



The EU's China policy must uphold human rights and international rule of law

The People's Republic of China is today more authoritarian domestically and more aggressive in its external relations than five, ten or twenty years ago. Vis-à-vis China the EU and its member states must actively pursue a policy that is guided by upholding human rights and defending international rule of law.

We criticise:

The atrocities committed against the Uyghurs in Xinjiang range from forcing over a million people into reeducation camps over forced labour, the obliteration of ethnic and religious culture and extremely intrusive surveillance to forced contraception, sterilisation and abortions and even mass rape. All of this amounts to crimes against humanity. Some Parliaments, like House of Commons in the UK, the Dutch, the Lithuanian, the American and the Canadian are even speaking of genocide. Ethnic oppression is also growing against the Tibetans, the Mongols, the Hui and others.

The oppression of the democracy movement in Hong Kong through the so-called National Security Law, the changes to the composition of the city's governing bodies and a wave of legal and administrative prosecutions have overturned the „one country, two systems“ promise and are undoing step by step the freedoms guaranteed under Hong Kong's Basic law thus breaching China's international obligations.

Civil society in China has suffered the abolition of grey zones which allowed it some limited self-organized activities in the past. Domestic and foreign NGOs are strictly controlled and their space is shrinking still. Human rights defenders are being systematically prosecuted.

Externally, the Chinese Leadership has become a bully to many of its neighbours going from assertive to aggressive. China is infringing on the interests and the territorial integrity of India, Nepal and Bhutan along its Himalayan borders. It pushes hard to establish its expansionist goals in the South China Sea against the Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia in violation of the United Nations Convention of the Law of the Seas. It puts increasing pressure on Japan over the Senkaku Islands and it is continuously ramping up military pressure on Taiwan, threatening this self-ruling democracy with conquest by force. China has been continuously hindering multilateral efforts to address the situation in Myanmar, particularly by blocking all condemnation of the junta in the United Nations Security Council. Since the coup, the military is suppressing uprisings bloodily by killing hundreds of protesters and imprisoning thousands of supporters of the democratic government in Myanmar.

China has used coercive policies to attack Australia with economic measures because the country demanded transparency regarding the origin of the COVID pandemic. In Europe, China has taken aggressive steps against Sweden and the Czech Republic, has threatened two Danish members of parliament with prosecution, has spread fake news for instance about pandemic management, and has mobilised its diplomats in different capitals to interfere in our democracies.



In recent years, China seems to have changed its policy to block journalists from accessing certain areas of its territory and is now inviting them to visit Xinjiang. However, these journalists are being followed at every turn and prevented from doing their work, and the local population is too scared to give interviews. At the same time, journalists' working conditions continue to worsen and international correspondents' visas are not being renewed anymore. Since the Covid outbreak the situation for the free press has become even more dramatic.

We advocate:

The European Union, its Member States, other European States and allies around the globe must pursue a common China policy on the basis of the analysis that China is at the same time a competitor, a partner and a systemic rival. The European Union, its Member States, other European States and allies around the globe must not allow Beijing's divide and conquer strategies to succeed. To achieve that goal national selfishness as expressed for instance in Germany's „automotive foreign policy“ must be overcome and formats like the 17+1 must not be allowed to pick EU countries apart. We support that the EU has sanctioned four Chinese individuals and one entity according to its new Human Rights Sanctions Mechanism because of their role in Xinjiang. Similar targeted sanctions have also been called for by many human rights defenders in the Hong Kong context. We strongly criticise China's counter sanctions that have hit China researchers, democratic institutions, and eight members of parliaments including Greens Reinhard Bütikofer and Samuel Cogolati and express full solidarity with them and their work.

The European Union, its Member States, other European States and allies around the globe shall implement the principle that democracies must have each other's back. European Union, its Member States, other European States and allies around the globe must show solidarity with countries that China tries to pressure as is the case with Australia or Canada whose „two Michaels“ China has taken hostage. In the global struggle between the forces of democracy and those of authoritarianism Europe can obviously not be neutral. We therefore seek stronger cooperation with like-minded partners. Transatlantic cooperation on China is positive where it helps the promotion of shared values and does not follow the confrontational policy we had seen from the Trump administration. We will continue advocating multilateralism against any hegemonic ambitions. We seek more consistent cooperation on China policy in multilateral institutions.

We do not advocate a decoupling strategy vis-à-vis China and we criticise China's dual circulation policies. We do not want an anti-China policy and we will always oppose anti-Chinese and anti-Asian discrimination and racism. We also recognise that Western countries must never forget their responsibility for aggressions against China since the Opium Wars. It is also mandated that all countries reflect on their role in international conflicts and their contributions to injustices in developing globalisation. We seek cooperation, where possible, to enable multilateral cooperation based on the international law and normative targets such as the Paris agreement and the sustainable development goals. One positive example of cooperation has been the JCPOA. We hope that China will facilitate successful international cooperation at the COP on biodiversity in Kunming. We will particularly welcome any substantive cooperation to fight climate change. As China is responsible for almost one third of current global CO2 emissions, effective collaboration on environmental, biodiversity and



climate policies is of paramount relevance. We will, however, not accept any trade-off between climate and human rights.

We also urge the European Union, its member States, other European States and allies around the globe to improve the human rights situation within the European Union and the European member states. Whereas facts-based criticism is valid regardless of the human rights record of the author of such criticism, further improvement of Europe's human rights record and putting human rights above economic interests will make such criticism of human rights violations elsewhere all the more credible.

We believe that the European Union, its member States, other European States and allies around the globe can and should seek to improve their competitive economic future by focussing on the European Green Deal and on enhanced research efforts particularly in the digital realm and regarding the recycling and substitution of critical raw materials such as rare earths for which the EU is now reliant on China. At the same time, it must step up its efforts to push back against unfair trade and investment policies from China. To that end, the EU urgently needs to create and strengthen necessary autonomous economic instruments. This includes in particular anti-dumping and anti-subsidy measures, human rights due diligence, a ban on the import of forced labour products, the International Procurement Instrument to create reciprocity in procurement markets, and a more effective European investment screening mechanism. It is important to increase economic resilience and to reduce economic dependencies using also instruments like re-shoring or near-shoring. The Comprehensive Agreement on Investment that was finalised between China and the EU before the end of last year has many shortcomings. We particularly object to its failure to secure China's ratification of ILO core conventions. As long as Chinese sanctions against the European Parliaments have not been lifted, this agreement cannot be put on the agenda of the EP. We also urge countries such as Switzerland which already have signed trade agreements with China to review these agreements under a human rights perspective and to terminate them if no substantial improvement is noted.

The EU needs more China competency. We are in favour of creating China knowledge centers like the China Competency Center in Sweden and we must make sure that our education systems will more widely offer language skills in Mandarin and other languages spoken in China and knowledge about China and its diversity. Defending any opportunity to report freely from China and defending journalists and researchers who try to do that is in this context also indispensable.

We are supportive of European efforts to enhance our own connectivity policy efforts to facilitate the development of our partners worldwide. Since we do not want to see countries falling victim to Chinese hub-and-spokes policies and its debt traps, and since you cannot fight something with nothing, we have to step up our own contributions to achieve the global sustainability goals.

We will continue to show solidarity with Hong Kong democrats. This includes that we demand a simplified right of residence for all Hong Kong residents in all EU member states. We want support for Taiwan's democracy to be strengthened and a meaningful participation of Taiwan in international organisations like the WHO. We advocate better exchange with Taiwan.



Adopted Resolution

We also urge the European Union, its member States, other European States and allies around the globe to show support for their journalists, to protest against intimidation of any kind and to push for investigation into China's Crimes against Humanity targeting the Uyghurs and other Muslims, as well as into oppression in Tibet and against other minorities.

The countries of Europe must be aware of spying, malign influence and other forms of interference directed at them by PRC actors and should cooperate to counter such challenges. We do ask governments to pay attention also to the safety of Chinese citizens, in particular minorities, living around Europe.

Furthermore, we will actively participate in an international campaign against forced labour also by putting pressure on European and other companies that are complicit with Uyghur forced labour exploitation.

We ask our governments to actively push back against Chinese efforts to externalise and to export its authoritarian policies. Technology cooperation that benefits China's system of tech authoritarianism must be stopped. We are calling on all governments to cancel extradition agreements with China.

Background

China is more powerful today than it has ever been. In China, the Communist Party has the ambition to control everything. It pursues a hegemonic strategy aiming at making the world safe for autocracies and at becoming the center of the international community through big power policies that are in conflict with the international rules-based order. We observe that the Chinese party state operates under the assumption that it can force its will on others because time and dynamics are on its side. It is brimming with self-confidence because it managed to control the COVID pandemic after a terrible beginning, to sustain a strong growth rate in its economy and to widely alleviate poverty in the remote parts of the country. The Chinese Government has started to weaponise economic interdependencies to get its way.

To expand its influence, it has also launched a programme known as Belt and Road Initiative that includes infrastructure development and takeover. The success of that programme, for instance in Greece, is also a consequence of the lack of solidarity among European states.