

c. Divide and Conquer in Europe Serves to Create a Split With the United States

In the Cold War, Europe was at the center of the confrontation between the free world and the communist camp. America and Western European nations maintained a close alliance via the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. After the end of the Cold War, Europe began to decline in terms of economic and political importance.

In order to drive a wedge between Europe and United States, the CCP adopted a strategy of dividing and conquering the European countries by adapting to local conditions to gradually penetrate and develop influence in Europe. In recent years, the differences between Europe and the United States on many major issues have become increasingly apparent. The CCP's activities have had a hand in this.

After the 2008 financial crisis, the CCP exploited the fact that weaker European economies were in urgent need of foreign investment. The CCP injected large sums of money into these countries in exchange for compromises on issues such as international law and human rights. The CCP used this method to create and expand the cracks between European countries, and reaped the benefits. Countries targeted by the CCP include Greece, Spain, Portugal, and Hungary.

After the sovereign debt crisis in Greece, the CCP invested heavily there, exchanging money for political influence, and using Greece as an opening for building more influence in Europe. Within a few years, the CCP obtained a thirty-five-year concession for the second

and third container terminals of Piraeus Port, Greece's largest port, and took over the main transshipment hub at the port.

In May 2017, China and Greece signed a three-year action plan covering railways, ports, airport network construction, power-energy networks, and power-plant investments. [55] The CCP's investment has already seen political returns. After 2016, Greece, a member of the European Union, has repeatedly opposed EU proposals that would criticize the Chinese regime's policies and human rights record. Many potential EU statements to this effect did not materialize. In August 2017, commentary by The New York Times said, "Greece has embraced the advances of China, its most ardent and geopolitically ambitious suitor." [56]

In 2012, the CCP regime launched a cooperation framework with sixteen countries in Central and Eastern Europe called "16+1." Hungary was the first country to join the 16+1 initiative and the first European country to sign a One Belt, One Road agreement with China. In 2017, bilateral trade volume between China and Hungary exceeded US\$10 billion. Like Greece, Hungary has repeatedly opposed EU criticism of the CCP's human rights abuses. [57] The president of the Czech Republic hired a wealthy Chinese businessman to be his personal adviser and has kept his distance from the Dalai Lama. [58]

Among the sixteen countries included in the framework, eleven are EU countries, and five are non-EU countries. The CCP has ulteriorly proposed a new model of regional cooperation, with the intent to divide the European Union being obvious. Additionally, among the sixteen countries, many are former socialist countries. These

countries all have a history of communist rule, and have preserved many ideological and organizational traces of those regimes. To some extent, conforming to the CCP's demands comes naturally to them.

There are many small countries in Europe, and it is difficult for any one country to compete with the CCP. The CCP has used this to handle each government individually, intimidating them into staying silent on China's human rights abuses and pernicious foreign policy. The most typical example is Norway. In 2010, the Norwegian Nobel Prize Committee awarded the Peace Prize to an incarcerated Chinese dissident. The CCP quickly took revenge by setting up various obstacles to prevent Norway from exporting salmon to China, as well as causing other difficulties. Six years later, relations between the two countries were "normalized," but Norway has remained silent on human rights issues in China. [59]

The traditional Western European powers have also felt the growing influence of the CCP. The CCP's direct investment in Germany has grown substantially since 2010. In 2016 and 2017, China was Germany's largest trading partner. In 2016, fifty-six German companies were acquired by mainland Chinese and Hong Kong investors, with investment reaching a high of 11 billion euros. These mergers and acquisitions allowed Chinese companies to quickly enter the market and acquire advanced Western technology, brands, and other assets. [60] The Hoover Institution of the United States, in a 2018 report, has labeled this the CCP's "weaponization" investment. [61]

The industrial city of Duisburg in western Germany has become the

European transit point for OBOR. Every week, thirty trains filled with Chinese goods come to the city, where they are then transported separately to other countries. The mayor of Duisburg has said that Duisburg is Germany's "China City." [62]

In dealing with France, the CCP has long used a strategy of "transaction diplomacy." For example, when Jiang Zemin, then-CCP regime head, visited France in 1999, he provided a large sale worth 15 billion francs by purchasing nearly thirty Airbus aircraft, leading to the French government's support for China's admission into the WTO. Following the Tiananmen Square massacre, France became the first Western country to establish a comprehensive strategic partnership with China. The French president at the time was the first in the West to oppose criticism of China at the Geneva Human Rights Conference, the first to advocate strongly for the lifting of the EU arms embargo on China, and the first head of a Western government who praised the CCP. [63] In addition, the CCP established large-scale Chinese Culture Weeks in France at an early stage of its expansionary activity as a means of promoting communist ideology under the guise of culture. [64]

The United Kingdom, a traditional European power for much of history and an important ally of the United States, is also one of the CCP's most prized targets. On September 15, 2016, the British government officially approved the start of the Hinkley Point C unit nuclear power project, a joint venture between China and a French consortium. Hinkley Point C nuclear power station is a nuclear power plant in Somerset, in southwest England, with an installed capacity of 3,200 megawatts.

The project was severely criticized by experts, including engineers, physicists, environmentalists, China experts, and business analysts, who especially referred to the huge hidden dangers to British national security. Nick Timothy, the ex-chief of staff to Theresa May, pointed out that security experts — reportedly inside as well as outside government — “are worried that Chinese people can use their role to build weaknesses in the computer system, which will enable them to shut down British energy production at will.” [65] The British Guardian calls this “the ‘dreadful deal’ behind the world’s most expensive power plant.” [66]

As in other parts of the world, the methods the Chinese regime uses to expand its influence in Europe are pervasive and legion. They include acquiring European high-tech companies, controlling the shares of important ports, bribing retired politicians to praise the CCP’s platform, coaxing sinologists to sing the praises of the CCP, penetrating universities, think tanks, and research institutes, and so on. [67] The English-language edition of the CCP-controlled China Daily has a monthly page insert in the long-established British newspaper The Daily Telegraph; the inserts carry articles beautifying the Chinese regime. Beijing pays The Daily Telegraph up to 750,000 pounds a year for the inserts. [68]

The CCP’s activities in Europe have caused great misgivings among researchers. The European Institute of Public Policy (GPPI), a leading think tank in Europe, published a research report in 2018 exposing the CCP’s infiltration activities in Europe:

China commands a comprehensive and flexible influencing toolset, ranging from the overt to the covert, primarily deployed across

three arenas: political and economic elites, media and public opinion, and civil society and academia. In expanding its political influence, China takes advantage of the one-sided openness of Europe. Europe's gates are wide open whereas China seeks to tightly restrict access of foreign ideas, actors and capital.

The effects of this asymmetric political relationship are beginning to show within Europe. European states increasingly tend to adjust their policies in fits of 'preemptive obedience' to curry favor with the Chinese side. Political elites within the European Union (EU) and in the European neighborhood have started to embrace Chinese rhetoric and interests, including where they contradict national and/or European interests. EU unity has suffered from Chinese divide and rule tactics, especially where the protection and projection of liberal values and human rights are concerned. Beijing also benefits from the 'services' of willing enablers among European political and professional classes who are happy to promote Chinese values and interests. Rather than only China trying to actively build up political capital, there is also much influence courting on the part of those political elites in EU member states who seek to attract Chinese money or to attain greater recognition on the global plane. [69]

In addition to political, economic, and cultural infiltration in Europe, the CCP has also engaged in various forms of espionage. On October 22, 2018, the French *Le Figaro* carried the headline "The revelations of *Le Figaro* on the Chinese spy program that targets France." Through an exclusive series of special reports, *Le Figaro* revealed the CCP's various espionage activities in France. This included how business social-networking websites, especially LinkedIn, were used

to recruit French people to provide information to the CCP for the purpose of infiltrating France's political, economic, and strategic realms, and for gaining extensive insider understanding in specific situations. The report also said that such cases are only the tip of the iceberg of the CCP's espionage operations in France. [70] The CCP's purpose is the large-scale plunder of sensitive information regarding the French state and its economic assets. Similar espionage activities have also taken place in Germany. [71]