

Summary of IN2030 virtual meeting with Tom Tugendhat MP and David McAllister MEP “The return of China: UK and EU perspectives to 2030”

Key issues arising from the open and friendly discussion are set out below:

GENERAL COMMENTS

In recent years, China has visibly become a more expansionist power, evolving to be the world's largest economy over the next decade. Initially, there were hopes when China joined the WTO that its relations with the West would become more integrated. But China wants to become dominant in all technologies. And recently, there have been signs that this attitude is becoming more assertive, for example in its relations with Australia or Czech attitudes to Taiwan. In essence, China is challenging the global system and there needs to be a Western response.

There is a motto which helps how to deal with China: the three Cs. Cooperate where possible; Compete where needed and Confront where necessary. Cooperation with China should be done with like-minded democracies working together in areas such as - technologies; multilateral institutions, supporting the rules-based order; human rights and foreign policies. It is important to make China accountable as an international player.

SPECIFIC COMMENTS

Where to compete and where to confront? How to manage the difference as to the primacy of state rights as opposed to individual rights within the UN framework? China cannot be allowed to suppress rights with impunity. While recognising that China is a systemic rival, it could be agreed to cooperate in defined areas while competing with them on economics and trade;

Cooperation approach demonstrated in EU/China deal where negotiations just completed lasting 7 years. Debate about agreement will take place in the European Parliament which has to approve the deal: principles concerning human rights will be maintained;

Indeed, it should be asked why is China prepared to sign off the deal? What is the end game here? Difficult to know exactly about future evolution of CCP leadership. But while China should legitimately have its voice heard, there need to be limits. The EU approach is cautious but needs to be vigilant as human rights should be the cornerstone of foreign policy;

What does Biden want with China? What are the allies supposed to do? Any chance of a strategic approach, in particular on technology? The US will be looking for greater cooperation with the Alliance of Democracies. Strong expectations across Europe for the potential to grow alliances for specific action. Moves underway for individual European countries to initiate strategies to Asia including Germany. Italy already has close links with the Belt and Road Initiative.

A tough approach was needed on technology, not just on standards but also on developing technologies together eg through NATO to curb Chinese dominance. The UK approach now taken to Huawei provides a good example;

Although there is no likelihood of the UK joining any EU initiatives on defence any time soon, deeper resilience is important between European countries. Cooperation has distinctly improved over the past year. It should be remembered that the UK has its closest defence links with France and intelligence links with Germany.