

Europe Needs China to Become an Independent Global Power

Strong US pressure against Europe in its dispute with Huawei, as well as with Germany over the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline with Russia, have managed to weaken European interests

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*For China, a strategic alliance with the EU will further develop the Belt and Road Initiative across the vast expanse of Eurasia. For the EU, China can help “the Old Continent” once again become a major global political and economic center as it once was before the rise of the US in the “New World.” At the virtual summit held on September 14 between Chinese **President Xi Jinping**, German **Chancellor Angela Merkel**, European Council **President Charles Michel** and the European Commission **President Ursula von der Leyen**, the necessity to “accelerate negotiations on an investment agreement between China and the EU and close the deal this year” was emphasized. However, there are many problems they face – the trade war with the US, EU tensions with Turkey, and more importantly, the differences on economic, political and diplomatic issues.*

The Global Europe Anticipation Bulletin think tank [described the EU](#) as “a ship adrift without navigation tools” because of its “total inability to forecast” events and the lack of “operational instruments” to solve its problems, internally and internationally. Indeed, the European Commission has enormous difficulties in defining a common policy for current challenges, as can be seen with the huge split between Mediterranean and Northern Europe in how to deal with Turkish aggression against EU members Greece and Cyprus.

Chinese state-owned Global Times, considered the international mouthpiece of Beijing, [wrote after the summit](#) that despite

“ideological differences between China and Europe [...] the two sides continue to expand their cooperation and interactions. This is the general trend of China-Europe ties. The desire of both sides to keep strengthening the trend is real. It is a wish not only at the national levels, but also from their companies.”

Xi called on the EU to adhere to peaceful coexistence, multilateralism, dialogue and openness. However, the EU insists on demanding that barriers to European investments in China be eliminated and on having greater access to the Chinese market, especially in areas reserved only for Chinese companies. The European Commissioner [stressed](#) that “it is not a question of meeting halfway, it is a question of rebalancing the asymmetry and a question of openness of our respective markets. China has to convince us that it is worth having an investment agreement.”

Andrew Small, an EU-China expert with the US-based German Marshall Fund, said

“The language and tone from the European side is continuing its shift into the new era, in which competition and rivalry are coming to the fore, and the areas of partnership look limited and difficult.”

Although China is a vital commercial partner for Germany, they are also undoubtedly competitors, which could explain why the EU, led by Berlin, vocally condemns Beijing’s alleged human rights abuses against the Uighur minority in China’s western Xinjiang province and the crackdown on Hong Kong rioters. According to renowned Brazilian journalist Pepe Escobar, the EU’s focus on events in Xinjiang and Hong Kong is to pressure China to open its markets.

Global Times [pondered](#) on how the EU would react

“if China demands Europe to solve its issues of migration, offer solutions to countries like France, Spain and the UK in dealing with separatist movements, and demands that Europe cope with the COVID-19 epidemic in certain specific ways, because reducing infections and deaths is a crucial human rights issue for China, would Europe accept it? Would Europeans feel offended?”

Signing the investment agreement before the end of the year will not be easy since the differences between the EU and China is massive. **Strong US pressure against Europe in its dispute with Huawei, as well as with Germany over the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline with Russia, have managed to weaken European interests.** For Europe, its priorities in its relations with Beijing is market access to help alleviate the acute crisis experienced by entire industries because of the COVID-19 pandemic, in addition to being able to project itself as an independent power on the global stage and in its relations with China.

For China, the European market is vital due to the volume and quality of its consumption. Expanding the Belt and Road Initiative into Europe is one of the main pillars of China’s 21st century foreign policy.

Moscow will also benefit from strong relations between the EU and China since much of the Belt and Road Initiative will pass through Russian territory, serving as a connection between East Asia and Western Europe. An uninterrupted trade corridor across Eurasia will lessen European dependence on the US. This too would be in the minds of European leaders as they try and reassert their own independence in the Age of Multipolarity – but this cannot be achieved without China, meaning the major differences between Beijing and Brussels must be resolved in the swiftest manner.

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