from the fact that the elected Parliament is a reflection of the *vox populi*, a decisive factor in this difference is the limited function of the Parliament within the EU structure. Moreover, the asymmetry between Taiwan and China in various fields and the aggressive reunification policy of Beijing's authoritarian regime are all reasons why European parliamentarians sympathize with democratic Taiwan.

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<sup>31</sup>There are altogether 617 releases on China, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/search/simple/perform2.do?page=1&query=China&language=EN>.

<sup>32</sup>Sakharov Prize 2008 awarded to Hu Jia, [http://www.delchn.ec.europa.eu/?item=news\\_view&nid=338](http://www.delchn.ec.europa.eu/?item=news_view&nid=338).

<sup>33</sup>There are altogether 95 releases on Tibet, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/search/simple/perform2.do?language=EN&query=Tibet>.

<sup>34</sup>"Resolution on the Situation in Tibet," April 10, 2008, [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/eplive/expert/shotlist\\_page/20080408SHL26179/default\\_en.htm](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/eplive/expert/shotlist_page/20080408SHL26179/default_en.htm).

<sup>35</sup>"Common Human Values, Inner Peace and Tibet: Dalai Lama at European Parliament," December 5, 2008, [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/briefing\\_page/43139-336-12-49-20081127BRI43138-01-12-2008-2008/default\\_p001c002\\_en.htm](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/briefing_page/43139-336-12-49-20081127BRI43138-01-12-2008-2008/default_p001c002_en.htm).

In addition, ideology, namely anti-communism and human rights issues, takes a bigger part in the actions of the Parliament, not only because of the Parliament's sovereign status but also due to its limited and indirect role in the EU decision-making process. For the new EU member states anti-communism and human rights are even more important reasons for them to defend Taiwan against China, as the EU shares the same democratic beliefs as Taiwan. Therefore, the Parliament has adopted a more value-oriented approach. When it comes to *realpolitik*, the EU Council and the Commission have to take Europe's political interests into account and accommodate China.

### **Expansion of the European Union**

Although, most of the countries that have joined the EU since 2004 are relatively small in size, it is possible that they could have had an impact on the EU's policy toward the two sides of the Taiwan Strait.

#### *Friction over Values between the EU and China*

Because all the new EU member states from Central and Eastern Europe emerged from communist regimes, they have particularly high regard for the democratic values for which they have had to fight. Coincidentally, on the day of the Tiananmen Square incident in 1989, a general election was held in Poland. This presented a stark contrast between the two countries in terms of their understanding of democratic values.<sup>36</sup>

Moreover, Vaclav Havel and Lech Walesa, the first post-communist presidents of the Czech Republic and Poland respectively, were the most outstanding personalities in the struggle against the ancient régime. They have often criticized China for its human rights record and they enjoy good

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<sup>36</sup>Geoffrey Edwards, "The New Member States and the Making of EU Foreign Policy," *European Foreign Affairs Review* 11, no. 2 (2006): 143-62; Robin Shepherd, "Romania, Bulgaria, and the EU's Future," *Current History* 106, no. 698 (March 2007): 117-22.



relations with Taiwan.<sup>37</sup> Lech Walesa has visited Taiwan four times since he left office and two vice presidents of Taiwan, Lien Chan (連戰) and Annette Lu (呂秀蓮) have visited Eastern Europe.<sup>38</sup> However, due to pressure from Beijing, this kind of visit rarely takes place nowadays.

The 2007 and 2008 visits of the Tibetan spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, to countries in Eastern and Western Europe led to a deterioration in Sino-EU relations.<sup>39</sup> The Dalai Lama was well received by the leaders of the Czech Republic and Poland, and by the European Parliament on his most recent trip. The meetings with these leaders must have helped pave the way for his reception by President Nicolas Sarkozy of France in December 2008. Due to the fact that Sarkozy was serving the rotating president of the EU, the Chinese reacted to this meeting by canceling the eleventh Sino-EU Summit.<sup>40</sup>

The failure of negotiations between Tibet and China, plus the fact that President Sarkozy held the then rotating EU presidency, were decisive factors in Beijing's reaction. In Beijing's eyes, the meeting significantly upgraded the status of the Dalai Lama, making the dispute with Tibet much more complicated. France had been the first Western country to officially recognize the PRC in 1964 and to establish relations at ambassadorial level. When President Jacques Chirac was in office, France and China enjoyed close bilateral relations, and in Beijing's foreign policy strategy relations with France are given the friendliest classification, that of a "comprehen-

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<sup>37</sup>Karin Tomala, "Poland and the Cross-Strait Relations since the End of the Cold War," in *Perspectives on Cross-Strait Relations: Views from Europe*, ed. Günter Schucher and Margot Schüller (Hamburg: Institut für Asienkunde, 2005), 145-60.

<sup>38</sup>Czelaw Tubilewicz, "The Scrooge Effect: Taiwan's Economic Diplomacy toward Central Europe, 1988-2005," *Issues & Studies* 41, no. 4 (December 2005): 209-49; Tang, "EU's Taiwan Policy in the Light of Its China Policy," 511-25.

<sup>39</sup>"China Threatens Trade Sanctions over Dalai Lama's European Trip," *Telegraph*, December 5, 2008, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/china/3564289/China-threatens-trade-sanctions-over-Dalai-Lamas-European-trip.html>; "Europe should not appease China: Dalai Lama," *Reuters*, December 3, 2008, <http://www.reuters.com/article/newsOne/idUSTRE4B246920081203>.

<sup>40</sup>"EU-China Summit Postponed - European Union Statement," November 28, 2008, [http://www.ue2008.fr/PFUE/lang/en/accueil/PFUE-12\\_2008/PFUE-01.12.2008/sommet\\_ue\\_chine.html](http://www.ue2008.fr/PFUE/lang/en/accueil/PFUE-12_2008/PFUE-01.12.2008/sommet_ue_chine.html); "China Cancels Summit with EU over Dalai Lama Visit," November 26, 2008, <http://www.iht.com/articles/2008/11/26/europe/27eu-china.php>.

sive strategic partnership."<sup>41</sup> Therefore, it was really hard for the Chinese leaders to accept this kind of "betrayal" by a close friend.

Last but not least, when Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) became president in Taipei in May 2008, Taiwan and China began a process of reconciliation. Not only have tensions between the two sides eased but mutual confidence has been established through various kinds of exchanges. In these circumstances, the diplomatic and military pressure that Beijing exerts on Taiwan can be partially reduced. This gives the Chinese leaders a free hand to tackle issues of interest elsewhere.

### *Security Concerns: Pro-Americanism*

From the 1950s onwards and especially during the transition period in the early 1990s, the East European countries received massive support from the West, first and foremost from the United States. In the post-Cold War era, these countries feared the export of instability from Russia, and thus saw NATO as their best security guarantee. But Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary did not become NATO members until 1999 and other East European countries joined much later.<sup>42</sup>

Although the CFSP had begun to be developed in the 1990s, this was before the East European countries joined the EU. Even after these countries joined, the CFSP and ESDP proved to be inadequate when it came to resolving European conflicts. Only the United States and NATO could offer these countries at least a partial guarantee of security and the United States remains their best security partner. In these circumstances, the reaction of the then EU candidate states to the U.S.-led war against Iraq in 2003

<sup>41</sup>There are altogether six categories in China's foreign policy strategy. The EU as a whole, Germany, the UK, and Russia also belong to this highest category. "Zhongguo chongshen jiaqiang quanmian zhanlue huoban guanxi" (China and EU reaffirm enhancement of the comprehensive strategic partnership), *Xinhuanet*, April 25, 2008, [http://big5.xinhuanet.com/gate/big5/news.xinhuanet.com/newscenter/2008-04/25/content\\_8052419.htm](http://big5.xinhuanet.com/gate/big5/news.xinhuanet.com/newscenter/2008-04/25/content_8052419.htm).

<sup>42</sup>Zhongguo Xiandai Guojiguanxi Yanjiuyuan Mei'ou Yanjiu zhongxin (The Institute of American and European Studies, China Institute of Contemporary International Relations), *Beiyue de mingyun* (NATO's Fate) (Beijing: Shishi chubanshe, 2004), 111-37. Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, and Slovakia joined NATO in March 2004. <http://www.nato.int/>.



makes perfect sense. Most of them supported President George W. Bush despite strong opposition from France and Germany.<sup>43</sup> Even Bulgaria and Romania sided with Washington.<sup>44</sup>

In addition, because of their small size, these new EU entrants tended to work together in negotiations with their larger fellow members, so support from Washington could also serve as leverage for them within the EU.

### **Continuity and Change**

Since 2005 several incidents involving China and Taiwan have occurred that have attracted the EU's attention. These include the passage of the PRC's Anti-Secession Law and President Chen Shui-bian's declaration that the National Unification Council would cease to function. In addition, the EU's arms embargo against China is an important issue in Sino-European relations. All of these issues are useful indicators of the EU's stance on relations between China and Taiwan.

#### *The Anti-Secession Law*

Just a month before the ASL was passed, the director of the PRC's Taiwan Affairs Office, Chen Yunlin (陳雲林), paid a visit to Javier Solana in Brussels. This was the first time that Chen had paid an official visit to the EU headquarters and it clearly revealed the strength of Beijing's desire to stress the significance of the Taiwan issue. If this had not have been the case, the matter would have been handled by officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or diplomats. The press release issued after this meeting

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<sup>43</sup>Piotr Buras and Kerry Longhurst, "The Berlin Republic, Iraq, and the Use of Force," in *Old Europe, New Europe and the Transatlantic Security Agenda*, ed. Kerry Longhurst and Marcin Zaborowski (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 29-60; John Gaffney, "Highly Emotional States: French-US Relations and the Iraq War," *ibid.*, 61-86; Olaf Osica, "Poland: A New European Atlanticist at a Crossroad?" *ibid.*, 115-36; Hans Mouritz, "Choosing Sides in the European Iraq Conflict: A Test of New Geopolitical Theory," *European Security* 15, no. 2 (June 2006): 137-63.

<sup>44</sup>William J. Kole, "New EU Members Reaffirm Ties with U.S.," *Associated Press*, September 27, 2006.

stated that it "provided an opportunity to discuss important questions concerning cross-Strait relations."<sup>45</sup>

This meeting was obviously a precautionary measure by Beijing to explore the EU's position on the ASL. But Solana's reaction was once again rather limited. If readers of the press release could not relate "important questions concerning cross-Strait relations" to the ASL, this part of the press release would have been puzzling. Therefore it could only be seen as a formality without much substance.

Soon after the publication of the ASL, the European Council issued another declaration stating that the EU had "taken note of it."<sup>46</sup> The EU's stance on the one-China principle and the resolution of disputes by peaceful means remained the same. What the EU was interested in was the ongoing direct charter flights between the two sides. Two days later, the Chinese Foreign Minister, Li Zhaoxing (李肇星), paid a visit to Brussels. After his meeting with Javier Solana, a summary of the press conference was released.<sup>47</sup> After Li expressed his support for Iran, the Middle East, and Myanmar (Burma), he mentioned the ASL. Making no reference to "non-peaceful means," Solana expressed his "concern" over the ASL while praising the positive function of exchanges between the two sides.

Beijing's use of direct threats against Taiwan in 1996, 1999, and 2002 proved to be counterproductive, so its leaders changed their policy in 2003. From then on, the PRC government relied upon the United States, Taiwan's long-time patron, to discourage Taipei from taking any provocative actions. After the United States, the European Union is Beijing's main ally in reinforcing in Taiwan. Considering the strong protests of people in Taiwan over the ASL, the EU's reaction was rather low-key. Brussels could have lashed out with a much stronger rebuke against the "non-peaceful means."

<sup>45</sup>[http://www.consilium.europa.eu/cms3\\_Applications/applications/search/metaDoSearch.asp?\\_num\\_page=1&lang=EN&cmsid=245&searchterm=Taiwan&cacheId=6141725220128171289FGA41G7SSWU1ORX3W9](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/cms3_Applications/applications/search/metaDoSearch.asp?_num_page=1&lang=EN&cmsid=245&searchterm=Taiwan&cacheId=6141725220128171289FGA41G7SSWU1ORX3W9).

<sup>46</sup>EU Presidency declaration on the "anti-secession law" by China, [http://europa-eu-un.org/articles/en/article\\_4470\\_en.htm](http://europa-eu-un.org/articles/en/article_4470_en.htm); <http://survey.chinatimes.com/9403c/Htm/05031505.htm>.

<sup>47</sup>Javier Solana, summary of remarks, "EU High Representative for the CFSP, After the Meeting with Chinese Foreign Minister, Li Zhaoxing," Brussels, March 17, 2005, S118/05, [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressdata/en/discours/84209.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/discours/84209.pdf).



This deliberate restraint could possibly be seen as a quid pro quo for the modification of Beijing's policy toward Iran.<sup>48</sup> Judging from the good relations China enjoys with this oil rich state, which is the subject of EU and U.S. sanctions on account of its nuclear program, Beijing could provide helpful leverage for the West to ease tension in this area. But there is no hard evidence of a connection between these three parties.<sup>49</sup> China invited Iran to become an observer of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in 2006, but since 2007 has blocked its bid to become a full member.<sup>50</sup> Membership of the SCO could have strengthened Iran's position in the region and exacerbated sectarian conflict in Iraq. Consequently, mutual trust and confidence between Beijing and Brussels were enhanced by the blocking of full SCO membership for Iran and room for bilateral cooperation was also expanded.

Chris Patten's successor as European Commissioner for External Relations, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, also expressed concern over the ASL.<sup>51</sup> In her speech to the European Parliament in July 2005, she mentioned the détente between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait right after mentions of the rise of China and the Korean situation. In particular, she underscored the visits of Taiwan's opposition leaders to China in 2005, which, in

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<sup>48</sup>"Shi Zhongguo xiugai dui Yilang zhengce de shihou le" (It is the time to modify China's Policy to Iran), *Boxun News Network*, July 31, 2006, [http://boxun.com/hero/2006/fangjue/14\\_1.shtml](http://boxun.com/hero/2006/fangjue/14_1.shtml); Benita Ferrero-Waldner, "Commissioner for External Relations & European Neighborhood Policy, Security in the Far East," European Parliament Strasbourg, July 6, 2005, SPEECH/05/421, [http://ec.europa.eu/comm/external\\_relations/news/ferrero/2005/sp05\\_421.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/comm/external_relations/news/ferrero/2005/sp05_421.htm).

<sup>49</sup>Shortly before President Barack Obama's first visit to China in November 2009, Randall Schriver, a former assistant secretary of state, indicated that Beijing must play an important role in Obama's foreign policy for the sake of North Korea, Iran, and Afghanistan, etc. *United Daily*, November 15, 2009, A16.

<sup>50</sup>Merle D. Kellerhals Jr., "U.S.-China Relations Show Progress: China Has Enormous Potential to Enhance Peace, Stability, Prosperity," May 27, 2008, <http://www.america.gov/st/peacesec-english/2008/May/20080527135326dmslahrellek0.5858271.html>; "Iran Moves to Join Shanghai Cooperation Organization," *Moscow News*, March 27, 2008, <http://www.mnweekly.ru/world/20080327/55319329.html>; Richard Weitz, "Iran Again Fails to Secure Shanghai Cooperation Organization Membership," *World Politics Review Exclusive*, August 28, 2007, <http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/Article.aspx?id=1070>.

<sup>51</sup>Ferrero-Waldner, SPEECH/05/421. [http://ec.europa.eu/comm/external\\_relations/news/ferrero/2005/sp05\\_421.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/comm/external_relations/news/ferrero/2005/sp05_421.htm).

her opinion, would help reduce tension between the two sides. She also expressed hope for a meeting between the CCP and what was then the ruling party in Taiwan, the Democratic Progressive Party (民進黨, DPP), although such a meeting was highly unlikely because the DPP considered acceptance of the one-China principle, the prerequisite set by Beijing for bilateral negotiations, as nothing short of surrender.

Now the significance of the ASL to Beijing and especially to its relations with the EU is clear. Almost all relevant organs of the EU—the European Council, the Commission, and the Parliament—are now intimately involved in visits of high ranking officials from Beijing to Brussels. This kind of response exceeds in intensity all other responses from the EU on the Taiwan issue.

### *Arms Embargo Issue*

The lifting of the arms embargo against China seemed a realistic option at one time as Germany and France promoted it with enthusiasm from 2004. During the aforementioned meeting between Javier Solana and Li Zhaoxing in 2005, Solana once again assured Li of the EU's consistent position on the arms embargo and stressed U.S. concerns as well.<sup>52</sup> The new governments that have come to power in Germany (2005) and France (2007) have also modified their attitudes on the embargo issue due to their relations to Washington.

Because of the close relations between the United States and the EU's new accession states, this issue is likely to be postponed for some time.<sup>53</sup> In addition, most of the new EU members would not be selling arms to China anyway and their democratic values would also play a role. Last but not least, the ASL was another reason to delay lifting the arms embargo. Since the release of the Guidelines on the EU's Foreign and Security Policy in East Asia<sup>54</sup> in 2007, the issue of lifting the arms embargo seems to have

<sup>52</sup>Solana remarks, S118/05.

<sup>53</sup>Tang Shaocheng, "The EU's Policy towards China and the Arms Embargo," *Asia Europe Journal* 3, no. 3 (October 2005): 313-21.

<sup>54</sup>"Guidelines on the EU's Foreign and Security Policy in East Asia," 2842nd Environment



reached an impasse. These Guidelines marked the first time that the military balance between the two sides of the Strait had been taken into consideration. Moreover, the dispute over the Dalai Lama's visits to Europe makes the issue even more difficult.

### *Abolition of the National Unification Council and Its Aftermath*

When President Chen Shui-bian abolished both the National Unification Council and the Guidelines for National Unification in January 2006, the EU again found it necessary to respond.<sup>55</sup> The strong wording of the statement issued by the chairperson of the European Union, Austrian Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik, in the presence of her Chinese counterpart Li Zhaoxing, indicated that the EU viewed Chen's move as unhelpful to progress in cross-Strait relations. This was the first time that President Chen's name had appeared in full in an EU document, but it was accompanied by a rebuke. However, when charter flights across the Taiwan Strait commenced during Lunar New Year 2006 and negotiations over this issue between Taipei and Beijing seemed to bear fruit shortly afterwards, these events were welcomed by the EU.<sup>56</sup> These declarations clearly expressed both Beijing's wish for cooperation from Brussels and the EU's high expectations for peace in the Taiwan Strait.

In May 2006, a group of European China experts made a fact-finding trip to Taipei under the auspices of the EU. The trip came after a round-table discussion conducted by the group with Chinese counterparts in

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Council meeting in Brussels, December 20, 2007, [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressdata/en/misc/97842.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/misc/97842.pdf).

<sup>55</sup>"Plassnik: 'A Broad Array of Topics Connects China and the EU'," news from the Presidency of EU, March 2, 2006, [http://www.ue2006.at/en/News/Press\\_Releases/February/0302TroikaChina.html](http://www.ue2006.at/en/News/Press_Releases/February/0302TroikaChina.html).

<sup>56</sup>"Declaration by the Presidency on Behalf of the European Union on Direct cross-Strait Flights over the Chinese New Year," news from the Presidency of EU, January 20, 2006, [http://www.ue2006.at/en/News/CFSP\\_Statements/January/2001TaiwanChina.html](http://www.ue2006.at/en/News/CFSP_Statements/January/2001TaiwanChina.html); "Declaration by the Presidency on Behalf of the European Union on Additional Direct cross-Straits Passenger Flights during Holiday Periods," news from the Presidency of EU, June 15, 2006, [http://www.ue2006.at/en/News/CFSP\\_Statements/June/1506TaiwanStrait.html](http://www.ue2006.at/en/News/CFSP_Statements/June/1506TaiwanStrait.html); "Winkler: 'Strategic Partnership with China an Important Aspect of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy'," news from the Presidency of EU, June 6, 2006, [http://www.ue2006.at/en/News/Press\\_Releases/June/0606WinklerChina.html](http://www.ue2006.at/en/News/Press_Releases/June/0606WinklerChina.html).

Hangzhou (杭州) in February that year.<sup>57</sup> This was the first time that the EU had tried to set up a track-two dialogue with Beijing and Taipei. It may have been more effective if the three sides had been able to sit down together as frequently as happens in the United States. But Beijing refused such three-way talks. Nonetheless, the efforts of the EU to become more actively involved in the cross-Straits stalemate were heartily appreciated, particularly by the Taiwanese side.

When President Chen announced a new policy of "four yeses and one no" (四要一沒有) in March 2007, Javier Solana again reacted promptly with a comment stressing the consistent stance of the EU on Taiwan.<sup>58</sup> This seems to have become the routine response to any action by President Chen. Along with the United States, the EU ceased to support Taiwan's accession to the WHO at the same time.<sup>59</sup> This must be seen as a consequence of Taipei's policy being perceived as provocation by the Europeans and the DPP government's insistence on joining the United Nations under the name Taiwan after a referendum.

The referendum issue seriously annoyed Beijing because it was perceived as another step toward Taiwan independence. In mid-September 2007, the director of the Taiwan Affairs Office, Chen Yunlin, once again visited the European Union.<sup>60</sup> Chen's trip to Brussels made it clear how much importance Beijing attached to this issue. The statement issued after

<sup>57</sup>The group included Jean-Pierre Cabestan, Tom Hart, and Linda Jacobsen, among others. Linda Jakobsen, "A Greater Chinese Union," *Washington Quarterly* 28, no. 3 (Summer 2005): 27-39.

<sup>58</sup>"Chen Shuibian ti siyao yimeiyong, Taiwanshe kending zhichi" (Chen Shui-bian proposes "four yeses and one no," and Taiwan Society affirmatively supports it), *Epoch Times* (Dajiyuan), March 5, 2007, <http://epochtimes.com/b5/7/3/5/n1637043.htm>; "Comments by Javier Solana, EU High Representative for the CFSP, on the Importance of Stability across the Taiwan Straits," Brussels, March 6, 2007, S083/06, [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressdata/en/declarations/93110.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/declarations/93110.pdf).

<sup>59</sup>"Taiwan yu jiaru Shiwei, Oumeng zhuisui Meiguo taidu: bu zhiyuan" (Taiwan wants to join WHO, EU follows US's position: no support), *Singtao Net*, April 19, 2007, [http://www.singtaonet.com:82/euro\\_asia/200704/t20070419\\_516958.html](http://www.singtaonet.com:82/euro_asia/200704/t20070419_516958.html); "EU Does Not Support Taiwan's WHO Bid," *Radio Taiwan International*, April 19, 2007, <http://english.rti.org.tw/Content/GetSingleNews.aspx?ContentID=35079>.

<sup>60</sup>[http://www.consilium.europa.eu/cms3\\_Applications/applications/search/metaDoSearch.asp](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/cms3_Applications/applications/search/metaDoSearch.asp).



his meeting with Solana, in contrast to the previous ambiguous statements, was clearly aimed at "Taiwan's accession to the UN in the name of Taiwan."

One month after this pronouncement by Solana, the EU expressed more detailed concern over the same issue, saying that Taipei's policy "might raise tension across the Strait and might be perceived as a unilateral change in the status quo."<sup>61</sup> Obviously, both in terms of quantity and quality, these expressions of concern were clear signs of the EU's growing anxiety. Even so, compared to the strong position delivered by high-ranking U.S. officials, the EU's reaction was very low key.<sup>62</sup> Washington even attempted to dissuade the Taiwanese people from supporting the referendum. This indicated the Bush administration's strong distaste for Taipei's unpredictability.

The latest policy of the European Union toward Taiwan during President Chen's time can be found in the "Guidelines on the EU's Foreign and Security Policy in East Asia," issued by the Council of the European Union in December 2007.<sup>63</sup> In this document, the EU put more weight on cross-Strait relations than it did on the issue of the Korean Peninsula, another important flashpoint in this region. Once again the one-China policy, peaceful resolution, and cross-Strait dialogue were underscored. But what was new was the direct expression of the EU's concerns over Taipei's provocative behavior. Brussels stated that it would "use channels to Taipei to deliver messages when necessary." This gave the impression that the EU intended to do whatever it could to prevent the worst from happening.

Immediately after Ma Ying-jeou was elected president in March 2008, the EU sent a message welcoming the result of the election.<sup>64</sup> At last, the EU seemed to breathe a sigh of relief in expectation of President

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<sup>61</sup>Ibid.

<sup>62</sup>For example, the declarations by the Deputy Secretary of State, John Negroponte, <http://www.state.gov/s/d/2007/91479.htm>, and by the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, Thomas J. Christensen, <http://www.ait.org.tw/en/news/officialtext/viewer.aspx?id=2007091201>.

<sup>63</sup>See *Guidelines on the EU's Foreign and Security Policy in East Asia*.

<sup>64</sup>Tang Shaocheng, "Relations across the Taiwan Strait," *UNISCI Discussion Papers*, no. 21, October 2009, 248-63; see also table 1.

Ma's conciliatory attitude toward China. In line with this policy, negotiations between Taipei and Beijing were also warmly welcomed by the EU (see table 1).

In sum, judging from all the EU's reactions to the cross-Strait issue, Brussels must have seen President Chen as a troublemaker, or even the provoker of crises. Even Chen's move to abolish the National Unification Council was a cause of concern in the EU, let alone the UN referendum proposed by the DPP. The EU's concern reached a pinnacle over the referendum issue in this period, as it could have led to conflict between Taiwan and China.

On the other hand, the EU also tried to ease tensions in this area. Up to now, the EU had only sent scholars on fact-finding tours to Taiwan. Therefore, in the EU's eyes, the opening of charter flights across the Strait seemed to be the only hope for the EU to mediate a detente between the two rivals. Thanks to the election of President Ma Ying-jeou, the EU can now be at ease over the issue of relations between Taiwan and China.

### **Concluding Remarks**

To sum up, although relations between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait are of only limited importance to the EU, the EU's involvement in this issue since 1996 has been increasingly active. There has been a clear increase in the quantity and quality of the European Council's statements on the Taiwan issue (see table 1). There was only one statement per year in 1996 and 1999, and from 2001 to 2004, the subject only came up in the annual EU-China Summit declarations. But since 2005 things have changed. In 2005 alone three statements were issued in quick succession on the ASL, and the issue of Taiwan's UN referendum provoked a similar rash of statements in 2007. During this period, both the director of China's Taiwan Affairs Office and the Chinese Foreign Minister visited Brussels, and as a result all the relevant organs of the EU became actively involved. Those were the periods when the EU's reaction to issues in cross-Strait relations was at its most intense.



In the case of the ASL, Beijing was still uncertain about the reaction of the EU whereas in 2007 both sides seemed to reach a full accord over the referendum issue. Due to the EU's limited capacity to make any impact on the Taiwan issue, all Brussels can do is issue statements. Once President Ma Ying-jeou had come to power in 2008, tension across the Taiwan Strait was eased and the EU's attitude toward Taiwan improved. A new era had begun in this triangular relationship.

However, the EU's policy toward the Taiwan issue remained unchanged during the period of this study. The most significant guidelines were adherence to the one-China principle, the necessity for a peaceful resolution of the conflict, and negotiation between the two sides. In particular, peace and stability were the most important concerns of the Europeans on this issue as their economic and trade interests outweighed their geostrategic interests in this region. This can be seen clearly from the EU's prompt and repeated expressions of approbation regarding the opening of cross-Strait charter flights and the visits of politicians from Taiwan's opposition parties to China, compared to the rebukes the EU issued when there was any possibility of unilateral change to the status quo. There is evidence of tacit understanding and cordial cooperation between Beijing and Brussels.

The EU's bilateral relations with China may have been affected to a degree by the opposition among the new accession states to China's lack of democratic values. The critical attitude of European parliamentarians toward China is the best evidence of this. This opposition gave the United States more leverage in persuading the EU to maintain its arms embargo against China. Leadership changes in Germany, France, and the United Kingdom since 2005, the passage of the ASL, and, especially, the European tour of the Dalai Lama in 2008 have all made the lifting of the embargo more difficult. This could contribute to the maintenance of the balance of power in the Taiwan Strait.

However, the EU's stance toward Taiwan became more and more unambiguous over this period, due to the ever increasing pro-independence attitude of President Chen Shui-bian. In 2002 the cross-Strait crisis provoked by Chen was played down by the EU, and puzzlingly described as

a "change of the situation." But since 2006, the European side seems to have lost its patience with Chen, subjecting him to harsh rebukes. At the same time, the EU withdrew its support for Taiwan's accession to the WHO.

Even so, there is not a single mention of Taiwan independence in any EU documents examined for this study, which is in stark contrast to corresponding documents from the United States. The nearest the EU came to addressing this DPP policy was when it mentioned a "unilateral change of the status quo." Furthermore, there was no mention of China's sovereignty over Taiwan (e.g., that Taiwan is a part of China or even the PRC). Given the European Parliament's support for Taiwan, it is open to speculation whether the EU has in fact left some room for the possible development of closer relations with Taiwan.

The reconciliation process between Taipei and Beijing introduced by President Ma Ying-jeou finally relieves the EU from its decade-long entanglement in the cross-Strait issue. Brussels did not hesitate to express its satisfaction with this development (see table 1). A new page has been turned in the EU's China/Taiwan policy because peace and stability can only serve the interests of the Europeans. The EU's policy in this regard provides further proof of the applicability of the neo-realist perspective.

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