

Taiwan's Opportunities and Challenges During the Pandemic: Domestic Politics, Foreign Relations, and Global Health Strategies

Between the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and spring 2021, Taiwan's global visibility has increased thanks in large part to its successful handling of the novel coronavirus outbreak. It is now almost a cliché to elaborate the way in which a small island of nearly 24 million people has managed to continue to enjoy "normal life" since the pandemic. We have also been inundated with detailed information about Taiwan's success in a wide range of media reports. Even Finland's *Helsingin Sanomat* has included significant coverage of Taiwan's COVID-19 story, under the title "Kaikkialla kiva ei ole kiellettyä," which translates literally as, "fun things are not forbidden everywhere" (that is, in Taiwan during the pandemic).

However, it is a little-known fact that Taiwan has to date had only a very limited number of vaccines available to its huge population. While there have been news stories related to like Taiwan's exclusion from the World Health Organization (WHO) and World Health Assembly, few people know that Taiwan used to have observer status within the WHO from 2009 to 2018. Even more obscure is the fact that Taiwanese scientists used to work as medical officers on important WHO projects. What is behind these changes?

This seminar goes beyond the clichés about Taiwan's handling of COVID-19. It is not just about creating a narrative of Taiwan's success or how that narrative is being suppressed in the international community. Instead, it invites experts from the medical humanities, political science, and diplomacy to help us critically examine the curious case of Taiwan.

Date: Tuesday 25 May

Time: 10-12 am Helsinki Time (9-11 am Copenhagen Time; 8-10 am London Time)

Programme

10:00-10:10 Opening

[Tiina Airaksinen \(Deputy Director of Department of Cultures and University Lecturer in Asian Studies, University of Helsinki\)](#)

[Julie Yu-Wen Chen \(Professor of Chinese Studies, University of Helsinki\)](#)

10:10-11:00 Presentations

All Eyes on Taiwan: How a Successful Pandemic Response Elevated Taiwan's Global Profile

[Jonathan Sullivan \(Associate Professor, School of Politics and International Relations, University of Nottingham\)](#)

Reappraising Taiwan's Role through the History of WHO

[Harry Yi-Jui Wu \(Director & Assistant Professor, Medical Ethics and Humanities Unit, University of Hong Kong\)](#)

11:00-11:15 Commentaries and questions from discussants

[Niklas Swanström \(Director of the Institute for Security and Development Policy, Sweden\)](#)

Dusica Ristivojević (Kone Foundation Bold Initiative Senior Researcher, University of Helsinki)

11:15-11:30 Responses from speakers
11:30-12:00 Q & A for general audience

Register [here](#) by Friday 21 May. Access to the event will be shared on 24 May via email notification.



Dr. Jonathan Sullivan is a China and Taiwan specialist, and Associate Professor, in the [School of Politics and International Relations, University of Nottingham](#). He is former Director of the China Policy Institute and current head of China Programs at the University of Nottingham's [Asia Research Institute](#). He has published extensively on China, Taiwan and cross-Strait relations.



Dr. Harry Yi-Jui Wu MD.DPhil is a historian of medicine teaching at [Li Ka Shing Faculty of Medicine, The University of Hong Kong](#). His research mainly focuses on the transnational histories of mental health. His first book, [Mad by the Millions: Mental Disorders and the Early Years of the World Health Organization](#), was published by MIT Press in 2021. In 2020, he was elected Early Career Fellow of Hong Kong Academy of Humanities. From 2021, he will be Associate Professor at Cross-College Elite Program of National Cheng-Kung University.



Dr. Niklas Swanström is Director of [the Institute for Security and Development Policy](#), and one of its co-founders. He is a Fellow at the Foreign Policy Institute of the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) and ISPI Senior Associate Research Fellow. His main areas of expertise are conflict prevention, conflict management and regional cooperation; Chinese foreign policy and security in Northeast Asia.



Dusica Ristivojević is [Kone Foundation Bold Initiatives](#) Senior Researcher at the University of Helsinki. Dušica works in the areas of interdisciplinary Chinese studies, media studies, and international relations. She was a Chevening Fellow at the University of Oxford, MOFA Taiwan Fellow at the National Taiwan Normal University, and has served as a consultant for a number of organizations in East Asia.