



Written by [Angeline Tan](#) on January 13, 2023

Senior German Lawmaker Affirms Germany Will Not Arm Taiwan

SINGAPORE — Germany will not supply Taiwan with weapons and has not been requested to do so, as the circumstances are not similar to Ukraine's, a senior German lawmaker said on January 11 during a trip to Taipei.

The self-ruled island nation of Taiwan, regarded by the Chinese Communist Party as part of China, has experienced rising bellicosity from Beijing, which conducted war games near the island last August following the controversial Taiwan visit of the then-U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. Beijing viewed Pelosi's visit as an infringement of its claims over Taiwan, whereas the latter dismisses Beijing's position and insists that it would protect its independence from the communist regime on the mainland.

In order not to rile China and cause a trade backlash, most countries do not sell arms to Taiwan. Marie-Agnes Strack-Zimmermann, the head of Germany's parliamentary defense committee and a member of Chancellor Olaf Scholz's junior coalition partner the Free Democratic Party (FDP), revealed in a news conference in Taipei that Germany had been lavish in sending weapons to Ukraine.

"The situation here [with Taiwan] is a different one. Our role is less military here. It's an economic question," she said in English.

When questioned whether Western countries should be arming Taiwan in light of China's increasing pugilism, Strack-Zimmermann said Germany would not do so.

"There's no question about sending weapons to Taiwan. That is not the question. We talked a lot here with people, with politics, and the question is not 'please Germany send us weapons,'" she added.

"It's not a question of military equipment. I think there are different partners here."

Johannes Vogel, the FDP's deputy chairman, remarked at the same news conference there was a "moral obligation" to prevent a military conflict in the Taiwan Strait.

"And then one has to think what can you bring to the table, and we think the economic dimension of avoiding a horrible scenario is something we can effectively bring to the table," Vogel said.

Both Strack-Zimmermann and Vogel met Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen on January 10, with China criticizing their trip as expected.

Taiwan's military forces are mostly armed with weapons either made domestically or by the United States, though France has sold fighter jets and warships to Taiwan. Also, the Netherlands sold Taiwan



AP Images
Johannes Vogel, Marie-Agnes Strack-Zimmermann, and Tsai Ing-wen in Taipei



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two submarines in the 1980s.

Germany has had a longstanding diplomatic and business relationship with China and, like most countries, has no formal diplomatic ties with Taiwan.

However, Berlin has been mulling a slew of measures to make business with China less attractive as it seeks to pivot its reliance away from Asia's economic superpower, a strategy paper seen by *Reuters* revealed.

During the visit with the German lawmakers, Tsai also urged Germany to sustain "regional order." Tsai continued that in the wake of "authoritarian expansionism," "democracies" must stick together.

"Starting next year, Taiwan's mandatory military service will be extended to one year. This will bolster our defense capabilities and demonstrate our determination to defend our homeland and safeguard democracy," she said, alluding to an announcement last month.

"We look forward to Taiwan, Germany and other democratic partners jointly maintaining the regional order and prosperity."

Russia's actions in Ukraine were a wake-up call for the whole world, said Strack-Zimmermann.

"That's the reason why we come to your country, to your wonderful island, to say to the world that we stand close together as democratic states," she added.

In November last year, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and his deputy Robert Habeck headed to Southeast Asia with various top executives as part of a campaign to diversify commercial ties in the region instead of depending mainly on China.

The ruling coalition in Berlin is increasing efforts to explore alternative markets for Europe's biggest economy. Scholz and Habeck went to Vietnam and Singapore before the chancellor headed to Indonesia for the Group of 20 (G20) summit.

The communist regime in Beijing has stayed away from openly lambasting President Vladimir Putin and has shown rising hostilities toward Taiwan, sparking concerns that an asymmetrical reliance on China for raw materials and goods could leave other countries vulnerable to China's whims as well as any conflicts in the Taiwan Strait.

"The aim is to position ourselves more broadly, spread risks, develop our own strengths and become more robust, and thus also politically more free to act," Habeck admitted.

Scholz and Habeck, who is also the economy minister, were slated to speak at the 17th Asia-Pacific Conference of German Business in Singapore when Habeck made the aforementioned remark.

Although Southeast Asia has a huge potential customer base, it has hitherto been a challenging market to penetrate for German manufacturers.

Import barriers raise the costs of shipping goods. Besides, Japanese manufacturers in the electronics, machinery, and automotive sectors offer fierce competition to any potential German enterprises looking to gain market share.

Additionally, Scholz and Habeck planned to push investments worth billions of euros in Germany's energy transformation and to enlist Singapore's sovereign wealth funds to speed up their transition toward "green" energies, based on statements from unnamed German government officials.

Notably, Habeck has been a major force behind the ruling coalition's more castigatory view of China,



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together with his Greens party colleague Annalena Baerbock, the foreign minister.

The era when the government rubber-stamped investments and corporate takeovers is past, Habeck said after Scholz's Cabinet banned the sale of chipmaking assets to two Chinese state-owned firms.

While German executives have admitted the need to diversify their business in Asia, they also fear that if they go too far, they could suffer a huge business loss.

"It would certainly not be an option to renounce China completely," Volker Treier, head of foreign trade at the DIHK lobby in Berlin, said in an interview.

"Rather, German businesses are trying to diversify and guard themselves against the possibility of a stronger decline in trade relations with China."

No other Asian economy, not even India, would be able to act as a substitute for Chinese business in the medium term, Treier said.

"But as a whole, they could at least dampen a potential negative development."



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