

A New Taiwanese Representative Office in Aix-en-Provence: A French “Political Distancing” vis-à-vis China?

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Taiwan, an island of twenty-three million inhabitants, is a *de facto* independent country claimed by the People's Republic of China (PRC) that since 1949 considers the island an integral part of its territory, and which promises to bring Formosa back willingly or by force into its fold. More recently, tensions between Taiwan and China accentuated after Tsai Ing-wen was re-elected into power in 2016 and later augmented to a new magnitude due to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, accordingly reinforcing many enduring antagonisms, like between the Taiwanese democratic regime (see the article by Asia Center: *Taiwan, laboratoire de toutes les audaces*) and Chinese authoritarianism, or the management of the pandemic, or the Hong Kong crisis. Tensions have also increased between the United States and China on various levels, where, as an example extant in the Indo-Pacific region, Taiwan occupies a strategic position, the only lock that China must break in order to have direct access to the Pacific. For the United States, the defense of Taiwan similarly consists of protecting its own interests in the region; meaning, above all else, the legitimacy of their military presence, notably in Japan, South Korea and the Philippines. Therefore, unsurprisingly, as a result of its “sanitation victory” and its delicate status, all the while wedged between the two main world superpowers, the island of Taiwan received unprecedented visibility in the year 2020.

The year 2020 is equally witness to a form of Franco-Taiwanese *rapprochement* on the diplomatic and political level. This development attests to an increased French mistrust vis-à-vis China on several issues, the sometimes naive expectations of Paris having been called into question by the geopolitical upheavals induced by the Covid-19 crisis, albeit not exclusively. Finally, the year 2020 is also undoubtedly a wake-up call for the French government regarding the “added-value” of Asian democracies, who persist in a world where authoritarian regimes assert themselves with evermore daring and, henceforth, unconcealed hegemonic ambitions.

France: “The Nuisance Of The World,”¹ Especially When China Moves Towards Taiwan

On Tuesday the 25th of August, the Taiwanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced the opening in Aix-en-Provence of a second representative office that in essence constitutes a *de facto* consulate. It joins the Taipei representative office already established in Paris in 1972 – originally under the name of Association for the Promotion of Commercial and Tourist Exchanges with Taiwan (ASPECT), and then subsequently named the Taipei Representative Bureau in France from 1995 onwards. Beijing's reaction was an immediate warning to Paris “against any contact with a country it considers to be part of China.”² This is not the first Chinese threat vis-à-vis France in the framework of Franco-Taiwanese relations.

A column, entitled *The WHO Must Fully Collaborate with Taiwan*, was published in the Obs. on the 31st of March, 2020. This text, signed by 72 French parliamentarians, 48 Taiwanese parliamentarians and personalities from the medical and academic world, provoked Beijing's anger and engendered an immediate denunciation by the Chinese ambassador to France, Lu Shaye. The ambassador declared in a letter published on the 12th of April that the Taiwanese

authorities, supported by French parliamentarians, had insulted the director of the World Health Organization (WHO) by using “the word ‘negro’ to attack him.”³

While tensions in the heart of the Indo-Pacific region increased (see the article by Asia Center: *l’Indo-Pacifique au cœur du Covid-19: une affirmation des blocs*), France signed a contract of armament with Taiwan (albeit, minor in scope because of the rather low value of 24.6 million euros) intended to modernize the Dagaie MK2 decoy/flare launching systems installed on their frigates. This particular sale occurred thirty years after the signing of a contract for the purchase of six French frigates by Taiwan in 1991, which had already affected France-China relations at the time. Under the presidency of François Mitterrand, the “Bravo B” contract signed on the 31st of August, 1991, between Thomson-CSF, the antecedent of Thales, and the China Shipbuilding Corporation at a value of 16 billion francs (approximately 2.5 billion euros) had indeed induced a freeze in Franco-Chinese relations. This agreement had garnered wide attention at the time owing to issues of corruption revealed later through investigations, with the payment of legal commissions until 2000 (estimated at nearly 500 million francs or 80 million euros) and, then, retro-commissions passing through Switzerland, along with suspicious deaths of various actors involved in the sale of the frigates. The six frigates were ultimately delivered between 1996 and 1998.

In another instance, on the 7th of April, 2019, Chinese warships intercepted a French naval vessel, the Frigate Vendémiaire, that was sailing in the Taiwan Strait. Beijing considered the French ship to have had entered “Chinese territorial waters” without permission, while Paris claimed it was an operation in the framework of the defense of freedom of navigation.⁴ All these elements showcase the Franco-Chinese tensions around the Taiwanese question.

In reaction to the recent arms contract, Beijing adopted a threatening tone and on the 12th of May, 2020, asking France to renounce this contract “so as not to harm Franco-Chinese relations.” Interestingly, the response from France has been particularly strong. Jean-Yves Le Drian, French Minister of Europe and Foreign Affairs (and former Minister of the Armed Forces from 2012 to 2017, recognised for staying firm on arms sales), was very clear. In a press release published on the 13th of May, 2020, the Quai d’Orsay invited China to focus on the Covid-19 crisis rather than on an old controversy, a way of giving it back to China. The latter having repeatedly told Europeans to deal with the pandemic rather than internal affairs in Beijing.

This direct and unambiguous response from Paris is all the more important as it surely would not have occurred a few years earlier – evidenced by the large commissions paid to the CCP in the 1990s in an effort to avoid offending Beijing over the frigate affair – and appears to reflect an evolution in French policy vis-à-vis China, encouraged by the Covid-19 crisis.

Franco-Chinese tensions on various issues catalysed by the Covid-19 crisis and its geopolitical consequences

Tensions in the Indo-Pacific Region: Handpicked Allies

Prior to the Covid-19 crisis, France had already clarified its strategy vis-à-vis China in the Indo-Pacific region. Excepting for the United Kingdom and its freedom of navigation operations in cooperation with the United States, or Germany and its definition on the 2nd of September, 2020, of its own peculiar strategic approach in the Indo-Pacific, France remains the only European country to have interests to defend in the region.⁵ On the 2nd of May, 2018, during his speech at the Garden Island naval base in Sydney, Emmanuel Macron defined the French strategy in the “Indo-Pacific” region, heretofore “Asia-Pacific,” and called for the establishment of a Paris-Delhi-Canberra axis to counter, without mentioning it explicitly, the aggressive Chinese posture.

During his speech in Noumea on the 5th of May, 2018, Emmanuel Macron again recalled the importance of this axis between France, India and Australia, that “extends from Papeete to Noumea.”⁶ Although selecting his words carefully, Emmanuel Macron nonetheless added: “China is building its hegemony step by step. It is not about raising fears, but to face reality [...] If we do not organize ourselves, it will soon be a hegemony that will reduce our freedoms, our opportunities, and which we will suffer.”⁷ It is evident that in terms of partners, France has chosen its camp and has put everything on the democracies involved in this maritime zone. On the 11th of February, 2019, Canberra and Paris signed a contract of no less than 50 billion dollars intended for the construction of twelve submarines for the Royal Australian Navy, considered the “most important investment made in peacetime defense by Australia,”⁸ Prime Minister Scott Morrison commended himself amongst Florence Parly, the present French Minister of the Armed Forces. As regards other democracies and strategic partners within the Indo-Pacific region: Japan⁹ and India, who, at the end of July 2020, took possession of its first completed Rafale from the Dassault Aviation production lines. In September 2016, the Indian Air Force ordered 36 multirole fighter aircraft for 590 billion rupees (or 8 billion euros at the exchange rate at the time).¹⁰ Most recently, Florence Parly visited India for the third time on the 10th of September, 2020 in the interest of celebrating the delivery of the first five Rafale and attending an aerial demonstration of French aircrafts at the nearby Ambala air base, in proximity to Pakistan, Kashmir and China.

Other potential partners were not ignored. In the spring of 2018, as part of the Joan of Arc mission, French ships docked in Australia, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam, and then conducted, the day before the Shangri-La Dialogue, an operation in the vicinity of the Spratly Islands, with five representatives of the European External Action Service (EEAS) on board in an order to observe the practices of the Chinese navy. As for the PEGASE mission,¹¹ that took place from the 19th of August to the 4th of September, 2018, the latter aimed to demonstrate the scale of French aviation technology to the countries visited by the French Air Force. Three Rafale, one A400M, one A310 for logistics and one C-135 for refuelling were to demonstrate to Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, Singapore and India what Paris could deploy for its partners, but, also, doubled as a commercial operation for diplomatic purposes with the threat from Beijing in the South China Sea constituting, among other things, the backdrop for discussions between the French and Asian soldiers. Joint exercises and the sale of arms or expertise are important elements in establishing military cooperation between France and other countries in Asia. During the PEGASE mission, the Air Force had thus proposed to approach the airspace at the levels in which China claims a sovereignty that is not recognized by its neighbours. The Élysée hesitated between the tough option (consisting of going through a disputed air corridor with the entire detachment, including the Rafale) and the more peaceful option (following the routes used by civil aviation), which was ultimately selected.

Since 1998, the 150th Singapore squadron had been installed at the French Cazaux air base in Gironde, participating in joint training sessions supervised by French instructors. Since 2002, less than a year after that of a nuclear submarine, the French aircraft carrier Charles-de-Gaulle made a stopover in Singapore. Similarly, since 2015, in Kuala Lumpur, the Malaysian General Staff has been advised by a French senior air force officer for the proper use of the four A400Ms ordered in 2005 by the *Royal Malaysian Air Force* (RMAF) added to a previous order in 2002 by the *Royal Malaysian Navy* (RMN) of two French Scorpene class submarines and a second hand Agosta type. Kuala Lumpur also acquired twelve H225 helicopters in 2010 and, then, six Gowind corvettes in 2013. In France, Indonesian guidance specialists are also taught the processes for tactical air-to-ground bombing missions. As to South Korea, the partnerships and arms sales concluded with Paris were mainly established within the framework of the Air Force. In 2015, Korean Aerospace Industries (KAI) and Airbus Helicopters signed a framework agreement to market and maintain the civil and military LCH / LAH (Light Civil

Helicopter/Light Armed Helicopter) program, adding to the previously organized production of the Surion helicopter developed jointly in 2005.¹² For more than ten years now, Airbus Helicopters has been rather successfully imposing itself in South Korea, winning in participation with KAI, the calls for tenders launched by the South Korean Ministry of Defense and required to supply Seoul with roughly 80% of its military fleet.¹³ This partnership was also added to the Samsung Thales joint venture that in 2003 won a contract worth € 470 million for the search and tracking system for the second batch of Korean short-range anti-aircraft missiles (K-SAM).

During the Shangri-La Dialogue in June 2019, Florence Parly was particularly exhaustive, declaring: "We will continue to sail more than twice a year in the South China Sea (SCS). There will be objections, there will be suspicious manoeuvres at sea. But we will not be intimidated by any *fait accompli*."¹⁴ Therefore, when China adopted a much more aggressive posture in the SCS and more generally within the Indo-Pacific amid the pandemic, the turn taken by French policy in the region from 2018 was vindicated. In January 2020, Indonesia, who had already signed a strategic partnership with France in 2011, showed its interest in acquiring some equipment while tensions between Jakarta and Beijing were at their zenith and Indonesia had announced an increase in its defense budget of 16.2% for the year 2021.¹⁵ On the 13th of January, 2020, the Indonesian Defense Minister, Prabowo Subianto, met Florence Parly. Following the meeting, the French newspaper, La Tribune, declared that according to several sources there are promising signs a contract between Jakarta and Paris may arrive, writing: "according to sources interviewed by La Tribune, Jakarta is interested in 48 Rafale fighter aircraft, up to 4 Scorpene submarines armed with Exocet SM39 missiles and 2 Gowind corvettes of 2,500 tons."¹⁶

China is Now in Europe Thanks to the Silk Roads: An Interference That France is Wary Of

During his speech on the 8th of January, 2018, in Xian, Emmanuel Macron pleaded for Franco-Chinese and Sino-European cooperation in the political, social, environmental and economic domains all the while denouncing American isolationism hintingly. And although supportive of this multilateral order of which Xi Jinping had already made himself its defender during the Davos forum in January 2017, Emmanuel Macron was simultaneously warning China by expressing his expectations and conditions via the "One Belt One Road" (一帶一路) project, launched in 2013 by Xi Jinping. He stated, "[w]hen you build a relationship of friendship, it is a balanced cooperation you seek."¹⁷ Adding, "also, this multilateralism that must come to be redefined implies finding a balanced cooperation yet to be invented for the coming century. There cannot be a disguised supremacy and it cannot be the conflict between competing supremacies."¹⁸ In his final words, Emmanuel Macron was even more explicit concerning the Silk Roads: "they cannot be the roads of a new hegemony that would in a way put in a state of vassalage the countries they cross... Transparency, interoperability, openness in public procurement, respect for competition and intellectual property rules, and risk sharing are subjects that we are dealing with together within the framework of the G20... [China] will also have to nurture this new philosophy and this will be at the heart of the dialogue that we will have to conduct."¹⁹ The last points evoked by Emmanuel Macron about transparency, interoperability, reciprocity, competition rules, and intellectual property are indeed all elements that justify French and more broadly European discontent in the trade with China.

A problem identified by Emmanuel Macron starting in 2018 as well as during the Sino-European meeting held on the 22nd of June, 2020, that harmed Franco-Chinese relations in the field of business apropos the protection of intellectual property with the looting of data faced by foreign and French companies.²⁰ In addition to the misappropriation of patents, there are cyberattacks in the areas of telecoms, energy, aeronautics and health (as was the case with

European hospitals like the Public Assistance Hospital of Paris (AP-HP) during the pandemic), which are all the more problematic as the links between the security organs, the People's Liberation Army and many Chinese companies have been proven.

Furthermore, France, alike most European countries, finds itself in a trade deficit situation with China. During his first visit to China in 2018, Emmanuel Macron insisted on the importance of rebalancing trade relations (with a trade deficit of more than 30 billion euros out of a total deficit of 65 billion euros in 2017),²¹ but hitherto his desires have not come true. On the contrary, the trade deficit between the two countries has even widened, particularly in the context of the pandemic with a decrease in French exports to China. Over the past twelve months, the trade deficit between France and China was 36.584 billion euros.²²

The other point that aggravates economic relations between France and China, and more generally between the European Union (EU) and Beijing, is that of investments. At the European level, negotiations had been launched in 2013 to obtain an Agreement on Investment (both to ensure better reciprocity and better transparency considering that Chinese companies benefit from State aid, a practice prohibited for European companies), an Agreement that has still not concluded.²³ If the stock of French Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) in China is greater than the stock of Chinese FDI in France due to the antecedence of the French presence in China, "French investors do not benefit from the same level of openness in China as their Chinese counterparts on the French and European market."²⁴ In addition, "French investments in China seem to have slowed down over the past two years, under the effect of various factors: loss of competitiveness, saturation of certain markets, weariness in the face of the difficult business climate." Indeed, the share of the stock of French FDI in the stock of total Chinese FDI has only decreased over the years – in 2014, the share was 1.976%, in 2015, 1.960%, in 2016, 1.895%, in 2017, 1.726% and in 2018, 1.593%.²⁵ Concerning the "difficult business climate," the trend has rather hardened further under the presidency of Xi Jinping. Following the first twenty years of the Deng Xiaoping era, China's exigencies on foreign companies increased considerably now that Beijing has overcome its technological backwardness. Thus, the Chinese state sector retains an overwhelming weight in certain strategic areas (naval, aeronautics, energy, defense) and increasingly interferes in the other branches. Foreign companies are, for example, subject to the formation of cells in which sessions of criticism and self-criticism, Marxism and analysis of Xi thought take place. "The general tendency is towards more national preference over a greater opening of the market to foreign companies."²⁶

Regarding foreign investments in Europe, Emmanuel Macron had also expressed his own concerns starting from his first European Council, on 22nd and 23rd of June, 2017, proposing to institute an instrument that could control FDI in Europe and target acquisitions by Chinese groups of European companies. However, this proposal met with some resistance at the time, notably from Portugal, Greece and Spain, countries in which Chinese investments are very significant, and thus justifying the fear Emmanuel Macron held concerning a China that divides the EU through its economic clout that may sometimes turn into political interference.²⁷ In an attempt to counter this European division that China has always played effectively, even at the height of the pandemic, Emmanuel Macron summoned Angela Merkel and former President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, during the Xi Jinping's visit to the Élysée Palace on the 26th of March, 2019, endeavouring to form a common European front against China and its "silk roads" that worry Paris. The two speeches delivered by Emmanuel Macron in Nice and Paris accordingly illustrate France's increased mistrust of "Chinese expansionism," which contrasted with the relative (albeit reserved) support of the French President for the "silk roads" voiced in Xi'an. On the 26th of March, 2019, the French President was even more explicit than in 2018: "We have differences, [and] obviously the exercise of power in the history of humanity is not without rivalries. None of us are naive. We respect China [...] and we naturally

hear from our major partners [China] that they, too, respect the unity of the European Union as well as the values it carries for itself and in the world."²⁸ From the 4th to the 6th of November, 2020, Emmanuel Macron also visited China with the European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, Phil Hogan, who was then soon to ascend to the post of European Commissioner for Trade. Lastly, in a climate of heightened tensions with Beijing, European mechanisms will be put in place to protect the European market, and with them the French market from all forms of unfair competition as well as political and economic interference.²⁹ On the 9th of September, 2020, the European Court of Auditors published a report warning the Member states about "the offensive from the 'Middle Kingdom' in terms of investing" with Beijing,³⁰ who has invested 150 billion euros in Europe between 2010 and 2019.³¹ In October 2020, a European regulation on the screening of foreign direct investments will hence come into force.

Huawei: An Implicit Ban à la Française

As early as 2012, the House Intelligence Committee of the United States warned that Huawei could pose a threat to national security because its telecommunications equipment could be used by the Chinese government to spy on American citizens. Since then, American sanctions against the telecommunications giant have multiplied, especially in the context of the trade war between Washington and Beijing. These tensions eventually led to Huawei's ban in the United States in 2018, and later mimicked by Australia, Japan, New Zealand and Taiwan. The question of threats posed by Huawei to the national security of each country that would utilise Chinese equipment has amplified in the context of the pandemic, causing many European countries to review their telecommunications and 5G devices.

In January 2020, the British Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, proposed to restrict Huawei's access to next-generation (5G) mobile networks. At the end of May, the British National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) re-examined the "potential risks to the security of the country posed by Huawei equipment, following the American decision to prohibit the Chinese giant's access to electronic components designed by American firms."³² The NCSC report, filed on the 6th of July at the Ministry for Digital and Culture, concluded that the American sanctions – the ban decided in May to use electronic components manufactured in the United States, specifically – impacted Huawei and rendered its services less reliable. This report had anew provoked threats from Beijing, with the Chinese ambassador to the United Kingdom, Liu Xiaoming, declaring: "We want to be your friends, your partners, but if you want to make China a hostile state, you will have to take responsibility for the consequences."³³ Yet the threats were pointless. Quite to the contrary, on July 14th, the Johnson government confirmed that Huawei would be banned from 5G mobile networks in two stages. Thus, operators in the United Kingdom will no longer have the right to purchase Huawei hardware starting from the 1st of January, 2021, and will have until 2027 to replace 5G software and machines put in place before December 31.

In France, following the American ban on Huawei in 2018, the question sharpened in politico-economic circles. Standing inside a pandemic, the French intelligence services had expressed their mistrust of Huawei. While Beijing was accused from the 7th of April by an American elected representative of "wanting to trade the delivery of masks to France against the adoption, by Paris, of the 5G network proposed by the Chinese company Huawei,"³⁴ leading Zhao Lijian, the spokesperson for the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as the Élysée Palace to refute, according to the French intelligence services, "Huawei would have offered masks to French companies that could be useful in its expansion."³⁵ In France, since a 2019 law,³⁶ the National Agency for Information Systems Security (ANSSI) is responsible for authorizing or prohibiting the use of equipment designed by Huawei. After February 2020, when the French government had to decide on the requests of Huawei equipment from operators in order to

deploy 5G, the spokesperson for the Chinese embassy in France issued a particularly aggressive *communiqué*, threatening to “take retaliatory measures against Nokia and Ericsson”³⁷ in the case that France were to discriminate against Huawei. On the 7th of July, 2020, the Director General of ANSSI also confirmed a hardening of French policy vis-à-vis the Shenzhen firm in an interview with *Les Echos*: “Operators who do not use Huawei, we urge them to do not go in that direction because it is rather presently the natural direction of things. Those who already use it, we issue authorizations whose duration varies between three and eight years.”³⁸ Therefore, we can speak of a gradual ban; whereas, Free and Orange, who do not use Huawei equipment, are encouraged to continue in this direction while SFR and Bouygues have a three to eight year stay that holds only one sole objective – to allow them to organize the dismantling of Huawei equipment over time. Bouygues and SFR will have to gradually dismantle the antennas and other Huawei equipment to replace them at 3,000 sites. Bouygues is moreover prohibited from using Huawei products in four cities evaluated as strategic from a national security point of view: Brest, housing the nuclear submarine base at Île Longue along with a military port; Toulouse, being the stronghold of Airbus; Rennes and its cybersecurity centre, as well as Strasbourg. Thus, by 2028, all Huawei equipment will have disappeared from very dense areas.

This final decision illustrates the gap between the official communication from France, in which there is question of cooperation and non-discrimination between Beijing and Paris in the establishment of a 5G network, and the unofficial position of Paris which, as stated by the facts, seeks to remove and exclude Huawei from its telecommunications network without differing much from the British positions, much more in tune with the official discourse. And, we find this French ambiguity in Emmanuel Macron's approach towards China on other issues like on the question of human rights.

Deterioration of the Humanitarian Situation in Hong Kong and Xinjiang, An Issue on Which France remains Timid, Notably in the Framework of “Realeconomik”

The first arrival of Emmanuel Macron in China on the 8th of January, 2018, accompanied by more than fifty executives from companies such as Airbus, Dassault, Sodexo and Auchan, had already been interpreted by Chinese observers as the expression of an economic pragmatism developing by the president and the importance he attached to relations with China (see the article by Yves-Heng Lim in *Asia Trends #3: Un nouveau du partenariat stratégique franco-chinois ? La visite du président Macron vue de Chine*). Franco-Chinese economic partnerships are important in many domains: agricultural products, high-tech industry, pharmaceutical products, financial services, aeronautics, energy, environmental protection, preservation of resources, and green economy. The membered companies of the France-China committee created in 1979, for example, attain 100 billion euros in turnover in China with Franco-Chinese trade weighing no less than 65 billion euros and 11% of French exports going to China.³⁹ In addition, Emmanuel Macron, who was illustrated by the weakness of his reaction to the death of Liu Xiaobo on the 12th of July, 2017, had, in his 2018 speeches, also refused to mention the issues of human rights and international law in the majority of his speeches in China.⁴⁰ A choice that reads as the continuity of the politics by François Hollande, who did not speak about the imprisonment of Ilham Tohti in 2015, a Uighur who had been the official guest of the Quai d'Orsay in 2010. Emmanuel Macron thusly declared very implicitly in his speech on the 8th of January, 2018, in Xi'an, “there are differences between us that are linked to our histories, our profound philosophies, and the nature of our societies.” Then, he added to reporters whilst visiting an art gallery in Beijing: “I can indulge myself by giving lessons to China by talking to the French press. It's been done a lot, but it's not working. [...] There are discussions, not in front of journalists, not out in the open, head-to-head, which can be useful and produce results. Those are the ones that I favour.”⁴¹ Emmanuel Macron has thus definitively defined his then

current and still relevant policy, one of avoiding any public statement on the "issues that anger" without yet ignoring them.

As early as the summer of 2019, protests in Hong Kong against the extradition law, a further setback against the city's partial democracy increasingly threatened by Beijing's influence, raised concerns in various Western countries. But at that time, the silence of French politicians was an illustration of this desire to not offend Beijing. Jean-François Césarini, president of the France-Taiwan friendship group, signed an open letter on the 8th of August, 2019, with around twenty other La République En Marche (LREM) deputies to denounce the "deafening silence of French political leaders."⁴² This letter had remained unanswered until the Élysée and the Quai d'Orsay ended up expressing themselves without too much verve on the subject, when Jean-Yves Le Drian declaring in a press release published on the 14th of August on the ministry's website that France was an adherent to the advantages of the autonomy statute of the Hong Kong territory which are "the rule of law, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms as well as the autonomy of the judicial system." However, Emmanuel Macron once again showed himself with his silence on the Hong Kong question and/or the repression suffered by the Uyghurs during his visit to China in November 2019, contenting himself with merely calling for "dialogue" and "restraint." This timidity, if not so then this sign of weakness, was in part justified by the rules of diplomacy and the role played by the French Head of State, but, above all, testified to the position of France, subject economically to China and fearing the risks of retaliation by expressing his opinion.

Nevertheless, once the National Security Law was passed in Hong Kong on the 30th of June, 2020, a red line was crossed. On the 8th of July, during a hearing before the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee, Jean-Yves Le Drian promised "not to remain inactive" in the face of the implementation of this new law, declaring that "there really is a break with the fundamental law of 1997, relative to the principle of "one country, two systems" [...] so we are not going to stay like that."⁴³ Once more, threats on the part of Beijing were not lacking, Zhao Lijian then decreeing: "the affairs in Hong Kong are China's internal affairs and no country has the right to interfere."⁴⁴ These remarks did not prevent France from announcing on the 3rd of August the suspension of the extradition agreement signed on the 4th of May, 2017, with Hong Kong. This measure, also taken by Germany four days earlier, by the United Kingdom on the 20th of July and also by Canada, Australia and New Zealand, undoubtedly constitutes the affirmation of a more severe French policy vis-à-vis China, although remaining less symbolic than the measures taken by London, Taipei or Canberra by welcoming Hongkongers to their soil.

The question of the Uyghurs has likewise gained momentum in French society, albeit tentatively. Starting in 2015, the Chinese authorities put in place a draconian security apparatus in Xinjiang that they further strengthened in 2017 as part of a campaign against religious extremism (去极端化). The different reports published by German researcher Adrian Zenz have markedly encouraged international and French awareness of Chinese policy in Xinjiang. His studies together with the testimonies of Uyghur victims collected by several human rights associations or images disseminated on the web, like the video of Uyghur prisoners published in 2019 on YouTube (though went viral in 2020) and on which Liu Xiaoming had been interviewed on the 19th of July, 2020, by a BBC journalist, seems to corroborate the facts according to which at least a million individuals are locked up in "re-education" camps and the women underwent forced sterilizations constituting all the signs of an ethnic genocide. However, it would only be since 2019 that there has been a "huge advance in the treatment of this subject by the French press,"⁴⁵ believes Dilnur Reyhan, president and founder of the Uyghur Institute of Europe, and who adds that this new media coverage has arisen from the dissemination of the *China Cables*, made public in November 2019. To the study published on the 29th of June, 2020, by the Jamestown Foundation disseminating in particular the

investigation of Adrian Zenz, have also been added the American sanctions with Donald Trump, promulgating a law on the 17th of June to sanction Chinese officials guilty of the “mass internment” of Uighurs and placing on a blacklist on the 21st of July, 2020, eleven Chinese companies “implicated in human rights violations.” The simultaneous awareness-raising campaign launched from the 30th of June by members of the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China (IPAC),⁴⁶ as well as the joint declaration issued on the 30th of June by the United Kingdom and signed by 27 countries including France and Germany to alert Michelle Bachelet, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, about Chinese policy in Xinjiang. All these elements have given a mounting visibility to the deplorable situation with the Uighurs and a form of impetus for French politicians. Consequently, Jean-Yves Le Drian raised the tone on the 21st of July, denouncing before the French National Assembly the “unacceptable practices” by China, in front of the senators and, later, declaring on the 22nd of July towards these practices: “we condemn them with much firmness.” Jean-Yves Le Drian, whose particularly harsh tone on this question, which had already been well-known to France for several years, was unprecedented, also took the next step by intervening in front of the deputies on the 28th of July to request that this time an independent international mission be assembled under the leadership of the United Nations to investigate Chinese policy in Xinjiang. Even more recently, Emmanuel Macron replied to a letter on the 6th of September, 2020, sent to him in July and co-signed by around thirty parliamentarians, including the member of parliament Aurélien Taché (ex-LREM), qualifying “the internment camps, the massive detentions, disappearances, forced labour, forced sterilizations, destruction of Uyghur heritage and houses of worship, surveillance of the population and more globally the entire repressive system put in place in this region” as an “unacceptable practice” that the French state condemns “with the greatest firmness.” Many unprecedented statements from the mouth of a President that was not, until then, very keen on declaratory diplomacy, preferring to let French diplomats use harsh words in their various writings concerning the Chinese repressive apparatus while the executive published press releases and communiqués with more evasive rhetoric.

These different speeches on the Hong Kong crisis and the situation of the Uyghurs that, at first glance, appear very light in the face of the sanctions and actions taken by the United States, nonetheless reflect a change in French policy vis-à-vis human rights issues. In a certain way, the pandemic reinforced antagonisms already at work and the end of French naivety towards Beijing has finally taken shape.

The Pandemic: An Ailing France That Does Not Forgive

The epidemic itself comprises a problem between France and China. The lack of transparency on Beijing's side combined with very serious health consequences was initially ardently criticized in France: China warned the WHO very late even when a doctor in Wuhan, Li Wenliang, had already launched an alert in December 2019 but then had been ordered to be quiet by the local authorities. It was recently proven that Xi Jinping had information about a potential outbreak well before the 7th of January, since that was the date of the politburo standing committee meeting (中央政治局常务委员会分开会议) for the purposes to discuss a management strategy for the coronavirus from Wuhan.⁴⁷ France along with twenty-six other members of the EU were amongst sixty-two countries to support Australia in its request for an independent investigation into the epidemic of the virus. It was also during an interview with the Financial Times on the 16th of April, 2020, that Emmanuel Macron expressed his disagreement with Chinese practices in managing the crisis, showing himself particularly critical. He stated, “[t]here is no comparison between countries where information flows freely and citizens can criticize their governments and those where the truth has been suppressed. Given these differences, the choices made and what China is today, which I do not respect, let us not be naive enough to say that it has handled this much better. We do not know. There are

clearly things that have happened that we do not know.”⁴⁸ On the 3rd of September, 2020, the director-general of the WHO, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, correspondingly announced the creation of an independent review committee that includes Michel Kazatchkine, the French AIDS specialist. The latter declared, "The WHO has held a certain complacency with regards to China. And the fact that she sent a mission to China and then was so laudatory of the way China responded [to the outbreak] creates unease and a sense of bias, it cannot be denied."⁴⁹

In addition to this lack of transparency denounced by Paris, there is particularly aggressive diplomacy on the part of China. This aggressive diplomacy, especially at the beginning of the pandemic, mixed health assistance and a denigrating discourse of the West on the part of Beijing. In effect, in being the first contaminated and possessing several weeks to curb the wave of contamination that then affected Europe and the rest of the world, China took advantage of this chronological shift to make its management of the crisis a health model to export globally. On the 16th of April, Xi Jinping had 36 communications with other leaders around the world. Every day, the CCTV-1 television news broadcasted images of Chinese parcels routed to countries around the world, on which was written the phrase "China aid for shared future," or "Chinese aid for a shared future." More than 170 Chinese health specialists travelled to Europe, Africa and Southeast Asia. The “mask diplomacy,” an instrument of rewriting history by Beijing, whose international reputation has been tarnished by a virus originating from Chinese soil, and greatly displeased by its self-interested character, contrasts sharply with the Taiwanese aid given in discretion and humility.⁵⁰ The divisions within Europe that arose then are not new, but Beijing has certainly been able to use them for its own health aid campaign. Serbia, an EU candidate, showed itself the most enthusiastic with its relationship with Beijing being characterized by China as “an iron friendship.” President Aleksandar Vucic, at the head of a country that had already installed Huawei surveillance technologies in three Serbian cities,⁵¹ asserted on the 15th of March, 2020, “European solidarity does not exist, it is a fairy tale on paper.”⁵² Similarly, Luigi Di Maio, a member of the Eurosceptic *Cinque Stelle* party, “declared the aid bolsters the strategy of his party, which seeks to distance itself from the European Union.”⁵³ These are all elements that France did not like seeing that it champions European integration and cooperation against China.

The aggressiveness in the Chinese discourse was also unprecedented as it used disinformation at the expense of diplomacy deeply annoying European countries. Zhao Lijian, spokesman for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, suggested as early as mid-March that the virus could have been imported by the US military into Hubei province. Some official Chinese media outlets also said that the virus may have originated in Italy and not Wuhan, reporting the so-called statements of a prominent Italian researcher, nephrologist Giuseppe Remuzzi, who established the truth by speaking with *Il Foglio*. More recently, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said during his 27th of August, 2020, visit to Norway that the virus was not necessarily of Chinese origin, a statement that contrasts sharply with the latest comments by the virologist Li Meng-Yan, the latter declaring on the 12th of September, 2020, to have the evidence that the virus was conceived in the laboratory. President Jair Bolsonaro's son, who accused China of opacity, was also insulted by the Chinese ambassador to Brazil for having contracted "a mental virus" after he met Donald Trump in Florida. And Paris was not spared by these undiplomatic remarks. On the 12th of April, 2020, the Chinese ambassador to France, Lu Shaye,⁵⁴ published on the official website a letter (undoubtedly written by the ambassador himself) entitled: “Restore distorted facts. Observations of a Chinese diplomat stationed in Paris.” The text boasted both the Chinese management of the pandemic, criticized the measures taken by Western societies, attacked "Western, anti-Chinese [politicians and the media outlets] [...] inventing lies,” and finished by personally attacking France, accusing nursing staff in French public nursing homes (EHPAD) of having “abandoned their posts overnight [...] leaving their residents to die of hunger and disease.” All these statements led the Quai d'Orsay to summon Lu Shaye by telephone on the

14th of April and to adopt a firm tone in the face of these “remarks [that] do not conform to the quality of the bilateral relationship”⁵⁵ between the France and China.

On the 8th of September, 2020, at the Great Hall of People (北京人民大会堂), the “relentless struggle to achieve the great victory of socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era”⁵⁶ (夺取新时代中国特色社会主义伟大胜利而不懈奋斗) was also celebrated, along with the “victory in Wuhan, victory in Hubei, victory in China” (武汉必胜、湖北必胜、中国必胜). During this ceremony, it was once again an attempt to self-praise the management of the health crisis as an indication of the superiority of the Chinese political system over the Western world. “China's fight against the epidemic has plainly demonstrated the Chinese spirit, Chinese strength and Chinese responsibility” (中国的抗疫斗争，充分展现了中国精神、中国力量、中国担当), said Xi Jinping moreover adding that “the fight against the novel coronavirus epidemic has achieved major strategic results, altogether demonstrating the significant advantages of the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese socialist system” (抗击新冠肺炎疫情斗争取得重大战略成果，充分展现了中国共产党领导和我国社会主义制度的显著优势). Finally, the failure of Western societies in managing the health crisis was mentioned more implicitly: “An important aspect of measuring the success and superiority of a country's system is to see if it can deliver orders from all sides and organize the respective parties to face major risks and challenges [...] This fight against the epidemic has ardently demonstrated the superiority of the national system and the national governance system of our country” (衡量一个个家的制度是否成功、是否优越，一个重要方面就是看其在重大风险挑战面前，能不能号令四面、组织八方 共同应对【。。。】这次抗疫斗争有力彰显了我国国家制度和国国家优越性。).

Four personalities distinguished themselves during the celebration: Zhong Nanshan, respiratory disease expert, Zhang Boli, promoter of traditional Chinese medicine, Zhang Dingyu, the head of the hospital in Wuhan Jinyintan, and Chen Wei, a military scientist. In all, 500 establishments, 186 CCP members and 14 posthumous members, together with 1,499 people and 150 grassroots party organizations were also rewarded. Li Wenliang, declared a “martyr” in April, was not one of them, however. Xi Jinping did not fail to include in this “national victory” the Hongkongers and especially the Taiwanese, whose management was nonetheless built in opposition to that of China – transparent, peaceful and more performant – since Taiwan did not even pass the mark of ten dead. In a subtle attempt to reduce their success, Xi Jinping stated that "I would like to express my deep gratitude to compatriots in Hong Kong, compatriots in Macao, compatriots in Taiwan and overseas Chinese who actively provided assistance" (向踊跃提供援助的香港同胞、偶们同胞、台湾同胞以及海外华侨华人，表示衷心的感谢).

In his speech, Xi Jinping also spoke of the health aid distributed around the world, echoing the rhetoric put in place all the way back in March. “From the 15th of March to the 6th of September, China exported a total of 151.5 billion masks, 1.4 billion protective suits, 230 million glasses, 209,000 ventilators, 470 million test kits and 8,041 infrared thermometers [...] China has helped save the lives of thousands of people around the world”(从3月15日至9月6日，我国总计出口口罩 1515 亿只、防护服 14 亿件、护目镜 2.3 亿个、呼吸机 20.9 万台、检测试剂盒 4.7 亿人分、红外测温仪 8014 万件【。。。】中国以实际行动帮助玩久了全球成千上万人的生命).

The term that has become fashionable to describe these bellicose diplomats is that of “wolf warriors,” in reference to the Chinese blockbuster “Wolf Warriors” released in 2015 and featuring Chinese soldiers saving the world. And, if the media around the world were

questioning in April and May the long-term results of this aggressive rhetoric on the part of Beijing, it seems that recent news events confirm the counterproductive aspect of the latter, against which various Western, but, also, Chinese intellectuals (for instance, Shi Zan, director at the China Foreign Affairs University in Beijing, or the economist, Hua Sheng) had previously warned China.

The Opening of the Aix Office Coupled with the Failure of Wang Yi's Diplomatic Visit

As it were, the recent visit of Foreign Minister Wang Yi to Paris on the 28th of August, supposedly to smooth things over, prepare for the meeting between Xi Jinping and European leaders on the 14th of September and appease the tensions between France and Beijing, seems to have resulted in an economic and political failure for China. Unsurprisingly, the various aforementioned issues were the key issues Wang Yi preferred not to dwell on (South China Sea, Hong Kong, Xinjiang, trade deficit, pandemic, investment problem) and, on the contrary, wanted to address Huawei. There have been many interpretations of this meeting with the French head of state. Yet, although criticized by part of the French and Western media for his silence (at least in public) on the question of the Uyghur community and the draconian crackdown on freedoms in Hong Kong, Emmanuel Macron has in fact remained faithful to his political pragmatism that may sometimes be interpreted as ambiguity. Although not a supporter of the great speeches on human rights that only risk damaging Franco-Chinese relations, he still made no public statement following the visit of Wang Yi as is customary. Likewise, the Quai d'Orsay contented itself with disseminating a press release in which were written in a very laconic manner the following words: “the Minister recalled France's serious concerns regarding the deterioration of human rights in China, especially Hong Kong and Xinjiang.” Once again, the absence of a press conference was indicative of the French position distancing itself from a China who aggravates on several points. Finally, the announcement of the opening of the new office in France by the Taiwanese Minister of Foreign Affairs, Joseph Wu, delighting Tsai Ing-wen, arrived only three days before Wang Yi's arrival in Paris, was not done randomly but purposed to send a new signal to Beijing. Wang Yi had been a guest on the 30th of August at the IFRI think tank (the day before, the facade had been tagged "Stop Uyghur Genocide" and then immediately covered up) where he just repeated the usual speech about Hong Kong and Xinjiang; like in the following way, “what happens there is a matter of Chinese internal affairs, and other countries should not interfere.” As for the forced sterilization of Uyghur women mentioned by Member of the European Parliament (MEP) and former Minister of European Affairs, Nathalie Loiseau, Wang Yi repeated Liu Xiaoming's remarks, insisting that the population in the region had increased since 1949, without mentioning of the Han/Uyghur ratio. Lastly, in regards to the agreement on investment so dear to Emmanuel Macron and the other European countries, his response did not inspire confidence, knowing that, according to him, it was “not useful to drown in the technical details,” yet so often essential in the drafting of this kind of text.

This “political distancing” (coupled with the “social distancing” as evidenced by the photo of Emmanuel Macron touching Wang Yi solely with the elbow that has aroused many reactions, including the negative comments of Raphaël Glucksmann or Dilnur Reyhan) also has had a European echo. Italy, the country that was the first G7 country to sign a framework agreement comprising 29 different protocols on the "silk roads" in March 2019, was the first stop on Wang Yi's journey. While two important trade agreements, one on the export of food products by Italy, the other on the supply of natural gas by China, have been signed by Luigi Di Maio to strengthen the bilateral cooperation pact, the President of the Council and Ministers, Giuseppe Conte, refused to speak with Wang Yi on the phone. On the other hand, Luigi Di Maio did not remain silent on the current situation in Hong Kong. At the same time, Nathan Law, president of the pro-democracy Demosisto party dissolved following the passage of the National Security Law,

was attending a press conference on Chinese totalitarianism held in Rome. When Wang Yi visited the Netherlands, various demonstrators shouted “Wang Yi go back home” as he passed, while the Foreign Affairs Committee in the Parliament invited him to come and discuss human rights issues. The Dutch Prime Minister, Mark Rutte, also did not spare Wang Yi, addressing the issue of Hong Kong and Xinjiang at a joint press conference, as was the case with Stef Block, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, during a conversation that was supposed to be devoted above all to economic exchanges. In Norway, a country not membered of the EU that holds strategic interest in the eyes of China on the grounds of its geographical location in the Arctic, but, with which, Beijing was cold since it awarded the Nobel Peace Prize to Liu Xiaobo in 2010, Wang Yi could not help himself reiterating threats as some claimed the prize could have been given this year to pro-democracy opponents in Hong Kong, opposing “strongly against any attempt to use the Nobel Prize to interfere in China's internal affairs.” Wang Yi once again made himself the spokesperson for a Chinese propagandist rhetoric that had bored many countries in Europe at the start of the crisis, decreeing that he was not certain that Covid-19 originated from China. In Germany, three deputies, Gyde Jensen (FDP, Liberal Democrat Party), Maragarete Bause (Greens) and Michael Brand (CDU) wrote a joint letter calling on Foreign Minister Heiko Maas not to “allow himself to be exploited.” Heiko Maas recently affirmed his support for the Hongkongers and the Uyghurs by asking China, as represented by Wang Yi, to “allow the United Nations to send an independent observer to the camps where the Uyghurs are located,”⁵⁷ but, also, to organize elections in Hong Kong. In front of the Ministry for Foreign Office, hundreds of people demonstrated, including Nathan Law. And during a press conference, on the 1st of September, Wang Yi could not help himself and condemned the visit to Taiwan by the Czech delegation headed by Senate Speaker Milos Vystreil, declaring that “[t]his is a flagrant act of provocation that crossed the line. It is an act of support for Taiwan's secessionism [...] The Chinese government and the Chinese people will neither adopt a laissez-faire attitude nor will sit idly by, they will make it a heavy price to pay for his short-sighted behaviour and political opportunism.” These threats were immediately reacted upon by the chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee in the Bundestag, Norbert Röttgen (CDU), claiming that this was a “diplomatic and democratic affront.” Heiko Maas also provided support and spoke on behalf of a common European front: “We Europeans act in close cooperation. [...] We offer respect to our international partners and we expect exactly the same. Threats have no place here.”

The most resounding element for Taiwan was the visit from the 30th of August to the 4th of September of the Czech delegation of ninety people, including entrepreneurs, politicians, journalists and scientists headed by the president of the Senate Milos Vystreil.⁵⁸ The visit, following that of US Secretary of Health and Human Services, Alex Azar, was very symbolic in itself and conveyed a strong message of friendship. Though, Milos Vystreil went even further than his American counterpart. During a speech given on the 1st of September at the National Taiwan University (台大), he declared in Mandarin, “I am a Taiwanese” (“我是台灣人”), insisting on an essential point that is yet so frequently neglected by many other European countries – that the Taiwanese identity is distinguishable from the Chinese identity, certainly on the political and cultural level, oftentimes unknown to foreigners. In this speech, he also expressed “the hope that other high political representatives, for example from European countries or the European Union, will progressively become aware of their ‘democratic backwardness’ and will also soon visit Taiwan.”

The visits on the 3rd to the 4th of September to southern Europe by Yang Jiechi, head of international relations in the Communist Party, were not more conclusive. Like other European leaders with Wang Yi, Spanish Foreign Minister, Arancha Gonzales, left the issue of 5G and Huawei in suspense, preferring to raise the situation in Xinjiang, Hong Kong and stress the importance of freedom of navigation in the South China Sea. On this last issue, the Greek Prime

Minister, Kyriakos Mitsotakis, was also very clear, declaring that "Greece can and wants to discuss the definition of the maritime zones in the Aegean Sea on the basis of international law and not of threats." If Turkey is the first country targeted by these statements, it is a thinly veiled accusation against China's practices in the South China Sea in defiance of the international judgment of the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA), who ruled in favour of the Philippines in 2016.

More recently, in a Tribune published on the 14th of September, 2020, in *Le Monde*, nine European experts and representatives, for instance Nathalie Loiseau, Raphaël Glucksmann or Reinhard Bütikofer, called the "European Union to revise its "One China policy" and support Taiwan" and "make it clear to China that if it is moving towards the use of force, it runs serious risks, especially the one of a political and economic break with European democracies that will not submit to its diktat". On the same date, was held the virtual meeting between Ursula von der Leyen, Charles Michel, Angela Merkel and Xi Jinping, during which EU discontents regarding the lack of Chinese efforts to find an Agreement on Investment, the human rights situation in Xinjiang, Tibet and Hong Kong, as well as the pollution caused by Chinese coal factories, were much more visible than the "tangible results" mentioned by European representatives through some circumstantial remarks.

Thusly, and without stating as such, like Cui Hongjian, that "France has always been the designer and leader of European integration and [that] the Franco-Chinese relationship has always had a particular influence and role in Sino-European relations,"⁵⁹ Emmanuel Macron's Chinese policy has finally neared its objective, which was the establishment of a common European front and not only a lonesome French approach vis-à-vis China. A common front that, in reality, has more power and room for manoeuvre in opposition to a country of more than 1.4 billion inhabitants and, which, as the world's second economic and military power, a permanent member of the Security Council, the WTO, the G20 and other international organizations, remains an essential power with which France and Europe have every interest in cooperating without submitting to it.

Without being revolutionary in of itself, the opening of the second Taipei representative office in Aix-en-Provence only takes on more importance in the context of these substantial Sino-French tensions that, catalysed by the pandemic, seem to induce a change in French policy on several issues. Admittedly, the French response to China on various points like the Taiwanese question is more reserve than that of the Czech Republic or other European players and, certainly, than that of the United States. France's ambiguity, similar to the strategic ambiguity of the United States vis-à-vis Taiwan and, which, Donald Trump seems ready to reconsider, surely can sometimes pass for weakness and, precisely, a lack of strategic considerations.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, if for the aforesaid economic and political reasons, Emmanuel Macron must sometimes show pusillanimity and cannot openly declare himself Taiwanese, he does not become Chinese.

¹ Jean Giraudoux, *l'Impromptu de Paris* (Paris: Bernard Grosset, 1937), 67.

² Dorian Malovic, "La France Soutient Taiwan et Met la Chine en Colère," *La Croix*, Aug. 27, 2020.

³ Collective, "L'OMS Doit Pleinement Collaborer Avec Taiwan," *l'Obs*, Mar. 31, 2020.

⁴ AFP, "Défroit de Taiwan : Incident Naval Entre la France et la Chine," *La Croix*, Apr. 25, 2019.

⁵ Minister Florence Parly, "France and Security in the Indo-Pacific," *Ministry of the French Armed Forces*, 2018. Although the Indo-Pacific region shifts the geo-strategic equilibrium from East Asia to the West and links further Asia to Europe, once the Red Sea has been crossed, the European country most concerned and the most involved

is France with its various overseas territories: In the southern zone of the Indian Ocean, France possesses the islands of Mayotte and Reunion, the Scattered Islands, as well as the southern lands and arctic; in the Pacific, near Australia, New Caledonia, Wallis and Futuna, Clipperton and French Polynesia constitute also strategic territories (the whole representing 33,000 square kilometers), whether in terms of Exclusive Economic Zone (approximately 9 million square kilometres in total), country nationals (1.6 million citizens in 2018), or military deployment zones. Consequently, the French Armed Forces in the South Indian Ocean (FAZSOI) consist of 2,000 servicemen, the Armed Forces of New Caledonia (FANC) consist of 1,660 servicemen, and the Armed Forces in French Polynesia (FAPF) consist of 1,180 servicemen. Added to this are the forward military presence forces in Djibouti (FFDj) and the United Arab Emirates (FFEAU), which bringing together 2,100 servicemen. In this last zone, essential for world trade, rich in fishery resources, polymetallic nodules and hydrocarbons, France must respond to a number of challenge, such as: illicit trafficking, terrorism, environmental security and the protection of the economy. The European Intervention Initiative (EI2) proposed by Emmanuel Macron and launched in June 2018 is a first step towards a more European presence and not only a French one in the Indo-Pacific with nine countries that include Belgium, Denmark, the Estonia, Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain (and the United Kingdom at the time) declaring themselves in favour of this project by signing a letter of intent.

⁶ Romain Mielcarek, "Le Diplomatie du Rafale," *Le Monde Diplomatique*, Dec. 1, 2018.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Collective, "Australie et France Signent Leur Colossal Contrat pour 12 Sous-marins," *Capital*, Feb. 11, 2019. The accord follows the signing of a \$38 billion deal to supply submarines to the Australian Navy in 2016.

⁹ France, in particular, is conducting joint exercises with the Japanese Self-Defense Forces, as was the case in May 2017 in Guam and the Southern Mariana Islands with the United States and the United Kingdom. Between France and Japan various agreements have been signed, like on information security in 2011, on defense equipment and the transfer of technologies in 2015 and on the acquisition and cross-service agreement (ACSCA) in 2018, facilitating cooperation chiefly in the context of joint exercises.

¹⁰ Guillaume Delacroix, "L'Inde Prend Possession de Ses Premiers Rafale," *Le Monde*, July 29, 2020.

¹¹ Lieutenant Lise Moricet, "PEGASE : l'Armée de l'Air Déploie ses Ailes," Aug. 28, 2018, <https://www.defense.gouv.fr/air/dossiers/pegase-l-armee-de-l-air-deploie-ses-ailes2/etape-6-le-retour-en-france>

¹² This program would have the potential to sell no less than 600 devices over the next 20 years.

¹³ Michel Cabirol, "Airbus et KAI Vont Vendre à l'Export les Hélicoptères Sud-Coréens LCH/LAH," *La Tribune*, Novembre 4, 2015.

¹⁴ Yves Bourdillon, "Paris Défend la Liberté de Navigation Face à Pékin," *Les Echos*, Juin 3, 2019.

¹⁵ Jon Grevatt, "Indonesia Announces Strong Increase in 2021 Defence Budget," *Janes*, Aug. 18, 2020.

¹⁶ Michel Cabirol, "Et Si l'Indonésie s'Offrait des Rafale et des Sous-marins Scorpène ?," *La Tribune*, Jan. 17, 2020. As quoted from the article, "[I]n 10 years, Paris sold 1.36 billion euros of military equipment to Jakarta with a peak in 2013 (480 million euros). That particular year, the arms manufacture company MBDA sold a short range surface-to-air weapon system (Mistral 3) for more than 200 million euros while Nexter placed 37 Caesar systems (115 million euros)."

¹⁷ President Emmanuel Macron, "Déclaration de M. Emmanuel Macron, Président de la République, sur Les Relations Franco-Chinoises, à Xi'an," Jan. 8, 2018, <https://www.vie-publique.fr/discours/204688-declaration-de-m-emmanuel-macron-president-de-la-republique-sur-les-r>

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ This meeting brought together by videoconference the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, the President of the Council, Charles Michel and Xi Jinping, as well as the Chinese Prime Minister, Li Keqiang. Ursula von der Leyen had been very clear, expressing her dissatisfaction concerning the trade deficit between the EU-China, the lack of an accord on investments and the current situation in Hong Kong. The report of this meeting recalled the notion of a "systemic rivalry" with China, which made its first appearance in the Joint Communication "on EU-China Relations: A Strategic Vision" in 2019.

²¹ INSEE, "Solde CAF/FAB des échanges de la France," <https://www.insee.fr/fr/statistiques/4277821?sommaire=4318291>

²² Direction Générale des Douanes et Droits Indirects, "Données Pays Selon La Nomenclature Agrégée : CN-Chine," http://lekiosque.finances.gouv.fr/site_fr/A129/data_brutes.asp?id=P50CN_Z5550_Z5500

²³ In 2018, the FDI derived from China was 175.3 billion euros compared to 59 billion euros for the FDI coming from Europe, showing a deep asymmetry.

²⁴ "Investissements Croisés France-Chine : Entre Dynamisme et Dissymétrie," *DG Trésor*, Jan. 2018, <https://www.tresor.economie.gouv.fr/Articles/32cc1416-97e6-4343-8423-826e4a3d2cb9/files/a851cead-dce8-408a-8bdd-c16a8e867b4d>

²⁵ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, "Stocks d'IDE Sortant par Pays Partenaire," <https://data.oecd.org/fr/fdi/stocks-d-ide-sortant-par-pays-partenaire.htm#indicator-chart>

²⁶ Alice Ekman, *Rouge Vif: L'idéal Communiste Chinois*, (Paris: l'Observatoire, 2020), 224.

²⁷ During the economic crisis of 2008, the container terminal at the port of Piraeus was acquired by China COSCO Shipping becoming the majority shareholder of the port. In 2016, Athens opposed a EU statement criticising China's attitude in the South China Sea, in addition to vetoing a European resolution condemning Beijing's

positions vis-à-vis human rights. In 2015, Athens, Zagreb and Budapest insisted that China not be mentioned directly in a European declaration about a court ruling that invalidated Chinese claims in the South China Sea.

²⁸ President Emmanuel Macron, “Déclaration de M. Emmanuel Macron, Président de la République sur les Relations entre l’Union Européenne et la Chine et la Préservation du Multilatéralisme, à Paris,” Mar. 26, 2019, <https://www.vie-publique.fr/discours/268496-emmanuel-macron-26032019-ue-chine-multilateralisme>

²⁹ In their statement on the 17th of June, Thierry Breton, Internal Market Commissioner and Margrethe Vestager, Competition Commissioner, presented their different projects to protect Europe from foreign companies through public subsidies. The Commission is in reality preparing a directive for 2021 that could lead foreign companies that do not respect competition rules to acquire a penalty, an acquisition ban, an exclusion from calls for tendering public contracts or even to part way from their activities. Different criteria may be applied, like revenue, market size, and carbon adjustment at borders.

³⁰ Jean-Pierre Strobants, “Le Poids de la Chine dans l’UE Inquiète la Cour des Comptes Européenne,” *Le Monde*, Sep. 11, 2020.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Cécile Ducourtieux, “Le Geste de Londres Envers les Hongkongais,” *Le Monde*, Jun. 2, 2020.

³³ Cécile Ducourtieux, “Montée des Tensions entre Londres et Pékin,” *Le Monde*, Jul. 9, 2020.

³⁴ Jacques Follorou, “Le Traitement de Faveur ‘des Amis Français de la Chine’ face au coronavirus,” *Le Monde*, Jul. 7, 2020.

³⁵ *Ibid.* The Directorate General for Internal Security (DGSI), the Central Service of Territorial Surveillance (SCRT) and the Directorate General for External Security (DGSE) provided the Élysée with information showing that the Chinese Ambassador, as well as Chinese consuls, have been ordered to favour “their French friends” at the apogee of the pandemic, by, as an example, donating masks and medical equipment. The city hall in the 13th arrondissement, where there is a large Chinese community, recently received 250,000 masks. Similarly, cities like Dijon, Nancy, Strasbourg or Besançon benefited from the mobilization of Chinese associations. Lastly, the embassy also encouraged “his French friends” to take advantage of the sister cities arrangement, as was the case between Papeete and the Changning district, the former receiving a donation of 50,000 masks, or between Réunion and Tianjin, the former receiving 350,000 surgical masks and 12,000 FFP2 masks. These political relationships being the case, the DGSE explicitly reiterates the strategic importance of Réunion due to its positioning in the Indian Ocean.

³⁶ A legislative proposal that incorporates most of the content of the amendments of the Pacte law rejected by the Senate was tabled in Parliament on the 20th of February, 2019, by the LREM group, and later adopted in July. The press qualifies the text as the “Huawei law,” ruining communication efforts on the subject so as not to offend China.

³⁷ Pierre Manière, “5G : la Chine appelle la France à ne pas limiter Huawei,” *La Tribune*, Feb. 9, 2020.

³⁸ Fabienne Schmitt and Florian Debes, “Il n’y aura pas un Bannissement Total de Huawei,” *Les Echos*, Jul. 6, 2020.

³⁹ Jean-Michel Bezat, “Le ‘doux commerce’ avec la Chine,” *Le Monde*, Sep. 1, 2020.

⁴⁰ It was only in his speech on the 8th of January, 2018, that Emmanuel Macron evoked the rules of international law concerning the situation in Crimea and Jerusalem without, however, referring to the issues related to Beijing, particularly in the South China Sea, despite the judgment rendered in July 2016 by the Permanent Court of Arbitration.

⁴¹ “Droits de l’Homme : Macron ne veut pas ‘donner des leçons’ à la Chine,” *L’Orient Le Jour*, Jan. 10, 2018.

⁴² “Hongkong : des députés LRM critiquent le ‘silence’ de la France,” *Le Monde*, Aug. 15, 2019.

⁴³ “Loi sur la Sécurité Nationale à Hong Kong : Pékin Met en Garde Paris Après les Propos de Jean-Yves Le Drian,” *France Info*, Jul. 9, 2020.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ “Pourquoi La Cause Ouïghoure Peine à Prendre en France,” *Novastan*, Apr. 16, 2020.

⁴⁶ This Alliance bringing together several parliamentarians of different political tendencies arriving from ten countries around the world (United Kingdom, United States, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, Sweden, Norway, Japan, and MEPs Reinhard Butikofer or Miriam Lexmann) was founded on the 5th of June, 2020. The aim of the Alliance is to offer concrete responses towards Chinese policies, notably to better coordinate the policies of different countries in an effort to respond to human rights violations by Beijing (Xinjiang, Tibet). The Alliance is also interested in other themes, such as: new technologies (5G), sustainable development, trade, and questions of international law (South China Sea, Hong Kong). In terms of French parliamentarians, Senator André Gattolin (LREM), MEP Isabelle Florennes (Modem) and MEP Raphaël Glucksmann have joined IPAC.

⁴⁷ For more details, see the twitter account of Nectar Gan (<https://t.co/BePvfh6PoF>), who forwards evidence that at first instance, the report of the meeting published by Xinhua did not mention the coronavirus once (see the report at http://www.xinhuanet.com/2020-01/07/c_1125432339.htm), while in a second instance, Xi Jinping declared that during this same meeting he had raised the issue of the coronavirus (“1月7日，我主持分开中央政治局常委会会议时，就对新型冠状病毒肺炎疫情防控工作提出了要求”).

⁴⁸ Victor Mallet, Roula Khalaf, “Thinking the unthinkable,” *Financial Times*, Apr. 17, 2020.

⁴⁹ “OMS : L’enquête sur La Gestion de La Pandémie Décolle avec La Sélection de Onze Experts Mondiaux,” *Sud Ouest*, Sep. 3, 2020.

⁵⁰ Jaushieh Joseph Wu, “Il Est Temps D’accueillir Enfin Taiwan au Sein du Système des Nations Unies,” *Le Monde*, Sep. 4, 2020. By the end of June, Taiwan had already donated a total of 51 million surgical masks, 1.16 million N95 masks, 35,000 forehead thermometers, 600,000 gowns and other medical supplies to more than 80 countries. This aid had been provided without aggressive propaganda, as was the case with China decreeing that the aid given to other nations was a sign of the “superiority” of its system of governance, if we use the terminology of some media officials from the *Global Times*.

⁵¹ Referring to roughly 1000 facial recognition cameras installed in more than 800 places in Belgrade on the model of the “safe city,” added to the other loans made by Serbia from the Chinese for the purposes to build highways, railways, military equipment, industries, etc. In 2018, they represented 12% of the country’s external debt.

⁵² L.S., “Entre Belgrade et Pékin, ‘Une Amitié de Fer,’” *Libération*, Jun. 19, 2020.

⁵³ “La Chine Tente de Redorer son Blason, Mais Gare à L’effet Boomerang,” *Courrier International*, Mai 3, 2020.

⁵⁴ It should be noted that Lu Shaye is none other than the former ambassador to Canada, who distinguished himself by his statements during the arrest of Meng Wanzhou, the vice-president of Huawei, in 2018, when he had spoken of “white supremacy” to denounce Ottawa's decision.

⁵⁵ Isabelle Lasserre, “L’Ambassadeur de Chine en France Recadré par Jean-Yves Le Drian,” *Le Figaro*, Apr. 15, 2020.

⁵⁶ The entire version of the discourse in Chinese is available at the following link:

http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/leaders/2020-09/08/c_1126467958.htm

⁵⁷ Benjamin Lawson, “Oùighours et Hongkong : l’Allemagne Lance un Appel à la Chine,” *La Nouvelle Tribune*, Sep. 8, 2020.

⁵⁸ “La Visite à Taiwan D’une Délégation Tchèque Provoque la Colère de Pékin,” *Courrier International*, Aug. 31, 2020. It should be noted that the Czech Republic, which had expected a lot of Chinese investments ultimately only to be disappointed, does not depend economically on China, as may be the case with other European countries. An economist has estimated that “a little less than 1% drop in GDP [would occur] in the event of an economic embargo from China.”

⁵⁹ “Cui Hongjian : L’exceptionnelle Visite d’Emmanuel Macron en Chine,” (崔洪建：马克龙破例元月访华), *China Institute of International Studies*, Jan. 3, 2018.

⁶⁰ Ben Hall, “Emmanuel Macron’s low profile on China is strategic,” *Financial Times*, Aug. 19, 2020.