



FINLAND-TAIWAN RELATIONS: AN OVERVIEW AND CHANGES AFTER COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Julie Yu-Wen Chen and Jyrki Kallio

Despite the lack of formal diplomatic relations between Finland and Taiwan, the two sides have maintained a practical relationship through trade, tourism, and educational and cultural exchanges. The COVID-19 pandemic has created some favorable ground for certain breakthroughs, be it in terms of the Finnish government's action plan to support Taiwan's meaningful international participation, Finnish media reports that offer more diverse views on Taiwan's society beyond international politics, or a Finnish parliamentarian's help in implementing Taiwan's mask diplomacy in the Finnish context. In general, the Foreign Ministry in Finland has been vigilant in ensuring that the One China Policy does not become unnecessarily restrictive. Finland has been quietly raising the profile of bilateral relations with Taiwan. Although trade was disrupted at the beginning of the pandemic, it managed to grow afterwards. In sum, the pandemic did stall tourism but not bilateral trade. In addition, Taiwan's overall visibility appears to have grown in Finnish society, as exemplified in the increasing coverage of Taiwan-related news in Finland's largest newspaper Helsingin Sanomat.

Introduction

Finland is often regarded as one of the few countries globally that has been able to maintain pragmatic diplomatic relations, without any hiccups, with the People's Republic of China (PRC) throughout its history. Like many European countries, relations with the Republic of China (ROC), also commonly known as Taiwan, are purely functional without diplomatic recognition. The ROC was only able to set up a representative office in Helsinki, Finland, in 1990; this was followed by Finland setting up an Office of Finnish Industry and Trade (OFIT) in Taiwan in 1991. The OFIT was renamed Finland Trade Center in 2018. It is part of Business Finland, a Finnish governmental organization promoting trade, tourism, and investment in Finland.

However, it is little known that Finland had actually signed a Friendship Treaty with the ROC when the ROC's regime was still established on the Chinese mainland. This Friendship Treaty is the oldest treaty between Finland and China and was signed in 1926. This treaty is still valid, albeit arguably between Finland and the PRC (considered the successor state of the ROC) because neither party has annulled it. Finland was recognized by the ROC in 1919 and set up further diplomatic relations with the ROC in 1923. There was even a Finnish consulate in Shanghai until World War II, "largely for the purpose of serving the Finnish business community there".¹

In the wake of the PRC's founding in 1949, Finland became one of the few countries in the world that immediately

recognized its regime, and Sino–Finnish diplomatic relations were established in 1950. The connection between Finland and the ROC, which later relocated its government to the island of Taiwan, was broken off after World War II. It was not until 1990 that ties were resumed. Informal representative offices of both sides were then set up in Helsinki and Taipei to facilitate functional relations, such as trade.

As Finland does not have extensive political relations with Taiwan, compared with Finnish–PRC relations, the crux of this article lies in exploring other dimensions of the relations that have grown in recent years, particularly after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. These dimensions include representations of Taiwan in Finland’s mainstream media and the growth of parliamentary relations between the two sides. Exploring these aspects will help us understand how Taiwan is slowly gaining more visibility in Finland.

In terms of methodology, we use literature review, data collected from major stakeholders (e.g., the Taipei Representative Office in Finland and the Finland Trade Center), as well as content analysis of *Helsingin Sanomat*, Finland’s largest newspaper, to enrich the study. We begin by examining the limited political relations between the two sides. The third section explores trade relations. The fourth section focuses on educational exchanges, and the fifth section on media coverage.

Political Relations

Finland and the European Union (EU), of which Finland is part, adhere to the One China Policy. This means that Finland seeks to create policy solutions to tackle the situation across the Taiwan Strait, acknowledging that there is

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only one China without maintaining official diplomatic relations with Taiwan. However, like many other European countries,² Finland tries to maintain a certain level of non-official relations with Taiwan through trade, education, culture, science, and technology. In other words, Finland’s relations with Taiwan are functional, and this principle has not fundamentally changed for decades.

The Foreign Ministry in Finland has been vigilant in ensuring that the One China Policy does not become unnecessarily restrictive. The PRC Embassy in Finland has actively exerted pressure on several Finnish authorities to refrain from using the term “Taiwan” as a reference to a political entity or state separate from China. For instance, in 2018, the Finnish Immigration Service (Migri) was approached by the Embassy with the demand to change their designation used for the country of origin for the ROC nationals from “Taiwan, Republic of China” to “Taiwan, China”. This was not the first time that the Embassy was pressuring the Migri. However, after consulting some experts and the Foreign Ministry, the Migri decided to change the designation to “Taiwan”, which is still in use.³

Furthermore, Finland has been quietly raising the profile of bilateral relations with Taiwan. In 2011, Permanent Secretary (Vice Minister) Erkki Virtanen from the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment led a delegation to Taipei for trade talks, the first time at such a high level. The talks followed the visit of Vice Minister Liang Kuo-hsin to Finland in 2010.⁴ The trade talk and business forum have since taken place every other year. The last time a high-level delegation visited Taiwan in 2018 was under the lead

of Under-Secretary of State Petri Peltonen.⁵ However, the time has not yet seemed ripe for sending a career diplomat as Finland's trade representative in Taipei, although several other EU states are following such a practice.

It is noteworthy that Finland's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other ministries jointly updated a Governmental Action Plan on China in June 2021, following the previous version created in 2010. Among the differences between the two versions, there is one small change concerning Taiwan: The 2021 version clearly states Finland's support for "Taiwan's meaningful participation in international organizations, which benefits the international community as a whole."⁶ This element is new and shows Finland synchronizing its policy with the EU to support Taiwan's participation in international organizations. The COVID-19 pandemic and various discussions on Taiwan's participation in the World Health Organization (WHO) in different contexts have helped Taiwan gain this kind of support from Finland and the EU.

Despite the absence of formal relations, Taiwan has strived to carve out its niche in the international space, as shown in many empirical cases worldwide.⁷ Among the 11 Taipei representatives sent to Finland since 1990, the work of the most recent representative, Janet Chang, is particularly impressive. Since she started her term in September 2019, she has used the strategy of parliamentary diplomacy to make a breakthrough in Finland. Parliamentary diplomacy is usually what Taiwan's diplomats focus on in many countries worldwide as an alternative to the shunned formal diplomatic channels. Although parliamentarians are not governmental officials, they play vital roles in democratic countries in Europe; depending on the political system of each EU member-state, parliamentarians may play different roles and influences in foreign affairs. As in the EU Parliament, Taiwan's diplomacy efforts in the US Congress are also recognizable.

In Finland, members of parliaments (MPs) also debate foreign policies. Finnish MPs can make foreign visits and study trips, and maintain international relations with their counterparts worldwide. In the Finnish parliament, different "friendship groups" supplement the parliament's official international relations and are particularly vital when official contact does not exist with a country for any reason. As such, Taiwan's diplomats have tried to encourage the formation and operation of a friendship group in

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the Finnish parliament. As far as we have observed, this friendship group already existed in 1994. On the Finnish parliament's website, one can find the list of friendship groups, but as Taiwan has no official diplomatic relationship with Finland, the pro-Taiwan friendship group is not listed. Further, the names of Finnish parliamentarians belonging to this group are kept confidential by the Taipei Representative Office in Finland.

Despite the lack of a public list, one can turn to Finnish and Taiwanese media to understand the key actors in the pro-Taiwan friendship group – for example, according to Taiwan's media, Mikko Kärnä (Centre Party) and Inka Hopsu (Green Party). Hopsu has visited Tainan City Council as part of her foreign work visit in 2019.⁸ It seems that Taiwan's representative in Finland, Janet Chang, has actively befriended Finnish MPs across different political parties. Kärnä's visibility in supporting Taiwan is notable because he has widely used social media platforms such as Twitter to speak for Taiwan. His Twitter bio even reads, "Northernmost MP of the Finnish Parliament. King in the North. Defender of Lapland, Catalonia, Scotland and Taiwan."⁹

Since the pandemic began in spring 2020, Kärnä has especially advocated for Taiwan's participation in the WHO and its decision-making body, the World Health Assembly.¹⁰ As the chairman of the Finnish Parliamentary Taiwan Friendship Group, Kärnä even helped organize the delivery

of 200,000 masks to Finland, bypassing the support of the Finnish government.¹¹ In 2019, the so-called Formosa Club, a pan-European Taiwan support group, was founded in the European Parliament. In 2021, Kärnä also joined this club as co-chairman, further supporting transnational European parliamentarians' connection with Taiwan.¹²

One primary challenge faced by Taiwan's parliamentary diplomacy is that it ultimately cannot substitute formal diplomatic channels. Ironically, Taiwan's media often reported Kärnä's support for Taiwan as Kärnä representing Finland as a country. Nearly all of Taiwan's new reports about relations with Finland are, in fact, about Finnish MPs' support for Taiwan, which might mislead newsreaders in Taiwan to equate certain MPs' support for Taiwan as official Finnish support.

Bilateral Trade Relations

According to available data from Taiwan's government, bilateral trade between Taiwan and Finland amounted to \$620.59 million in 2020 compared to \$625.78 million in 2019, a slight decrease of 0.83 percent. Taiwan's exports to Finland in 2020 were valued at \$221.54 million compared to \$261.7 million in 2019, a sharp decline of 15.344 percent, and Taiwan's imports from Finland in 2020 amounted to \$399.04 million, representing a growth of 9.603 percent from \$364.08 million in 2019 (Table 1).

The main products exported from Taiwan to Finland in 2020 were communication equipment, integrated circuits, screws, nuts, automatic data processors and auxiliary units, vinyl ester polymers, motor vehicle equipment, transformer converters, portable tools, oscilloscopes, and spectrum analyzers, as well as instruments for measuring or checking electricity, monitors and projectors, etc. Among them, spectrum analyzers and instruments for measuring or checking electricity (251 percent), appliances and monitor projectors (91 percent), and motorcycles (38 percent) have shown tremendous growth from 2019 to 2020. Insulation (including enamel or anodizing) wires and cables are also Taiwan's main export items, with a high growth rate of 77 percent from 2019 to 2020.

The main products Taiwan imports from Finland include passenger vehicles, nickel, chemical wood pulp, discs, magnetic tapes, solid non-volatile storage devices, communication supplies and equipment, pulp and paper

products, paper machinery equipment, transformer converters, as well as machines with special functions and mechanical appliances. Among them, tractors (579 percent), pulp and cardboard manufacturing machinery (570 percent), power distribution panels (523 percent), communication products such as telephones (328 percent), electric heating equipment (193 percent), and soda and sulfite wood pulp (86 percent) showed huge growth from 2019 to 2020.

Taiwan's total trade with Finland in 2020 accounted for 0.515 percent of Finland's total trade. As far as the global market is concerned, Taiwan is Finland's 29th largest source of imports and 34th largest export market. In terms of the Asian market, Taiwan is Finland's 6th largest import source and 5th largest export market.

Table 1: Taiwan and Finland Bilateral Trade from 2016 to 2020 (Unit: Million US\$)

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Growth Rate from 2019 to 2020
Taiwan's Export to Finland	264.56	257.22	258.46	261.70	221.55	-15.344%
Taiwan's Import from Finland	260.37	277.03	399.15	364.08	399.04	9.603%
Total	524.93	534.25	657.61	625.78	620.59	-0.830%

Source: Import and Export Statistics of the Customs Administration, Ministry of Finance, Republic of China (Taiwan).

For Taiwanese businesspeople, Finland's investment environment has its advantages and disadvantages. Its advantages are that Finland is the only Nordic country that has joined the Eurozone. Therefore, it is possible to directly conduct commercial transactions in Euros without exchanging currency, making all financial transactions quite convenient. Moreover, the Finnish financial system is sound, bank operations are fast and reliable, and there are no particular restrictions on the flow of foreign capital. Finnish society is also relatively stable, and the coverage of transportation facilities and national network construction is relatively complete. Although newspapers and magazines are in Finnish or Swedish, there is no obstacle to communicating with Finns in English. Thus, these favorable conditions attract Taiwanese businesses, among other foreign investors, to invest in Finland.

One of the disadvantages of foreign investment in Finland is the imbalance between supply and demand in the labor market. Finland's advanced information technology, including the Nokia-based telecommunications industry, video game design industry, and information security technology, requires many software engineers. However, the lack of production and education in these specialized fields has led to an insufficient labor supply. In addition, due to the industry's rapid expansion, the supply of factories and office premises has become saturated. Although new premises continue to be built, it is still difficult to fully meet the needs of such enterprises.

Another challenge for Taiwanese businesses is that the Finnish market lacks competition, and as a result, prices of products are very high. The EU recommends that the Finnish government increase fair competition among industries and simultaneously strengthen the supervisory powers of market competition regulators. Finnish telecommunications, electricity, gas, and other industries are due to open their markets for competition, so the relevant prices can be lower than the EU average.

Due to the small Finnish market, apart from the well-known large factories of Japanese and South Korean companies, few other Asian countries have invested in local factories in Finland. Most rely on Finnish importers or large local distributors for sales or after-sales services. Thus, Taiwanese firms are usually located in Sweden (for example, both ACER and Asustek in Stockholm), and most of them only have service bases in Finland.

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When the aforementioned OFIT was set up in Taipei in 1991, the aim was to foster trade, travel, and cultural exchanges. In fact, the OFIT was jointly created by eight listed companies in Finland (Valmet, Neste, Kone, Huolintakeskus, Kaukomarkkinat, Partek, Outokumpu, and Raute) since Taiwan's status as one of the four Asian Tigers made it an attractive new market for Finnish companies to explore. In 1995, the name was changed to the Finland Trade Center as the office became part of the Suomen Ulkomaankauppaliitto (Finnish Foreign Trade Association), which later became Finpro in 1999 and then Business Finland in 2018. The name of the office in Taipei changed because the host organization in Finland had changed. The Finland Trade Center used to handle visas and other selective official matters from 1995 to 2000 when Finland became part of the Schengen agreement, but it no longer handles such matters.

In August 2021, the Finland Trade Center in Taiwan increased its workforce when Jere Tala was appointed senior advisor. As Jere Tala expressed, “We see that there are big opportunities to increase trade between Finland and Taiwan. We want to make Taiwan more attractive to Finnish companies, as well as increase Finland's recognizability to Taiwanese businesses.”¹³ However, at the time of writing, the current situation is that the pandemic has stalled the once growing tourism relations between Finland and Taiwan. For instance, back in 2019, there were 18,000 visitors from Taiwan to Finland. In 2021, there were only 447. Interestingly though, although trade was disrupted at the beginning of the pandemic, it managed to grow afterwards. According to the Finnish government's calculation, trade in goods between Taiwan and Finland between January and November 2021 was already higher than the same period in 2020.¹⁴ In sum, the pandemic did stall tourism but not bilateral trade.

Educational Exchanges

According to the Taipei Representative Office in Finland, there were 20-30 student exchanges annually prior to the pandemic, which has since halted the program. In general, the Taiwanese government has several educational and cultural exchange programs that can be seen as different kinds of soft power strategies to involve citizens in different parts of the world in learning about Taiwan. Three types of scholarships have been in operation for years.

The first type is the Taiwan Scholarship, which was jointly launched by Taiwan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), Ministry of Education (MOE), Ministry of Economic Affairs (MOEA), and National Science Council (NSC) in 2004. On average, every year, one Taiwan Scholarship is granted to an applicant from Finland, offering financial support for Finnish students to complete academic degrees in Taiwan. The second is the Huayu Enrichment Scholarship granted by Taiwan’s MOE. Annually, 4-7 Huayu Enrichment Scholarships are granted to Finnish students to continue their Mandarin education in Taiwan. Finally, the third type is the Taiwan-Europe Connectivity Scholarship launched by Taiwan’s MOFA in 2021 to encourage the study of all kinds of disciplines in Taiwan. In addition to attracting international students to Taiwan, this scholarship seeks to use the cooperation to help Taiwanese universities build up their bilingual teaching capacity and create a bilingual environment. This goal is part of the current Taiwan government’s plan to turn the country into a bilingual nation by 2030, facilitating the incorporation of English services in the public and private sectors. International students are accordingly encouraged to help with English teaching while studying in Taiwan. In 2021, seven Finnish students from different universities received the Taiwan-Europe Connectivity Scholarship.

In addition to individual scholarships, Finnish universities participate in various cooperation initiatives with Taiwanese universities, although the scale is much smaller than Taiwan’s educational cooperation in most EU countries. For instance, the University of Helsinki, Finland’s largest higher education institution, has different levels of cooperative relationships

with its counterparts in Taiwan. The University of Helsinki has a sister partnership with the National Taiwan University (NTU), Taiwan’s largest higher education institution. The partnership entails cooperation at the university level. At the faculty level, the Faculty of Arts of the University of Helsinki has a partnership with its counterpart at the National Taiwan Normal University. Table 2 provides an overview.

Table 2: University of Helsinki’s Cooperation with Higher Education Institutions in Taiwan

Universities	Level of Cooperation	Starting Year
National Taiwan University	University level	1999
National Taiwan Normal University	Faculty level (Faculty of Arts)	2017
National Tsing Hua University	University level	2018
Kaohsiung Medical University	Faculty level at the Faculty of Pharmacy, including a Team Finland Knowledge Project ¹⁵	2021
National Taiwan University	University level	1999
National Taiwan Normal University	Faculty level (Faculty of Arts)	2017
National Tsing Hua University	University level	2018
Kaohsiung Medical University	Faculty level at the Faculty of Pharmacy, including a Team Finland Knowledge Project ¹⁶	2021

Source: University of Helsinki

The Department of Cultures, under the Faculty of Arts at the University of Helsinki, has also received grants from Taiwan’s Ministry of Culture to organize a series of academic events under the Spotlight Taiwan program since 2021. This program has been supporting professional artists and cultural organizations as well as universities (e.g., Stockholm University, SOAS University of London, the University of British Columbia) around the world by sponsoring a diverse array of activities related to Taiwan’s culture. In 2021, for instance, the University of Helsinki held six academic lectures and one film screening event sponsored by the program.¹⁷

Lastly, two agreements between Finland’s main research funding agency, the Academy of Finland, and Taiwan were signed in 1998. The first of these is the “Agreement on scientific cooperation between the Academy of Finland and the National Science Council of the Republic of China.”

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This agreement was renewed in 2021 as the “Agreement on scientific cooperation between the Academy of Finland and the Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST), Taiwan.” The second agreement is the “Memorandum of understanding between the Academy of Finland and the Academia Sinica, Taipei, Taiwan.” Such cooperation primarily supports Finnish researchers in applying for a mobility grant to Taiwan or inviting a Taiwanese researcher to Finland.¹⁸ The number of grants given can be seen in Table 3, though some of the actual visits may have been postponed due to COVID-19 travel restrictions.

Table 3: Mobility Grants Given by Academy of Finland to Support Exchange between Finnish and Taiwanese Researchers

Years	2021	2020	2019	2018
Finnish researchers visiting Taiwan (number of grants)	1	4	1	5
Finnish researchers inviting Taiwanese researchers to visit Finland (number of grants)	1	3	1	3

Source: Academy of Finland

Overall, educational and research cooperation between Finland and Taiwan is small compared to some other European countries. Moreover, certain types of cooperation in other European countries do not exist in Finland. For instance, Taiwan’s MOE has tried to persuade Finnish universities to engage Mandarin teachers, but without success. The offering of Mandarin teaching can be seen as a competition between Taiwan and the PRC’s various programs, such as the Confucius Institutes. This type of cooperation seems to have changed over time. We do not have sufficient data to show a complete picture, but as far as we can find, both the PRC and ROC governments have earlier sent Mandarin teachers to Finland or offered financial support for Mandarin teaching in Finland.¹⁹ However, at least in the past decade, the cooperation with Taiwan in this regard has not existed. Instead, the PRC government has been active and generous in supporting Mandarin teaching in several Finnish universities, such as the University of Helsinki, the University of Turku, and the University of Lapland, at different points in time.

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Media Coverage and Public Image

In general, Taiwan is not visible in all Finnish media, particularly not in local media. However, it is relatively more visible in Finland’s mainstream media, such as Finland’s largest newspaper, *Helsingin Sanomat*, and Finland’s state media, YLE. In *Helsingin Sanomat*’s digital archive, which records all its publications since its foundation in 1889, there are about 8,019 pieces of news that contain the word “Taiwan.” The earliest piece dated back to September 23, 1909, but a large majority of these news pieces did not focus on reporting on Taiwan; the term “Taiwan” was mentioned as part of international news or an advertisement.

A closer examination of how the term “Taiwan” was mentioned from 2013 to 2021 suggests that the overall numbers of articles or advertisements containing the word “Taiwan” has increased over the years, particularly in 2020 and 2021, the first two years of the COVID-19 pandemic.²⁰ This should match other global trends where Taiwan’s management of COVID-19 and its often uneasy relations with China became more visible in international media. If there is any real news focusing on Taiwan in *Helsingin Sanomat*, it is often about contemporary international politics related to China. In other words, in the Finnish media, Taiwan is usually depicted from the perspective of its political conflict with China.

The only exception is the series of reports that Mari Manninen wrote for *Helsingin Sanomat* in 2021.²¹ From the end of January to May in 2021, Manninen worked as a correspondent and reported about Asia when based in Taiwan. Her stay in Taiwan was for a functional reason: the pandemic situation and the challenge of getting a visa to

enter mainland China, which many foreign correspondents faced during the pandemic. Manninen stayed in Taiwan until May, when Taiwan had its first large-scale domestic coronavirus outbreak, the situation soon becoming unfavorable for her work, and she then decided to return to Finland.

Manninen's reports were often featured on *Helsingin Sanomat's* front page or in the foreign news section's front page, with colorful and vivid pictures and in-depth analyses of various facets of Taiwan's society and culture, going beyond international politics. This is the first time Taiwan was not being seen and discussed from merely a political perspective in *Helsingin Sanomat's* reports. Instead, the island's peoples, cultures, and society became known to Finnish readers. The stories covered a wide range of topics: indigenous peoples, people living in the military frontline in Kinmen, death metal music, and mock meat.

From time to time, Taiwan's relations with China were covered by Manninen too, but the reports were enriched with more local stories and perspectives than the standard narrative found in Western media. For instance, the story of people living in Kinmen brought up the history of military conflicts with China. Manninen's commentary on how Taiwan's pineapples sold well in Hong Kong after China banned the import of Taiwan's pineapples revealed the vivid political tension between Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the Chinese mainland. There was another front page

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of a long article published on Saturday, February 6, soon after Manninen started her work in Taiwan. The article is titled “*Kaikkialla kiva ei ole kiellettyä*,” which translates literally as “Fun things are not forbidden everywhere” (that is, in Taiwan during the pandemic) and is basically about Taiwan's COVID-19 story. While the central message of this article is in line with most Western reports that show Taiwan's success in taking early actions against the spread of the virus in 2020 and how that led to low COVID-19 cases, the article is distinguished by Manninen's use of the very personal experience of having fun in parties and clubs to reveal a stark contrast to the COVID-19 lockdowns in many parts of the globe. The article was on the front page of the foreign news section. Under the title, there is a summary of her article: “HS's Asian correspondent Mari Manninen having fun one day in Taiwan because it is the only place in the world where having fun is possible. Days run as usual, wine flows in crowded bars, and people cuddle each other.”²²

Manninen did not publish as many articles on Taiwan after leaving the island in May 2021. These pieces that she wrote during her short stay provided a supplementary understanding of Taiwan, which is often only seen as a geopolitical problem in the eyes of international newsreaders. Manninen's stories gave the local Taiwanese a chance or the “agency” to talk about their own history, culture, and society in terms that would make sense of their own values and worldviews.

In international politics, Taiwan has been constructed as and equated to “the Taiwan issue,” which continues to occur in international and Finnish media. To better understand its history, one should not just examine how that political symbolism was constructed but also how local residents themselves reinterpret its development. Manninen's reports gave examples of how this could be achieved. There are also other journalists from *Helsingin Sanomat* who reported on news related to Taiwan, such as Emil Elo's article²³ on Taiwan's anarchist digital minister Audrey Tang as well as Niclas Storås' (2021) story²⁴ on Taiwan's semi-conductor industry and its founding father, Morris Chang. Overall, the scope of Finland's leading newspaper's reports on Taiwan has widened and deepened.

Nevertheless, there is still a profound lack of understanding in the media about the “Taiwan issue”, which makes it difficult for the Finnish audiences to put the news regarding

Taiwan's international activities and its relations with China in the right context. Reporters do not wish to use the terms "Republic" and "People's Republic", on the plea that it is less complicated to just talk of Taiwan and China. As a consequence, the Finnish audiences are left believing that Taiwan is a country in its own right, "born in 1949",²⁵ which China regards as "a rebellious province".²⁶ At times, Taiwan has even been presented as "an autonomous region of China".²⁷ References to "Taiwanese independence" lead to the misconception that Taiwan needs "independence" because it is currently part of China.²⁸ The meaning of 'One China Policy' is often understood as recognizing that Taiwan is a part of China.²⁹ There are exceptionally also news stories where the facts are more or less in place,³⁰ but all in all, the media presents the status of Taiwan and the reasons for its tensions with China in a hopelessly muddled way. In case of a military conflict between Taiwan and China, and especially if it is related to the outlying areas of Taiwan, such as the Taiping Reef, the Finnish audience would have a very small chance of understanding what is really happening and why.

Conclusion

Despite the lack of formal diplomatic relations between Finland and Taiwan, the two sides have maintained a practical relationship through trade, tourism, and educational and cultural exchanges. The COVID-19 pandemic has created some favorable ground for certain breakthroughs, be it in terms of the Finnish government's action plan to support Taiwan's meaningful international participation, Finnish reports that offer more diverse views on Taiwan's society beyond international politics, or a Finnish parliamentarian's help in implementing Taiwan's mask diplomacy in the Finnish context. Despite tourism, educational exchanges, and actual people-to-people interactions being stalled during the pandemic, Taiwan's visibility appears to have grown overall in Finnish society.

Authors

Julie Yu-Wen Chen is Professor of Chinese Studies at the Department of Cultures, Faculty of Arts, University of Helsinki

Jyrki Kallio is Senior Research Fellow at the Finnish Institute of International Affairs, Helsinki,

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to the Helsingin Sanomat Foundation for providing archival access for this research as well as the Finland Trade Office in Taiwan, Taipei Representative Office in Finland, University of Helsinki, and Academy of Finland for offering valuable information in the completion of this article.

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- 13 Email correspondence with Jere Tala, January 13, 2022.
- 14 Information in Table 1 was from the Taiwan government, which was only able to show the situation until 2020. My statement is from the Finnish customs' figures at http://karirast.com/importexport/TW_mtb.html. It documents the situation in 2021. Overall, there is no major difference between the Taiwanese and Finnish calculations.
- 15 The cooperation between the College of Pharmacy at Kaohsiung Medical University and the Faculty of Pharmacy at the University of Helsinki is educational, aiming to establish dual degree structures in both master's and doctoral education. At the master's level, this project represents a preparative phase to align the curricula, set up a cross-studying agreement, and build a joint online study module to complement existing course portfolios. The mobility actions included in the

- project are a nine-month stay of a doctoral student and a five-month stay of a master's student from the University of Helsinki at Kaohsiung Medical University. Respectively, a doctoral student from Taiwan will spend nine months in Finland and a master's student from the Taiwanese partner institute will have a one-term (5-month) exchange period in Helsinki. Short-term visits by the teaching staff are carried out in both directions to facilitate common teaching activities. For more information, please see the website of the Finnish National Agency for Education, https://www.oph.fi/sites/default/files/documents/Cultivating%20pharmaceutical%20expertise%20within%20Taiwanese%20%E2%80%93%20Finnish%20cooperation_1.pdf.
- 16 The cooperation between the College of Pharmacy at Kaohsiung Medical University and the Faculty of Pharmacy at the University of Helsinki is educational, aiming to establish dual degree structures in both master's and doctoral education. At the master's level, this project represents a preparative phase to align the curricula, set up a cross-studying agreement, and build a joint online study module to complement existing course portfolios. The mobility actions included in the project are a nine-month stay of a doctoral student and a five-month stay of a master's student from the University of Helsinki at Kaohsiung Medical University. Respectively, a doctoral student from Taiwan will spend nine months in Finland and a master's student from the Taiwanese partner institute will have a one-term (5-month) exchange period in Helsinki. Short-term visits by the teaching staff are carried out in both directions to facilitate common teaching activities. For more information, please see the website of the Finnish National Agency for Education, https://www.oph.fi/sites/default/files/documents/Cultivating%20pharmaceutical%20expertise%20within%20Taiwanese%20%E2%80%93%20Finnish%20cooperation_1.pdf.
 - 17 <https://blogs.helsinki.fi/spotlighttaiwan/>.
 - 18 The Academy of Finland has published some limited information on the cooperation on its website: <https://www.aka.fi/en/about-us/what-we-do/international-cooperation/global-partnerships/bilateral-international-partnerships/taiwan/>.
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 - 20 The number of news pieces mentioning Taiwan in *Helsingin Sanomat* from 2013 to 2021 is as follows: 205 (from January 2021 to December 2, 2021, when the archive was checked), 210 (2020), 150 (2019), 96 (2018), 130 (2017), 119 (2016), 77 (2015), 59 (2014), and 60 (2013).
 - 21 Mari Manninen, "Fun Things are not Forbidden Everywhere" (Kaikkiällä kiva ei ole kiellettyä), *Helsingin Sanomat*, February 6, 2021, <https://www.hs.fi/ulkomaat/art-2000007785470.html>; "Skull-Hunter Family" (Pääkallon-metsästäjien sukua), *Helsingin Sanomat*, February 27, 2021, <https://www.hs.fi/ulkomaat/art-2000007828405.html>; "On a Shaky Border" (Häilyvällä rajalla), *Helsingin Sanomat*, March 6, 2021, <https://www.hs.fi/ulkomaat/art-2000007844207.html>; "My Dear Dictator, Would you Like to Taste a Piece of Pineapple? (Rakas diktaattorini, maistuisiko pala ananasta?)" *Helsingin Sanomat*, May 22, 2021. The online version has a different title "Blind Channel Dyed Middle Ginger Red the Same Reason Hong Kongers Eat Pineapples" (Blind Channel värjäsi keskisormensa punaisiksi samasta samasta syystä kuin hongkongilaiset syövät anansta), <https://www.hs.fi/ulkomaat/art-2000007989710.html?share=8c4895a1bd7ae175256a0f2e3115ff81>.
 - 22 In Finnish, it is "*HS:n Aasian-kirjeenvaihtaja Mari Manninen humputteli päivän Taiwanissa, koska se on ainoita paikkoja maailmassa, jossa niin voi tehdä. Arki rullaa, viini virtaa täpötäysissä baareissa ja ihmiset halailevat toisiaan.*"
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