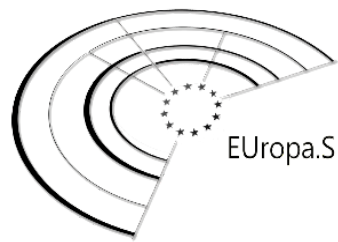


# EUropa.S. 2022

April 15<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> | University of Piraeus  
Organized by: Institute of Research &  
Training on European Affairs



EUropa.S. 2022  
European Parliament,  
Foreign Affairs (AFET)  
Committee

**Study Guide**  
**Topic:** *“EU's Relations with  
China, following the new EU  
Indo-Pacific Strategy”*

**EUropa.S. 2022**  
**European Parliament, Foreign Affairs (AFET) Committee, “EU's Relations with**  
**China, following the new EU Indo-Pacific Strategy”**  
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## **Greeting of the Board**

*Distinguished Members of the European Parliament,*

*It is our utmost pleasure to welcome you to EUropa.S 2022 and precisely to the European Parliament’s Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET), an institution of fundamental importance for the development of the EU’s Common Foreign and Security Policy.*

*We want to express our gratitude for opting to join this committee and we hope that the conference will constitute a stepping stone for you to continue with your involvement in European Affairs. We are committed to making this simulation an impactful experience for you both academically and socially and facilitating your participation in the conference as well as we can.*

*The topic of our agenda, “EU's Relations with China, following the new EU Indo-Pacific Strategy”, is a highly controversial, but yet a current topic that is now being discussed on a European and International level. We hope that you find our topic as interesting and thought-provoking as we do, and we look forward to seeing your contribution on the matter. Also, please keep in mind that the information included in the present study guide covers the developments around the topic until the 11th of December 2021, when it was written. As a result, you shall also beware of potential updates regarding our topic area until the course of the conference.*

*In the following Study Guide, we aim to provide you with the fundamental background information regarding the issue. However, we want to urge you to use this information as a basis for your own research on the matter in order to form a well-rounded opinion when it comes to it.*

*It goes without saying that we are very excited to meet you in person, especially after the restrictions enforced due to the pandemic, and we can’t wait to listen to your fruitful discussions.*

*Shall you have any inquiries; we remain at your disposal!*

*Kind regards,*

*The Board of AFET*

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## **Introduction to AFET**

The European Parliament is one of the EU’s basic institutional bodies. It was founded in 1952 as the Common Assembly of the European Coal and Steel Community and received its current name in 1962. It has three roles: legislative, supervisory and budgetary. As a legislative body, it passes EU law together with the Council of the European Union based on the proposals of the European Commission. As a supervisory body, it puts other EU institutions under democratic scrutiny, and as a budgetary body, it votes upon the EU budget together with the European Council. Lastly, it is a directly elected body with elections held every 5 years.<sup>1</sup> The Plenary session is supported by 20 specialized committees which instruct legislative proposals with reports.<sup>2</sup>

AFET is the committee specialized in Foreign Affairs. It ensures that the democratic rule of law and human rights are respected in any agreement the EU has with third parties. It supports multilateralism, openness, fairness and a rule based international order, while it promotes dynamic EU external action for a democratic and secure Europe.<sup>3</sup>

## **Introduction to the topic**

On 16 September 2021, the EU released its Indo-Pacific strategy, declaring its approach towards the region.<sup>4</sup> Due to its growing economic, political, and demographic power, the Indo-Pacific region is now considered a key player in international affairs. In fact, together, the Indo-Pacific and Europe, account for 70% of the global trade and 60% of foreign direct

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<sup>1</sup> European Union (2021) *European Parliament*. [online] Available at: [https://european-union.europa.eu/institutions-law-budget/institutions-and-bodies/institutions-and-bodies-profiles/european-parliament\\_en#further-information](https://european-union.europa.eu/institutions-law-budget/institutions-and-bodies/institutions-and-bodies-profiles/european-parliament_en#further-information) [Accessed: 11 December 2021].

<sup>2</sup> European Union (2021) *Committees*. [online] Available at: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/about/introduction> [Accessed: 11 December 2021].

<sup>3</sup> European Parliament (2019), *About AFET* [online] Available at: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/afet/about> [Accessed: 11 December 2021].

<sup>4</sup> European Commission. (2021) *Questions and Answers: EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific*. [online] Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/QANDA\\_21\\_4709](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/QANDA_21_4709). [Accessed: 11 December 2021].

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investment flows.<sup>5</sup> As a result, the main aim of the strategy is to build the foundations for the formulation of strong partnerships with the nations in the region.

A key factor in achieving the aforementioned goal is the union's relations with one of the greatest emerging economies of the 21st century, China. More specifically, not only has China become the second biggest trading partner of the EU but has also started to reposition itself as a leading global power with the Belt and Road Initiative.<sup>6</sup> The initiative consists of a series of infrastructure projects spanning from China to the EU that China has already spent an estimated \$200 billion on.<sup>7</sup>

However, behind this ambitious global power lies a state with authoritarian tendencies that directly contradict some of the founding values of the EU. Sending ethnic minorities to “re-education camps” where they are forced to renounce their religion and culture, conducting mass surveillance on citizens and suppressing all forms of dissent are only a few examples of violations that take place within the Chinese mandate.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, China has increased military spending and adopted an aggressive foreign policy in the South China Sea and elsewhere, in service of its economic and political goals.<sup>9</sup>

Taking the above into consideration, the road ahead for the union is filled with conflicting priorities: What approach should the EU take, in order to benefit from cooperation with China and the rest of the Indo-Pacific region, while retaining its position on human rights, security and economic independence?

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<sup>5</sup> European Institute for Asian Studies. (2019) *Enter EU: The Challenges and Cooperation Potential of the Indo-Pacific Strategy*. [online] Available at: <https://eias.org/policy-briefs/enter-eu-the-challenges-and-cooperation-potential-of-the-indo-pacific-strategy/>. [Accessed: 11 December 2021].

<sup>6</sup> Agenda Publica. (2019) *The EU, China and Strategic Trade: Context and Priorities*. [online] Available at: <https://agendapublica.es/the-eu-china-and-strategic-trade-context-and-priorities/>. [Accessed: 11 December 2021]

<sup>7</sup> Chatzky, A. & McBride, J. (2020) China's Massive Belt and Road Initiative. *Council on Foreign Affairs*. [online] 28 January. Available at: <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/chinas-massive-belt-and-road-initiative>. [Accessed: 10 December 2021]

<sup>8</sup> Amnesty International. (2020) *Everything you need to know about human rights in China 2020*. [online] Available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/asia-and-the-pacific/east-asia/china/report-china/>. [Accessed: 9 December 2021]

<sup>9</sup> Zhu, T. (2001) Nationalism and Chinese Foreign Policy. *The China Review*. [online] JSTOR. 1. p.1-27. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23461927>. [Accessed: 10 December 2021]

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## **Review of the Issue**

### ***A growing China***

The Indo-Pacific is a region with increased strategic importance. It is home to almost half of the world's population and an area where great geopolitical and economic interests are at stake. This region includes some of the most highly populated, economically important and geopolitically significant countries of the world, like China, India and Japan. China in particular became the world's second largest economy in 2011 and has been growing ever since. In 2013, the Belt and Road Initiative was introduced by Chinese President Xi Jinping, and it is focused on investments related to infrastructure in transport, energy, IT, communications, tourism, industrial parks, Special Economic Zones and urban development. This project involves 138 countries and 30 international organizations and has increased Chinese influence globally.<sup>10</sup>

### ***The AUKUS Agreement***

On 15 September 2021, the United States of America, the United Kingdom and Australia, signed a security pact of historic importance. The AUKUS Agreement allows the sharing of intelligence and technology between the three countries. Most crucially, it will allow Australia to build nuclear-powered submarines. The agreement came as a response to the growing power and influence of China in the disputed region of the South China Sea. According to the joint announcements of the three parties, “This is a historic opportunity for the three nations, with like-minded allies and partners, to protect shared values and promote security and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region”.<sup>11</sup>

This announcement followed a strong reaction from the Chinese side, with a foreign ministry spokesperson noting that this pact, “seriously undermines regional peace and stability and intensifies the arms race”. A strong reaction came, also, from France, a traditional western ally. Australia had previously agreed on a \$37 billion agreement with France for the acquisition of 12 submarines. This deal was cancelled in light of the AUKUS security pact,

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<sup>10</sup> Belt and Road Initiative (2021), *Belt and Road Initiative*. [online] Available at: <https://www.beltroad-initiative.com/info/> [Accessed: 10 December 2021].

<sup>11</sup> BBC NEWS (2021) *Aukus: UK, US and Australia launch pact to counter China* [online] Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-58564837> [Accessed: 11 December 2021]

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with the French side being informed some hours before its public announcement. The French Foreign Minister called this move “a stab on the back”, while Paris recalled its ambassadors from Washington and Canberra.<sup>12</sup>

Many EU member states and officials expressed their solidarity to France. The President of the European Commission, Ursula Von der Leyen, said on CNN that “one of our member states has been treated in a way that is not acceptable. [...] We want to know what happened and why.”<sup>13</sup> Moreover, the President of the European Council, Charles Michel, highlighted on Twitter the need for a united EU strategy for the Indo-pacific, a region with increased geopolitical importance.<sup>14</sup>

## **EU-China-Indo Pacific Relations**

### ***Trade***

In general, the Indo-Pacific is home to some of the EU’s most notable trade partners. China holds the first place as the EU’s largest trading partner, while Japan and India are also in the top ten.<sup>15</sup>

Since the reforms of the Deng regime, trade flows have increased from ECU2.4 billion in 1978 to ECU69.1 billion in 1999 and 671.3 billion in 2019. China is currently the EU's number one source of imports and is the second largest market for exports. However, China enjoys a significant surplus in the overall trade flow. More specifically, as shown on table 1.1 trade balance in 2019 had a defence of 164.7 billion in favour of China.<sup>16</sup>

Concerning the Belt and Road Initiative, the European Commission and the High Representative issued a joint communication introducing a strategy for sustainable and rule-based connectivity between Europe and Asia. This plan did not come into effect. In January 2021 Ursula von der Leyen announced in her State of the Union speech a new EU-Asia connectivity Strategy “Global Gateway” which aims at investments based on

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<sup>12</sup> Marafora, M. (2021) *European Reactions to AUKUS and Implications for EU Strategic Autonomy*, [https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/joint\\_b\\_5.pdf](https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/joint_b_5.pdf) [Accessed: 8 December 2021]

<sup>13</sup> BBC NEWS (2021), *Aukus pact: France and US seek to mend rift* [online] Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-5865962> [Accessed: 8 December 2021]

<sup>14</sup> Michel, C. (2021),<sup>16</sup> September 2021 [twitter] Available at: <https://twitter.com/eucopresident/status/1438484514137911306?lang=el> [Accessed: 11 December 2021]

<sup>15</sup> European Commission (2021), *Client and Supplier Countries of the EU27 in Merchandise Trade (value %) (2020, excluding intra-EU trade)* [online] Available at: [https://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2006/september/tradoc\\_122530.pdf](https://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2006/september/tradoc_122530.pdf) [Accessed: 8 December 2021]

<sup>16</sup> European Commission (2021), *Countries and Regions: China* [online] Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/countries/china/> [Accessed: 8 December 2021]



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sustainability and democratic values. It is estimated to mobilize up to €300 billion in order to support investments on energy, transportation, digitalisation, research and education.<sup>17</sup>

**EU-China: Trade in goods**

*Trade in goods 2018-2020, € billions*

Year	EU imports	EU exports	Balance
2018	342.6	188.0	-154.7
2019	363.0	198.2	-164.7
2020	383.4	202.6	-180.8

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### ***Rule of law and Human rights***

In 1995 the European Commission criticized China for its stance towards violations of the right of expression, association, religion, the right to a free trial and the suppression of minorities. While it suggested the promotion of human rights through the UN framework and the biannual human rights dialogue, the situation has remained unchanged. Since then, a series of sanctions has been imposed against China, especially concerning the treatment of the Uyghur minority group in Xinjiang.

The European Parliament (EP) in particular has repeatedly criticized the violation of human rights in the regions of Xinjiang as well as in Hong Kong and in Tibet. More specifically, during the discussion of the new EU- China Comprehensive Agreement on Investments, the EP has pointed out reports of forced Uyghur labour, arbitrary detention programmes and large-scale surveillance. Beijing responded to these accusations by applying sanctions on five Members of the European Parliament and other individuals.<sup>19</sup>

### ***Security and Defence***

In recent years, the increase in Chinese military capabilities has become apparent, while the region of the East and South China Sea and that surrounding Taiwan have been witness to more and more tensions. Evidence of that is the over flight of 149 Chinese aircrafts over the

<sup>17</sup> European Commission (2021), *Global Gateway: up to €300 billion for the European Union's strategy to boost sustainable links around the world* [online] Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_21\\_6433](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_6433) [Accessed: 8 December 2021]

<sup>18</sup> European Commission (2021), *European Union, Trade in goods with China* [online] Available at: [https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/isdb\\_results/factsheets/country/details\\_china\\_en.pdf](https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/isdb_results/factsheets/country/details_china_en.pdf) [Accessed: 8 December 2021]

<sup>19</sup> European Parliament (2021), *EU-China relations in challenging times* [online] Available at: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2021/698751/EPRS\\_BRI\(2021\)698751\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2021/698751/EPRS_BRI(2021)698751_EN.pdf) [Accessed: 8 December 2021]

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air defence identification zone of Taiwan in a period of four days in October 2021.<sup>20</sup> The European Parliament in a resolution on the 15th of September highlighted the need for a European strategy in the Indo-Pacific in order to establish EU presence in a region of growing importance. It also stressed the need for the establishment of dynamic relations with Washington in order to cooperate further on the challenges faced in the Indo-pacific.<sup>21</sup>

### ***Climate and Environmental Protection***

China is currently producing 27% of global CO2 emissions but is also the number one investor on renewable energy. Beijing for years pointed out that as a developing country it didn't feel obliged to set any major goals regarding its climate policy. However, that changed in 2016 when China ratified the Paris Agreement. In COP26 President Xi announced that the country will set more ambitious goals for its environmental policy, although it has not yet submitted its renewed 2030 targets. In general, the EU and China have engaged in bilateral communications since 2003 in order to coordinate efforts regarding forestry, water management and capacity building. On the downside, the EP pointed out in 2019 that China continued to construct coal-fired power stations. The latter also refused to participate in the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism, an EU initiative aimed at combating carbon leakage.<sup>22 23</sup>

### **Measures in place**

#### ***The 17+1 initiative***

China has previously made attempts to use the decentralised foreign policy of the EU to its advantage, such as with the 17+1 project, a project launched by China in 2012 promising to invest in Central and Eastern Europe. However, due to security concerns and the actual level of investment falling short of what was promised, it remains doubtful how successful the project was.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Hu, W.& Rising, C. (2021), *Tensions flare as Chinese flights near Taiwan intensify* [online] Available at: [https://apnews.com/article/tensions-flare-chinese-flights-near-taiwan-02b30ed449f663cf53ef0782482e35e9?fbclid=IwAR39J1pMpa5Km0d1CiQoUuS6Qav\\_8r7AZIVQhELvKILt287V13WkpLfUJw](https://apnews.com/article/tensions-flare-chinese-flights-near-taiwan-02b30ed449f663cf53ef0782482e35e9?fbclid=IwAR39J1pMpa5Km0d1CiQoUuS6Qav_8r7AZIVQhELvKILt287V13WkpLfUJw) [Accessed: 8 December 2021]

<sup>21</sup> European Parliament (2021), *EU-China relations in challenging times* [online] Available at: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2021/698751/EPRS\\_BRI\(2021\)698751\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2021/698751/EPRS_BRI(2021)698751_EN.pdf) [Accessed: 8 December 2021]

<sup>22</sup> European Commission (2021), *Environment: International Issues* [online] Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/environment/international\\_issues/relations\\_china\\_en.htm](https://ec.europa.eu/environment/international_issues/relations_china_en.htm) [Accessed: 8 December 2021]

<sup>23</sup> European Parliament (2021), *EU-China relations in challenging times* [online] Available at: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2021/698751/EPRS\\_BRI\(2021\)698751\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2021/698751/EPRS_BRI(2021)698751_EN.pdf) [Accessed: 8 December 2021]

<sup>24</sup> Brînză, A. (2021) *How China's 17+1 Became a Zombie Mechanism*. The Diplomat. [online] 10 February. Available at: <https://thediplomat.com/2021/02/how-chinas-171-became-a-zombie-mechanism/>. [Accessed: 10 December 2021]

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***The EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment (CAI)***

The CAI is a trade agreement between the EU and China whose negotiation was concluded in principle in December 2020. The agreement still needs to be ratified by the European Parliament and the Council of the EU. With the aim of providing EU investors with better access to the China market, CAI contains rules for Chinese state-owned enterprises, a commitment to improved transparency for subsidies and rules against forced transfer of technologies, i.e., the Chinese government compelling EU firms to share its technology with Chinese companies in exchange for market access.<sup>25</sup>

***The EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific***

The strategy was created to facilitate the EU’s strategic enlargement with the Indo-Pacific region. It aims to not only formulate strong partnerships with the nations in the region but also foster a “rules-based international order” so as to ensure regional stability. Thus, it consists of 7 priority areas: sustainable and inclusive prosperity, green transition, ocean governance, digital governance and partnerships, connectivity, security and defence, and human security.<sup>26</sup>

***The EU-China 2020 Strategic Agenda for Cooperation***

China and the EU are committed to a prosperous partnership through the aforementioned strategy. The Agenda sets the ground for a pragmatic and practical approach towards China. It allows the two parties to manage their differences in order to achieve mutual economic and social benefits in various sectors such as: trade and investment, peace and security, human rights, energy and environmental protection etc.<sup>27</sup>

***EU Sanctions on China over Human Rights Abuses***

On 22nd March 2021, the Council of the European Union imposed sanctions on four Chinese officials and one entity.<sup>28</sup> This was followed by China imposing sanctions on ten individuals

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<sup>25</sup> European Commission. (2020) *Key elements of the EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment*. [online] Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP\\_20\\_2542](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_20_2542). [Accessed: 10 December 2021]

<sup>26</sup> European Commission. (2021) Questions and Answers: EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific. [online] Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/QANDA\\_21\\_4709](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/QANDA_21_4709). [Accessed: 11 December 2021].

<sup>27</sup> European External Action Service. (2020) *EU-China 2020 Strategic Agenda for Cooperation*. [online] Available at: [https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/china/docs/eu-china\\_2020\\_strategic\\_agenda\\_en.pdf](https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/china/docs/eu-china_2020_strategic_agenda_en.pdf). [Accessed: 10 December 2021]

<sup>28</sup> European Parliament. (2021) *MEPs continue to firmly condemn human rights abuses in China*. [online] Available at: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20210323IPR00601/meps-continue-to-firmly-condemn-human-rights-abuses-in-china>. [Accessed: 11 December 2021]

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and four entities, including 5 members of the European Parliament and several EU institutions. Some experts believe that this will impede the passing of the CAI in the European Parliament.<sup>29</sup>

## **Discussion**

### ***Key Conflicts***

The essence of the potential conflicts between China and the EU can be boiled down to two fundamental parts: economic power and political stance.

In 2020, 10.5 % of EU exports were to China and 22.4 % of all EU imports were of Chinese origin.<sup>30</sup> However, while the EU is committed to an open economy, the Chinese economy is deeply protectionist; foreign competition is limited by regulations and the government, through giving subsidies and creating discriminatory regulations, significantly supports national enterprises.<sup>31</sup> This lack of a level playing field is deeply concerning for the EU.

Another notable point is the lack of a cohesive China policy within the EU. The requirement for unanimity in EU foreign policy decisions, combined with wide latitude for individual Member States building their own foreign policy results in the lack of a united and coherent China policy from the EU. This provides China with the opportunity to build and dominate bilateral relations with individual Member States. It should be noted that the governments of most Member States prefer “A common EU position defining China, pragmatically, as a rival or a partner”.<sup>32</sup>

A further point of conflict is China’s worrying record on human rights. The European Parliament states that “protecting human rights is one of the EU's overarching objectives in its external action”.<sup>33</sup> This, combined with credible allegations of human rights abuses in Xinjiang, the violation of international commitments in Hong Kong presents one of the main questions of EU-China policy.

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<sup>29</sup> Brinză, A. (2021) China’s EU Sanctions Are the Latest Proof: Beijing Doesn’t Understand Democracies. *The Diplomat*. [online] 25 March. Available at: <https://thediplomat.com/2021/03/chinas-eu-sanctions-are-the-latest-proof-beijing-doesnt-understand-democracies/>. [Accessed: 10 December 2021]

<sup>30</sup> Eurostat. (2021) *China-EU - international trade in goods statistics*. [online] Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=China-EU\\_-\\_international\\_trade\\_in\\_goods\\_statistics](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=China-EU_-_international_trade_in_goods_statistics). [Accessed: 10 December 2021]

<sup>31</sup> European Commission. (2021) *China-Trade*. [online] Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/countries/china/>. [Accessed: 9 December 2021]

<sup>32</sup> European Council on Foreign Affairs. (2020) *Policy Intentions Mapping*. Available at: [https://ecfr.eu/special/eucoalitionexplorer/policy\\_intentions\\_mapping/](https://ecfr.eu/special/eucoalitionexplorer/policy_intentions_mapping/). [Accessed: 10 December 2021]

<sup>33</sup> European Parliament Briefing. (2018) *Human rights in EU trade policy: Unilateral measures applied by the EU*. Available at: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2018/621905/EPRS\\_BRI\(2018\)621905\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2018/621905/EPRS_BRI(2018)621905_EN.pdf). [Accessed: 11 December 2021]

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### ***Future Approaches***

There are 3 potential scenarios that could dictate the union’s approach towards China.<sup>34</sup>

Firstly, the EU could adopt a less confrontational stance and view China merely as a strategic partner. That would entail having a limited amount of demands from China’s part. Such demands could be improving the human rights situation, committing to assist with the EU’s climate strategy and lifting the sanctions placed upon certain Members of the European Parliament. However, this scenario could be characterized as too optimistic since it only requires China to make the necessary moves. And given Europe's economic dependency on China, it is likely that the EU will have to trade off their values on human rights in order to achieve economic benefits in terms of imports and exports.

The second scenario would request from the EU to gradually adopt a confrontational stance towards China. Given the recent period of severe economic recession as well as the COVID-19 pandemic, the EU could not afford the deterioration of relationships with China. However, what could be done is the implementation of stricter rules regarding corporate governance, the procurement of goods and the supply-chain model European companies follow. This way the union is adopting a multi-faceted approach which allows it to both maintain economic ties with China and become more independent. The problem with this approach is that China could easily adopt a decoupling stance as a response to the stricter economic regulations that would directly harm the trade and investment sector.

The third scenario would require the immediate decoupling of the EU and China due to their fundamental differences in sectors such as human rights, climate change and peace and security. This would be accompanied with strict bans on Chinese economic and investment activities within the EU which would lead to the elimination of trade ties between the two parties.

## **Parties**

### ***The European People’s Party***

The European People’s Party is the party with the most seats in the European Parliament and it is positioned on the centre-right of the political spectrum. Regarding China, the EPP strongly condemns the efforts of the Chinese People’s Party to undermine civil liberties and human rights in places like Xinjiang, Hong Kong and Tibet. It also calls out Beijing for not

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<sup>34</sup> Wijffelaars, M., Groot, E. & Every, M. (2021) *Three scenarios for EU-China Relations: But one direction of travel?* [online] Available at: <https://economics.rabobank.com/publications/2021/august/three-scenarios-for-eu-china-relations/>. [Accessed: 10 December 2021]

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complying with its international obligations and not abiding to international norms and values. Moreover, although it recognizes that China is the EU's largest trade partner, it suggests that in a world of struggle between democracy and authoritarianism the space for cooperation is limited. However, the EU must not stop the efforts to approach China, especially when it comes to battling problems like climate change, but it has to set specific boundaries when it comes to fair trade, human rights, protecting European businesses, freedom of expression and sustainability. As for the Belt and Road Initiative, the EPP is concerned about the lack of transparency and the negative political effects of the projects. Lastly, concerning Taiwan, the EPP suggests the initiation of an Investment Agreement between the first and the EU and the expansion of their bilateral communications.<sup>3536</sup>

***Progressive Alliance of Democrats and Socialists in the European Parliament***

The Social and Democrats Party is the second largest party in the EP and has a centre-left orientation. Regarding China's rise as a global power the S&D is pointing out the need for the EU's strategic autonomy in regards to trade and security. It supports the cooperation between the two parties on combating global issues like health crises and climate change. On the other hand, the S&D voices serious concerns regarding the abuse of the human rights of minorities like the Uyghurs and the existence of forced labour camps in the Xinjiang region. Lastly, on the 16th of September 2021 it backed an EP resolution for China to make progress on human rights before the ratification of the Comprehensive Agreement on Investment between the two parties.<sup>3738</sup>

***Renew Europe***

Renew Europe is the third largest Party in the European Parliament, and it is the liberal, pro-European party. Firstly, RE recognises China as a great economic actor ready to project its power in the region of the Indo-pacific causing turmoil. The EU, according to RE, must broaden its cooperation with China to sectors other than trade, without however shying away from the need to protect democratic values and human rights. It highlights the importance of taking a clear stance against the repression of minorities and the propagation of a governance model opposite to western values. Furthermore, it highlights the need for a solid European front in cooperation with the US vis-a-vis China and the need to revisit engagement with Taiwan. In general, concerning China, it supports cooperation on combating climate change,

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<sup>35</sup> EPP (2021), *About us* [online] Available at: <https://www.eppgroup.eu/about-us> [Accessed: 11 December 2021]

<sup>36</sup> EPP (2021), *EU-China Relations - Towards a Fair and Reciprocal Partnership* [online] Available at: <https://www.eppgroup.eu/newsroom/publications/eu-china-relations-towards-a-fair-and-reciprocal-partnership> [Accessed: 8 December 2021]

<sup>37</sup> S&D (2021) *Our priorities* [online] Available at: <https://www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu/> [Accessed: 8 December 2021]

<sup>38</sup> S&D (2021), *The respect for human rights must be at the centre of EU-China relations* [online] Available at: <https://www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu/newsroom/respect-human-rights-must-be-centre-eu-china-relations> [Accessed: 8 December 2021]

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the establishment of fairer and more balanced trade and the further protection of human rights. Lastly, RE is strongly in favour of a common European defence, European strategic autonomy and a more assertive presence of the EU in international areas of interest, such as the Indo-pacific.<sup>3940</sup>

### ***The Greens - European Free Alliance***

The Greens- European Free Alliance is the fourth largest group in the EP and represents green politics. Firstly, the Greens have a strong stance regarding the violation of human rights in Xinjiang and Hong Kong, a situation which they regard as increasingly worrying. In regard to the “Global Gateway Strategy ” as a response to the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative, they find this initiative of great strategic importance, especially as it focused on digital connectivity and green technology. Moreover, it suggests that the EU is falling short on its demands from China regarding climate change and environmental policy.<sup>41</sup> Lastly, the increased Chinese aggression towards the countries of the South China Sea, the crackdown on religious minorities and the pressure exercised on Taiwan are all issues that should require amelioration from the Chinese side in order for the EU to concede to a renewed common Comprehensive Agreement on Investments.<sup>42</sup>

### ***European Conservatives Reformists***

The European Conservatives and Reformists is a centre-right party with its core values revolving around liberalism and conservatism. The party’s support for free trade and a strong European economy has led it to advocate for a decisive trade and investment EU strategy in the Indo-Pacific, especially towards China. They also criticize Beijing for the oppression of civil liberties in Hong Kong, Tibet and Xinjiang and the increasingly aggressive behaviour in the South China Sea, where the country has refused to abide by international law. Additionally, regarding Taiwan, ECR suggests that it should be defended, and the EU should upgrade its relations with it as well as with its other partners in the Indo-pacific.<sup>4344</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Renew Europe (2021) *What we stand for* [online] Available at: <https://www.reneweuropengroup.eu/what-we-stand-for> [Accessed: 11 December 2021]

<sup>40</sup> Renew Europe (2021) *Blueprint for an EU-China Strategy* [online] Available: <https://reneweuropengroup.app.box.com/s/iik40rg3cdg2qzfi493cqixlzh2i9j0b>. [Accessed: 11 December 2021]

<sup>41</sup> Bütikofer, R. (2021) *Global Gateway Strategy- Quote from Reinhard Bütikofer MEP* [online] Available at: <https://www.greens-efa.eu/en/article/press/global-gateway-strategy-quote-from-reinhard-b%C3%BCtikofer-mep> [Accessed: 11 December 2021]

<sup>42</sup> Greens-EFA (2021), *What we stand for* [online] Available at: <https://www.greens-efa.eu/en/> [Accessed: 11 December 2021]

<sup>43</sup> ECR (2021) *Our vision for Europe* [online] Available at: <https://ecrgroup.eu/> [Accessed 11 December 2021]

<sup>44</sup> Weimers, C.(2021) *A strong signal that the EU is increasingly ready to upgrade its relationship with Taiwan* [online] Available at: <https://ecrgroup.eu/article/a-strong-signal-that-the-eu-is-increasingly-ready-to-upgrade-its-relationships> [Accessed 11 December 2021]

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***The Left in the European Parliament/Nordic Green Left***

The Confederal Group of the European United Left/Nordic Green Left (CUE/NGL) with the slogan “Another Europe is Possible” is the representation of the Left in the European Parliament. In general, the Left is the group with the friendliest positions towards Beijing and has voted against sanctions on the country. It supports that China must not be seen as a rival and its economic policies must be viewed as the transition from one economic system to another. There is room for competition, but the EU should cooperate with China in order to promote the concepts of joint participation and human rights and in order to achieve progress in the department of climate change, technology and sustainability.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, China is a growing economic and military actor and constitutes the EU’s number one trade partner as well as an important investor in the European market. Cooperation in global issues like the deregulation of the climate is more than required. However, human rights violations and aggression in the Indo-pacific cannot be overlooked by an institution who promotes democratic values and the principle of the rule of law so strongly. Moreover, the EU needs to establish a more dynamic presence in the Indo-Pacific and build connectivity with countries in a region, where significant geopolitical interests are at stake. The European Parliament plays an important role in the formation of the EU’s stance towards China and the Indo-pacific. Its input is significant in decisions regarding the EU as a global actor, the Union’s relations with other countries and the promotion of European interests and values in an increasingly interdependent world.<sup>4546</sup>

## **Questions Raised**

1. Which of these should be the EU’s perspective in China:
  - a. A strategic partner
  - b. A rival or a partner depending on the issue
  - c. An economic and political rival
2. What are the economic and political trade-offs in each scenario?
3. How can cooperation between the EU and China be continued given Beijing’s continuing violations of human rights and rule of law?
4. How can the EU achieve a decisive presence in the Indo-pacific?
5. How can the EU build connectivity with the countries of the Indo-pacific as a response to the growing influence of the Belt and Road Initiative?
6. Can the EU increase cooperation with other states in the Indo-pacific?

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<sup>45</sup> The Left (2021) *About the group* [online] Available at: <https://left.eu/> [Accessed 11 December 2021]

<sup>46</sup> Scholz, H. (2019) *EU must change its attitude to trade with China* [online] Available at: <https://left.eu/eu-must-change-its-attitude-to-trade-with-china/> [Accessed 11 December 2021]



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7. How should the Member States consolidate their positions towards China and ensure a united, EU-wide stance on the issue?
8. How can the EU promote human rights and rule of law in China?
9. How should the EU handle the suppression of minorities in China?
10. Should the EU and the Western Allies decide on a common strategy in the Indo-pacific?

\*The current Study Guide has been developed with the contribution of Ms Elena Chrysafi, former chair of the AFET Committee.

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