

How Xinjiang “Interferes” with the EU-China Deal

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A Beijing-Brussels-Berlin special: that was quite the video-summit.

From Beijing, we had President Xi Jinping. From Berlin, Chancellor Angela Merkel. And from Brussels, President of the European Council Charles Michel and President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen. The Chinese billed it as the first summit “of its kind in history”.

It was actually the second high-level meeting of the Chinese and European leadership in two months. And it took place only a few days after a high-level tour by Foreign Minister Wang Yi encompassing France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Norway, and the visit by the powerful “Yoda” of the State Council, Yang Jiechi, to Spain and Greece.

The Holy Grail at the end of all these meetings – face-to-face and virtual – is the China-EU investment treaty. Germany currently heads the EU presidency for six months. Berlin wanted the treaty to be signed at a summit in Leipzig this month uniting the EU-27 and Beijing. But Covid-19 had other plans.

So the summit was metastasized into this mini videoconference. The treaty is still supposed to be signed before the end of 2020.

Adding an intriguing note, the mini-summit also happened one day before Premier Li Keqiang attended a Special Virtual Dialogue with Business Leaders, promoted by the World Economic Forum (WEF). It’s unclear whether Li will discuss the intricacies of the [Great Reset](#) with Klaus Schwab – not to mention whether China subscribes to it.

We are “still committed”

The mini EU-China video summit was quite remarkable for its very discreet spin. The EU, officially, now considers China as both an essential partner and a “strategic rival”. Brussels is adamant on its will to “cooperate” while defending its notorious human rights “values”.

As for the investment treaty, the business Holy Grail which has been under negotiation for seven years now, Ursula von der Leyen said “there’s still much to be done”.

What the EU essentially wants is equal treatment for their companies in China, similar to how Chinese companies are treated inside the EU. Diplomats confirmed the key areas are telecoms, the automobile market – which should be totally open – and the end of unfair competition by Chinese steel.

Last week, the head of Siemens, Joe Kaeser, threw an extra spanner in the works, telling Die Zeit that “we categorically condemn every form of oppression, forced labor and threat to human rights”, referring to Hong Kong and Xinjiang.

That caused quite a stir. At least 10% of Siemens business is generated in China, where the company is present since 1872 and employs over 35,000 people. Siemens was forced to publicly state that it is “still committed” to China.

China has been Germany’s top trade partner since 2017 – ahead of France and the US. So it’s no wonder alarm bells started to ring, on and off. It was in January last year that the BDI – the Federation of German Industries – first defined China as a “systemic competitor”, and not only as a “partner”. The concern was centered on market “distortions” and the barriers against German competition inside China.

The mini video-summit took place as the trade war unleashed by Washington against Beijing has reached Cold War 2.0 proportions. EU diplomats, uncomfortably, and off the record, admit that the Europeans are caught in the middle and the only possible strategy is to try to advance their economic interests while insisting on the same panacea of human rights.

Thus the official EU demand this Monday – unreported in Chinese media: allow us to send “independent observers” to Xinjiang.

Those Uighur jihadis

So we’re back, inevitably, to the hyper-incandescent issue of Xinjiang “concentration camps”.

The Atlanticist establishment has unleashed a ferocious, no holds barred campaign to shape the narrative that Beijing is conducting no less than cultural genocide in Xinjiang.

Apart from United States government rhetoric, the campaign is mostly conducted by “influencer” US think tanks such as [this one](#), which issue reports that turn viral on Western corporate media.

[One of these reports](#) quotes “numerous firsthand accounts from Uighurs” who are defined as “employed” to perform forced labor. As a result, the global supply chain, according to the report, is “likely tainted with forced labor”.

The operative word is “likely”. As in Russia is “likely” interfering in US elections and “likely” poisoning opponents of the Kremlin. There’s no way to verify the accuracy of the sources quoted in these reports – which happen to be conveniently financed by “multiple donors interested in commerce in Asia.” Who are these donors? What is their agenda? Who will profit from the kind of “commerce in Asia” they are pushing?

On a personal level, Xinjiang was at the top of my travel priorities this year – then laid to rest by Covid-19 – because I want to check by myself all aspects of what’s really goin’ on in China’s Far West.

As it stands, US copycat “influencers” in the EU are having free reign to impose the narrative about Uighur forced labor, stressing that the clothes Europeans are wearing “could” – and the operative word is “could” – be made by forced laborers.

Don't expect the Atlanticist network to even bother to offer context in terms of China fighting terrorism in Xinjiang.

In the old al-Qaeda days, I visited and interviewed Uighur jihadis locked up in a sprawling prison set up by the mujahideen under commander Masoud in the Panjshir valley. They had all been indoctrinated by imams preaching in Saudi-financed madrassas across Xinjiang.

More recently, Uighur Salafi-jihadis have been very active in Syria: at least 5,000, according to the Syrian embassy in Beijing.

Beijing knows exactly what would happen if they return to Xinjiang, as much as Moscow knows what would happen if Chechen jihadis return to the Caucasus.

So it's no wonder that China has to act. That includes closing madrassas, detaining imams and arresting - and "re-educating" - possible jihadis and their families.

Forget about the West offering context about the Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP), which declared an Islamic Emirate, ISIS/Daesh-style, in November 2019 in Idlib, northwest Syria. TIP was founded in Xinjiang 12 years ago and has been very active in Syria since 2011 - exactly the same year when they claimed to be responsible for a terror operation in Kashgar which killed 23 people.

It's beyond pathetic that the West killed and displaced Muslim multitudes - directly and indirectly - with the "war on terror" just to become oh so worried with the plight of the Uighurs.

It's more enlightening to remember history. As in the autumn of 821, when princess Taihe, sister of a Tang dynasty emperor, rode in a Bactrian camel, her female attendants following her in treasured Ferghana horses, all the way from the imperial palace in Chang'an to the land of the Uighurs.

Princess Taihe had been chosen as a living tribute - and was on her way to wed the Uighur kaghan to cement their peoples' friendship. She came from the east, but her dress and ornaments were from the west, from the Central Asian steppes and deserts where she would live her new life.

And by the way, the Uighurs and the Tang dynasty were allies.

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