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Don't Be Scared ^{TOI}

*India should ignore Chinese blandishments
and enhance ties with Taiwan*

In a speech that not only marked China's hardening stance towards Taiwan but also exemplified Beijing's aggressive foreign policy posture in general, Chinese President Xi Jinping warned his country won't renounce the use of force in its bid to incorporate Taiwan into itself. China and Taiwan split in 1949 after a civil war brought the Chinese Communist Party to power on the mainland and rival nationalists set up their own government in Taiwan. Since then, China has developed into a communist behemoth while Taiwan has evolved into a vibrant democracy of 23 million people.

And while there have been periods of cooperation, since Xi's rise to power in China in 2012 and the election of an independence-leaning government in Taiwan in 2016 Beijing has been squeezing Taipei by carrying out military drills against it, taking away its few diplomatic allies and preventing its participation at international forums. Against this backdrop, the international community must stand up to China. If Beijing is allowed to get away with threatening or harming Taipei, it will only be emboldened to replicate the tactics elsewhere.

Last year, the US ramped up ties with Taiwan by facilitating high-level government-to-government exchanges and passing the Asia Reassurance Initiative Act which seeks to counter China's military influence in the region. India too should enhance cooperation with Taiwan in coordination with the US and Japan. India's parliamentary standing committee on external affairs in its latest report on India-China ties expressed concern at New Delhi's timid policies in deference to China's sensitivities, when Beijing does not reciprocate – quite to the contrary, it rides roughshod over Indian interests. Moreover, when China and Taiwan continue economic engagements despite political differences, there's no reason for India to shy away, especially when Taipei too is seeking such engagement under its New Southbound Policy. New Delhi must be bolder and step up.

