DGAP POLICY BRIEF

How "Democratic Security" can Protect Europe from a Rising China

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The Communist Party of China (CPC) plans for China to achieve effective global dominance by 2049. It is using the major global crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic to secure strategic advantage through propaganda and disinformation, assertive, sometimes aggressive diplomacy, pursuing targeted investments, and offering "health cooperation." The CPC has long targeted European business and political elites to build constituencies of support. Europe must counter by building robust societies based on core democratic values.

— The CPC's massive information control system contributed to the catastrophic spread of COVID-19. It is increasingly impacting Europe too. Party-cultivated networks in strategic sectors, including science and technology, deepen the challenge.

— During the acute phase of the crisis at home, China hoarded PPE and medical supplies, causing shortages in Europe. This raises questions about global supply chain security.

— Europe can protect its interests by countering disinformation, auditing and diversifying supply chains, building trusted alliances, screening foreign investments, clearly labeling propaganda sources, cracking down on United Front activity, prohibiting Chinese tech and taking cybersecurity seriously.

— European governments should build democratic security[1] in concert with small and medium countries around the world with a set of robust, yet flexible, society-wide responses to protect democratic sovereignty.

THE FLIGHT FORWARD

As the full scale of the pandemic became apparent in Europe in February 2020, the CPC was already deploying well-honed propaganda and disinformation tools at home to gain practical and strategic high ground overseas, and to control the narrative about the health crisis. The result was a blizzard of diplomatic, information and economic activity at multiple levels including by the CPC General Secretary Xi Jinping, Premier Li Keqiang, Foreign Minister Wang Yi, Chinese embassies overseas, and the United Front apparatus.[2]

The CPC pumps millions of social media posts into its domestic environment annually to "distract the public and change the subject."[3] This effort has gone global via new networks of phony accounts, on Twitter for example, designed to amplify pro-CPC virus messaging. A flurry of anonymous bot accounts sprang up which were linked to Chinese diplomats in Europe and party-state media, forging new networks with existing or newly established "official messaging" accounts belonging to the Foreign Ministry in Beijing and Chinese official media outlets.

The result of this campaign is a network of multiple overlapping or disconnected mechanisms that amplify disinformation and propaganda. Key messages include that the virus did not come from China, only China can save other countries, and accusations that criticism of China is racist, rather than being about CPC policies or actions.

These networked CPC voices serve to drive the global conversation away from important issues such as actual events in China, including the censorship that contributed to the delay in reporting, and early cover-up of the virus. In propaganda environments, what is *not* said is as important as what is. China's timeline[4] of the virus begins on December 27, 2019, though another report[5] says cases dated back at least a month earlier, to November 17. Recently, the World Health Organization revised its account to make clear China did not inform it of the virus; instead the WHO picked up a report from other sources and questioned the Chinese government, which confirmed the problem some days later. In official communications, China continues to present itself as a hapless first victim of the virus, likening it to a "force majeure."

Offers of health cooperation to foreign governments and institutions then surged, as part of a so-called "Health Silk Road" (健康丝绸之路) which has been part of China's geo-strategic Belt and Road Initiative (BRI, 一带一路) for some years now. The former has found its moment to shine during the pandemic.[6] In addition, the CPC declared a "people's war" on the virus, expanding the established Maoist concept of permanent warfare. According to a report on the website of the Ministry of Defense, the virus "opened up a new realm of the people's war."[7]

DIPLOMACY AND GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

In China's "whole of state" system (举国体制, in English "whole of government" or "whole of society"), institutions and policies are interconnected, and action can be swift. The party's diplomatic policy, known as "Great Power Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics" (中国特色大国外交理论), aims to shift the global order to place China center-stage, replacing competitive international relations with "harmonious" relations ultimately shaped and directed by the CPC, backed by its sweeping concept of state security, which is de-

1 For an early examination of "democratic security," a concept neglected in the decades after the fall of the Berlin Wall as democracies fell into an "end of history" sleep, see: Robert C. Johansen, "Real Security Is Democratic Security" in "Alternatives: Global, Local, Political," Vol. 16, No. 2, "The Global Context of Democratization" (Spring 1991), pp. 209-241; https://www.jstor.org/stable/40644712 See also: Max Steuer, "Democratic Security," Romaniuk, Thapa and Marton (eds), The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Global Security Studies, 2019. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.

2 Alex Joske, "The party speaks for you: Foreign interference and the Chinese Communist party's united front system," Australian Strategic Policy Institute, Policy Brief 32/2020, June 8, 2020. https://www.aspi.org.au/report/party-speaks-you

3 Gary King, Jennifer Pan, Margaret E. Roberts, "How the Chinese Government Fabricates Social Media Posts for Strategic Distraction, Not Engaged Argument," American Political Science Review, Vol. 111 Issue 3, August 2017; https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/american-political-science-review/article/how-the-chinese-government-fabricates-social-media-posts-for-strategic-distraction-not-engaged-argument/4662DB26E2685BAF1485F14369BD137C

4 Xinhua, "Fighting COVID-19: China in Action," June 7, 2020. http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-06/07/c_139120424.htm Accessed July 6, 2020.

5 Josephine Ma, "Coronavirus: China's first confirmed COVID-19 case traced back to November 17," South China Morning Post, Mar. 13, 2020. https://www.scmp.com/news/china/society/article/3074991/coronavirus-chinas-first-confirmed-covid-19-case-traced-back Accessed July 6, 2020.

6 For the political-strategic nature of the BRI, see: Nadège Rolland, "Mapping the Footprint of Belt and Road influence operations," Sinopsis, Aug. 12, 2019. https://sinopsis.cz/en/rolland-bri-influence-operations/

7 PRC Ministry of Defense Newspaper, "From Fighting the Virus, Seeing Future People's Wars" Apr. 8, 2020. http://www.mod.gov.cn/jmsd/2020-04/08/content_4863290.htm Accessed July 6, 2020.

signed to have global reach and to be at least partially pre-emptive in nature.[8] The crisis "injects inner meaning" to the BRI policy, Foreign Minister Wang Yi said in April in an article in *Qiushi* (Seeking Truth) – a CPC theory magazine.[9]

On January 5, 2020, even as the virus was spreading in China and around the world – aided by approximately 5 million people who traveled from the city of Wuhan to national and international destinations before the city was locked down on January 23 –, the Central Party History and Documents Research Institute in Beijing published a book titled "Excerpts of Xi Jinping's Thought on Great Power Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics". The book defines China's goals as achieving "national rejuvenation," reshaping global governance, and ensuring foreign affairs work does not stray from "central party" control, which is code for Xi and the standing committee of the Politburo keeping a firm grip on foreign affairs.[10]

This interconnected vision is also expressed in Xi Jinping's counter-universalist theory of global governance – the "community of human destiny" (人类命运共同体). The "community of human destiny," which Xi first publicly spoke about in a speech at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations in 2013, seeks to replace, or at least "repurpose," the post-1945 world order to the benefit of China.[11]

Within China, the party's legitimacy also rests on its ability to deliver healthcare to its citizens. So China's global "health cooperation" has gained new urgency since the party seeks to protect its domestic power by shaping its external environment.[12] "China will actively strengthen its 'One Belt One Road' health cooperation in order to build a 'Health Silk Road' together," Foreign Minister Wang wrote in the *Qiushi* article.

One example of stepped up "health cooperation" activity in recent months was a telephone call between Xi and Finnish President Sauli Niinistö, during which Xi offered to deepen public health cooperation with Finland, referenced China's vision of a "human destiny community," and assured Niinistö that China would supply essential medical goods again if needed, according to *Xinhua*.[13]

In the same call, Xi reportedly said, "China is prioritizing the resumption and expansion of medical supply production. This will help keep the global industrial and supply chains stable and contribute to international cooperation against the disease and stability of the global economy". In the transcript of the call, Xi refers more than once to globalization, showing how important it is to the CPC. China is keen to continue the trading terms of the World Trade Organization, which it joined in 2001, but which the United States says China is gaming.

Importantly, Xi also made clear that he wanted Finland to continue to deliver knowledge and technology to China, including in "ICT and life sciences." The CPC is anxious to make sure the virus does not disrupt its global, decades-old efforts to import technology and know-how into China. The Belgian security service, VSSE, said in early May 2020 that, from China's point of view, "As part of the ambitious 'Made in China 2025' project, which provides for rapid development of know-how in China itself, all available means must be used to import as much knowledge as possible into China."[14]

LOOKING FORWARD TO 2049

The year 2049 will mark the 100th anniversary of the 1949 Communist revolution. By then, the CPC aims to achieve "socialist modernization and national rejuve-

8   The extraterritorial nature of the CPC's concept of state security is clearly spelled out in the new, "National Security Law" for Hong Kong, passed on June 30, 2020. See Art. 38.

9   Foreign Minister Wang Yi (in Chinese, original publication), "Taking Xi Jinping's Foreign Policy Thought as a Guide, Push and Build the 'Human Destiny Community' via Global Cooperation in Fighting the Virus," Qiushi (Seeking Truth) magazine, Apr. 15, 2020; http://www.gov.cn/guowuyuan/2020-04/15/content_5502818.htm In English: "Following Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy to build a community with a shared future for mankind through international cooperation against COVID-19," China Daily, Apr. 16, 2020. https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202004/16/WS5e97b899a3105d50a3d16958.html Accessed July 6, 2020.

10   State Council Information Office via Xinhua, "Xi Jinping on Extracts on the Theory of 'Great Power Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics'," Jan. 5, 2020; http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/leaders/2020-01/05/c_1125423757.htm Accessed July 6, 2020

11   Xi Jinping, via Xinhua, "Walking Towards a 'Community of Human Destiny,'" Nov. 24, 2019; http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/leaders/2019-11/24/c_1125268369.htm. Accessed July 6, 2020. For an English account see: Nadège Rolland, "Beijing's Vision for a Reshaped International Order," The Jamestown Foundation, China Brief Vol. 18 Issue 3, Feb. 26, 2018; https://jamestown.org/program/beijings-vision-reshaped-international-order/

12   See, for example: Xinhua, "Health Silk Road promotes cooperation during COVID-19 pandemic - Turkish experts," May 7, 2020; http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-05/07/c_139038211.htm Accessed July 6, 2020.

13   Website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, "President Xi Jinping Speaks with Finnish President Sauli Niinistö on the Phone," Apr. 14, 2020; https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1770059.shtml Accessed July 6, 2020.

14   Andre Rettman, "China Suspected of bio-espionage in Heart of EU," euobserver, May 6, 2020; https://euobserver.com/science/148244 Accessed July 6, 2020. Accessed July 6, 2020

nation," and "national strength and international influence." This vision of a modern, strong, rejuvenated and influential China is the "China Dream." It is to be realized through "Xi Jinping Thought," or, to give it its full name, "Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era."[15] It is even written into the Chinese Constitution. "National Rejuvenation" includes being "a talent superpower" and having forces "capable of ... winning wars." Xi's speech at the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China on October 18, 2017 remains a key guide for understanding China's plans.[16] These are ambitious, and relevant to today: a child born in Europe this year will still be under 30 years old in 2049, perhaps in the early stages of her career, or starting a family.

Two "centenary goals" mark the milestones of national rejuvenation. Both are tied to major anniversaries in party history, thus reinforcing party legitimacy. The first, to be achieved by 2021 – the 100th anniversary of the founding of the CPC in Shanghai in 1921 – is an "overall moderately prosperous society." This modest-sounding goal has in reality driven China's high economic growth for decades and has been accompanied by a policy of "military-civilian fusion."

The second centenary goal is divided into two phases. The first, from 2020 to 2035, aims to establish a leading position in global innovation, science and technology. "Made in China 2025" is one of the few elements of the plan familiar to people in Europe, yet it is only one step on the planned road to global power. Alongside this policy, China has rolling, 15-year-long, "Medium- and Long-Term Plans for Science and Technology Development". These plans

10 PRIORITY SECTORS FOR "MADE IN CHINA 2025"

Published in 2015, China's state "Made in China" policy aims for global leadership in 10 major categories of science and technology. These are:

NEW INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES, INCLUDING AI AND DATA ANALYTICS

NEW ENERGIES

DIGITAL CONTROL AND ROBOTICS, INCLUDING ADVANCED MANUFACTURING

ELECTRONICS, INCLUDING SEMICONDUCTORS

AEROSPACE

FARMING TECHNOLOGIES

OCEAN ENGINEERING

NEW PHYSICAL MATERIALS

RAILWAYS

BIOTECHNOLOGY AND MEDICAL EQUIPMENT
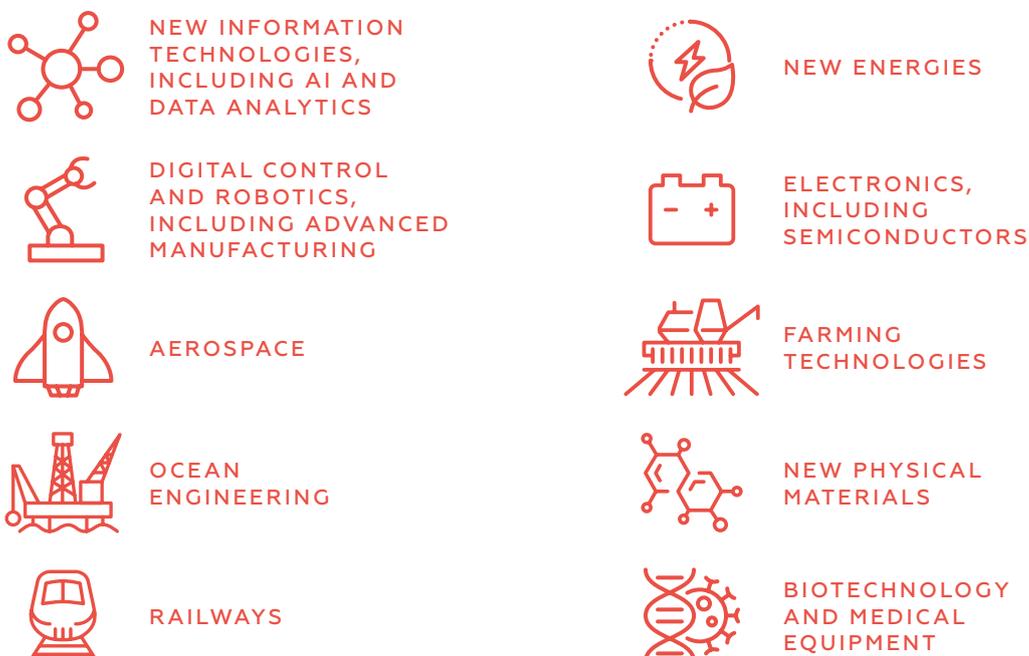
Source: State Council document no. 28, "Made in China 2025," published May 19, 2015: http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/content/2015-05/19/content_9784.htm

15 Xinhua, "Backgrounder: Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era," March 17, 2018; http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-03/17/c_137046261.htm Accessed July 6, 2020.

16 Xi Jinping, "Secure a Decisive Victory in Building a Moderately Prosperous Society in All Respects and Strive for the Great Success of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era," speech at the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China Oct. 18, 2017; http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/download/Xi_Jinping's_report_at_19th_CPC_National_Congress.pdf Accessed July 6, 2020.

MAKING EUROPE "CHOOSE NEUTRALITY" IN THE COMPETITION BETWEEN CHINA AND THE UNITED STATES

China has long sought to "divide and rule" in Europe, to prevent common "anti-China" policies developing on the continent. This is relatively easy due to the EU's system of consensus voting, whereby one country of 27 can nix collective positions. China seeks to neutralize Europe as an ally of the United States, in order to facilitate its own rise.

A book first published in 2013 titled "Inertia of History: China and the World by 2023," by Yan Xuetong described three categories of European countries to be handled according to their self-interests. Illustrating this approach, a chapter titled "Great Powers' Diplomacy: Strategies for China," includes sections on "Turning Germany into a strategic economic partner," and "Making France treasure the friendship."

Yan writes, "In the next 10 years the EU's internal disagreements will increase and its ability to speak with a unified voice on foreign affairs will assume a downward trend, so it will be impossible for the EU to implement a consistent policy toward China." He adds, "Given that the EU's policies regarding China conflict with each other, the idea of improving China's relations with European countries through improving its relations with the EU will be unrealistic; China will only be able to make its Europe policy focus on improving bilateral relations with major European powers. China needs to group European countries into three categories".

Friends: "All-weather strategic, cooperative relationships" of "political friendship," to be built with Greece, Spain, and Serbia. These countries have "the capability to prevent the EU from adopting common anti-China policies" by nixing collective votes in Brussels. Mostly in Southern and Southeastern Europe. Includes Hungary.

Frenemies: "Those that are unwilling to politically oppose China because of economic interests," including Germany, France, and the United Kingdom. To be neutralized by appealing to their strong and individual economic interest. Mostly in western Europe.

Political Enemies: A "hands-off policy" for "politically prejudiced" countries mostly in Northern and Eastern Europe such as Sweden, Norway, Poland. Approach: "not turning down any comers and not going out to proselytize." Yan adds, "The growing trend of the bipolarization of the international configuration will impel them to give up their policies of opposing China."

detail how to identify and extract technology from around the world and bring it to China to develop, "re-innovate," and commercialize. For China, Europe is a key source of high-level science and technology. By allowing China to obtain its technology, Europe fuels China's rise.

The second phase of the second centenary goal, from 2035 to 2049, aims to achieve "new heights … in every dimension of material, political, cultural and ethical, social, and ecological advancement," ending with sufficient military force to win wars in which technology plays a key role. Other aspects include rural revitalization and the "modernization of China's sys-

tem and capacity for governance." All of these, Xi said in the 2017 party congress speech, will allow Chinese people "to enjoy happier, safer and healthier lives."

CPC leadership remains non-negotiable in this process because, as Xi said, "the path of socialist political advancement with Chinese characteristics … is a requisite for maintaining the very nature of the Party and fulfilling its fundamental purpose". The self-referential nature of that statement is deliberate. There is wider consultation and contestation by the party and government, but cooptation is the goal, to be achieved through the United Front and other methods.

Importantly, the "China Dream" involves influencing people and systems around the world. United Front and related kinds of activity, for example outreach conducted by the core "Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries," is part of this architecture of influence which aims to build constituencies of support around the world for CPC policies and goals, among both overseas Chinese and non-Chinese. In particular, it directs efforts at influential groups and individuals, including political, business, social and academic elites.[17]

NUDGING EUROPE TOWARD NEUTRALITY

China's true target is the United States. It has long seen the European Union, a US ally, as internally divided and therefore weak and manipulable. Compared to China's central command, which facilitates clear communication, the EU's multitude of voices make it more difficult to speak with a unified voice. What's more, China sees that voice weakening over time. China has recognized that it is not useful to cultivate a bloc-level relationship, but to focus on bilateral ties instead. The EU's "consensus vote" rule means China only has to win one dissenting vote in Brussels to nix whatever it defines as "anti-China" policies.

This sobering assessment of the EU was detailed by Yan Xuetong, an influential scholar at Tsinghua University.[18] In one section of his thesis, "Nudging Europe toward neutrality", Yan said China could prevent "collective anti-China decisions" by dividing member states into groups and cultivating them accordingly. According to Yan, China has split EU member states into three constituencies which could broadly be described as "friends," "frenemies," and "enemies."

THE ECONOMY

Successful investments by Chinese companies into critical European industries, including medical equipment and aviation, are continuing during the pandemic. While EU rules have been tightened and officials are more risk-aware, protections remain inadequate.[19]

In March 2020, Heyer Medical, a 130-year-old German medical equipment company specializing in ventilators, was acquired by Aeonmed, a Beijing-based medical equipment company.[20] Aeonmed was recently embroiled in a scandal in Britain when its shipment of 250 ventilators was found to be defective.[21] In May, China's state-owned Bank of China acquired a 12.67 percent share in Norwegian Air through a chain of subsidiaries.[22]

While China offered aid to other countries during the pandemic, it was careful to package it as a high-profile gift, to win positive attention among European politicians and publics consumed by crisis. All the while it was practicing economic statecraft in ways that damaged other countries.

For example, on February 6, 2020, China's Ministry of Commerce published a list of 51 medical suppliers and distributors in 14 countries to target for PPE supplies.[23] In addition, according to Chinese customs statistics, China imported 2.02 billion facemasks between January 24 and February 29, at the height of its battle with the pandemic (normally China is a major exporter of facemasks).[24] Furthermore, in the first two months of 2020, exports of the category of goods that includes surgical gowns dropped 13 percent compared to the previous year, and imports rose a remarkable 40,582 percent. Similar patterns – though less dramatic – are seen for most categories of PPE and medical equipment, including ventilators (exports dropped 20 percent, imports rose 174 per-

17 Tatlow, 2019. In its 2019 report, published July 8, 2020, Germany's federal domestic security agency, the Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, newly addresses these political influencing and interfering activities by the CPC in Germany. https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/embed/vsbericht-2019.pdf

18 Yan Xuetong, "Inertia of History: China and the World by 2023", Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2019, translated by Alexander A. Bowe, https://www.cambridgescholars.com/inertia-of-history

19 "Introductory statement by Commissioner Phil Hogan at Informal meeting of EU Trade Ministers," European Commission, Apr. 16. 2020; https://ec.europa.eu/commission/commissioners/2019-2024/hogan/announcements/introductory-statement-commissioner-phil-hogan-informal-meeting-eu-trade-ministers_en

20 "Hersteller von Medizinprodukten geht an Chinesen," Legal Tribune Online, Apr. 14, 2020; https://www.lto.de/recht/kanzleien-unternehmen/k/orrick-aeonmed-china-erwerb-heyer-medical/

21 The Guardian, "Entire UK order of 250 Chinese ventilators ditched over danger to lives ," May 1, 2020; https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/apr/30/entire-order-of-250-chinese-ventilators-were-useless-despite

22 ScandAsia, "Chinese state-owned company bought 12.67 percent of Norwegian airline's share," May 25, 2020; https://scandasia.com/chinese-state-owned-company-bought-12-67-percent-of-norwegian-airlines-share/ Accessed July 6, 2020.

23 Karen M. Sutter, Andrew B. Schwarzenberg, Michael D. Sutherland "COVID-19: China Medical Supply Chains and Broader Trade Issues," Congressional Research Serrvice; https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R46304

24 Ibid.

CHANGE IN CHINA'S EXPORTS AND IMPORTS OF SELECT MEDICAL PRODUCTS
YTD 2019 (January-February) vs. YTD 2020 (January-February), in %

	EXPORT	IMPORT
MEDICAL, SURGICAL OR LABORATORY STERILIZERS	**–34**	**+66**
IMMUNOLOGICAL PRODUCTS	**–30**	**+197**
MEDICAL VENTILATORS AND RESPIRATION APPARATUS	**–20**	**+174**
SPECTACLES AND GOGGLES	**–20**	**+185**
MADE-UP TEXTILE ARTICLES*	**–16**	**+2,176**
GARMENTS, MADE-UP OF FABRICS OF FELTS AND NONWOVENS (INCLUDING DISPOSABLE HOSPITAL GOWNS AND LAB COATS)	**–13**	**+40,582**

*N95 and other protective masks have historically been classified under tariff subheading 6307.99.9889, which includes other miscellaneous textile article made from similar materials

Source: CRS analysis with data from China Customs and Global Trade Atlas (March 31, 2020), from Sutter, Schwarzenberg and Sutherland, "COVID-19: ChinaMedical Supply Chains and Broader Trade Issues," Congressional Research Service, Apr. 6, 2020. https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R46304 (accessed June 6,2020).

cent). China is a major global supplier of PPE, medical devices, antibiotics, and active pharmaceutical ingredients, so increasing imports and decreasing exports led to shortages of critical medical supplies in Europe and elsewhere. One way of framing the issue is that China "broke" globalization, since its sheer size, and habitual use of economic statecraft (political or state intervention in the economy), created supply chain instability for the rest of the world.

Shortages in basic consumer items such as facemasks and hand sanitizer in European pharmacies beginning in January had another cause, too. In addition to the trade policies and behaviors examined above, the United Front organized and encouraged shipments of goods to China in bulk, often via accompanied excess baggage on commercial flights.[25] Some other activity was genuinely individual, unrelated to political influence systems. Yet where it was managed by groups with provable ties to the CPC, the EU should scrutinize it, to prevent such shortages going forward. There are hundreds, perhaps thousands, of such United Front- (or other CPC-) guided, controlled, or supported groups in Eu-

25 Xu Yousheng, deputy minister of the United Front Work Department, Qiushi via cpcnews.cn, "Fighting the Epidemic in Peace and Harmony," Apr. 17, 2020. In Chinese: http://cpc.people.com.cn/n1/2020/0417/c64102-31677509.html
In English: https://www.tellerreport.com/news/2020-04-16---xu-yousheng--fighting-for-the-epidemic-situation-in-peace-and-harmony-.ry1snHr_L.html Accessed July 6, 2020. For an account of how the UF system worked in Canada during the early stages of COVID-19, see, Sam Cooper, "United Front groups in Canada helped Beijing stockpile coronavirus safety supplies," Apr. 30. 2020. Accessed July 8, 2020.

rope with ties to the overseas Chinese community, and local European business, political and academic elites, as well as civil society organizations.[26]

DEMOCRATIC SECURITY

For Europe, all this raises the question of what to do to protect its democratic sovereignty. The concept of "democratic security" provides a particularly helpful way to think and act. However, it's important to understand that we are only beginning to identify how to manage the CPC problem, therefore much work remains to be done to define and detail this concept.

Some initial key points:
- Democratic security aims to raise awareness and educate. People in democratic nations must understand that democracy requires security, or protection, and will not necessarily triumph, or even just survive, by virtue of being a humane system.

- Democratic security aims to provide democracies with a set of practical tools and intellectual/moral concepts to protect democracy, recognizing that traditional, "hard" (military) security, while necessary, is insufficient on its own. An antagonistic power trying to limit the freedom of action of democracies by means other than military, for example economic statecraft or disinformation, must be countered by other measures, too.

- Crucially, democratic security must be robust and flexible. It must draw on all areas of government and civil society and offer a range of measures. This will enable it to effectively counter the multiple levels on which the CPC influences and interferes in democracies.

- Democratic security must counter the situation where democracies are in a position of "provocative weakness" vis à vis authoritarian states. At the same time, it should not overly securitize democratic systems, which should remain open, but highly resilient.[27] Democratic security should be "politically practical as well as morally sensitive," as Robert C. Johansen wrote.[28]

- Democratic security requires a robust system of alliances of democratic nations. Here, Europe can play a major role (see below). By paying attention to democratic security, Europe will naturally improve its relationship with the US, which sees Europe as unwilling to take responsibility for its own security, including political security, leading to widespread irritation on both sides.

WHAT CAN EUROPE DO?

Europeans must assume that the CPC is pushing for strategic and economic advantage, with the economic and health crisis caused by the pandemic offering a window of opportunity. This assumption is a necessary prerequisite for combating China's opportunism, especially since European tools are easily disrupted by member state disagreement. The EU has economic and regulatory powers, but these are slow-moving.

In addition, China may simply ignore or break agreements; see, for example, its imposition of a harsh state security law on Hong Kong, contrary to its own domestic and international agreements. In addition, Article 38 of the new law is extra-territorial in nature, criminalizing speech by people around the world. Europe must assume that this is a "trial balloon" and China is testing reactions.

A resilient economy is a key factor in making Europe shock-proof and strengthening democratic security, but this will not come without some costs. The EU must think through who, and which domestic industries, will be affected by a push to counter unwanted CPC influence and interference, and consider how to support them as it moves into the phase of allocating large amounts of money to recover from the economic shock of the virus. A key example is Germany's automotive industry.

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26 Didi Kirsten Tatlow, "Mapping China-in-Germany," Sinopsis, October 2, 2019, https://sinopsis.cz/en/mapping-china-in-germany/

27 Thanks to the European Values Center for Security, Prague and Berlin, for discussions on this topic. The original concept of "provocative weakness" belongs to Fritz Kraemer, the German-born Pentagon strategist who fled Germany in 1933, arriving in the US in 1939; https://www.encyclopedia.com/humanities/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/kraemer-fritz-gustav-anton

28 Robert C. Johansen, "Real Security Is Democratic Security" in "Alternatives: Global, Local, Political," Vol. 16, No. 2, "The Global Context of Democratization" (Spring 1991), pp. 209-241. https://www.jstor.org/stable/40644712

There are ten steps Europe can take to stand its ground against the CPC:

1. Strengthen democratic resilience: Sweden's plan for a Psychological Defense Agency should be replicated in each EU country and connect to Brussels.[29] This would identify and counter disinformation and other malign influences, support open source research and tracking. As a Swedish government report noted, "psychological defense should be viewed as a natural part of safeguarding the open society, freedom of opinion, and the freedom and independence of Sweden."

2. Audit Supply Chains: Engage in a reassessment of supply chains and technologies across a range of goods, from PPE to pharmaceuticals to 5G. Regarding 5G, decisions to use China-made technology and parts can and should be reversed, and deeper commitments refused, in the name of democratic security which includes technological and internet security, and data privacy and integrity.[30]

3. Limit Opportunities for Disinformatio: Address the expansion of China's massive information control system through limiting penetration of its telecoms infrastructure in Europe, and by monitoring more closely propaganda and disinformation aimed at weakening European democratic sovereignty. An East Stratcom Task force, set up in 2015 within the European External Action Service, deals primarily with Russian propaganda. This should be expanded to include a full, language- and ethnographically fluent, team focused on China.[31] Consider moving it to the Values and Transparency Commissioner since propaganda and disinformation have domestic impact.

4. Diversify Supply Chains: Help businesses to diversify supply chains away from China. Japan's "relocation fund," which is in excess of $2 billion, and part of its COVID-19 economic stimulus, has begun a process for companies seeking to move production out of China back to Japan, or other locations in Southeast Asia, for example.[32] The same could be done through Europe's economic recovery fund.

5. Build Trusted Alliances: Expand positive alliances and work with "likeminded" partners and neighbors to build democratically minded, secure trade systems. This "security through greater diversification," as one report put it, necessitates revisiting the rules of global trade and encouraging certain countries to become trusted suppliers.[33]

6. Screen Foreign Investments: Quicker, wider and deeper action to block unwanted foreign acquisitions to protect European sovereignty. An investment screening mechanism initiated last year by the EU, to take effect on October 1, 2020, goes in the right direction but remains inadequate and is voluntary.

7. Label Propaganda Sources: Highlight the activities of Chinese entities that censored virus outbreaks in the November to January period, including state-run media such as CCTV/CGTN, the Chinese state TV broadcaster. These are implicated in broadcasting forced confessions linked to torture.[34] A first step would be to designate CPC media in Europe as "foreign missions," as the US has done to nine, including CGTN, People's Daily, and Global Times, in an effort to force transparency since they are not editorially independent but "embody the party's will [and] safeguard the party's authority."[35]

8. Crack Down on United Front Activity: Counter United Front activity by drawing up a toolbox based on Australian or US foreign agent registration laws. This would oblige transparency on these organizations and educate citizens at home, thus contributing strongly to creating democratic security.

29 In Swedish, "En ny myndighet för att stärka det psykologiska försvaret" (A new authority to strengthen psychological defense), Government Official Investigations, SOU 2020:29, Stockholm 2020; https://www.regeringen.se/49bbbd/contentassets/e3a84a5fd7144c6a95a1eb90a2bbfec0/en-ny-myndighet-for-att-starka-det-psykologiska-forsvaret-sou-2020-29.pdf See also, Christina La Cour, "Governments Countering Disinformation: The Case of Sweden", Disinfo Portal, updated November 8, 2019, https://disinfoportal.org/governments-countering-disinformation-the-case-of-sweden/ Accessed July 8, 2020.

30 Sahin & Tatlow, above.

31 East Stratcom Task Force website, https://euvsdisinfo.eu/

32 Francesco Alberti, The Asean Post, "Japan switching manufacturing to ASEAN," Apr. 19, 2020; https://theaseanpost.com/article/japan-switching-manufacturing-asean See also, Ministry of Trade, Economy and Industry, https://www.meti.go.jp/english/covid-19/index.html#latest Both accessed July 8, 2020.

33 Charles Edel, "Democracies need alliances to secure vital supply chains," ASPI, The Strategist, May 6, 2020; https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/democracies-need-alliances-to-secure-vital-supply-chains/

34 Alex Hearn, The Guardian, "UK-based Chinese news network CGTN faces possible ban," July 6, 2020; https://www.theguardian.com/media/2020/jul/06/uk-based-chinese-news-network-cgtn-faces-possible-ban Accessed July 8, 2020.

35 State Department, press statement, June 22, 2020: "Designation of Additional Chinese Media Entities as Foreign Missions." https://www.state.gov/designation-of-additional-chinese-media-entities-as-foreign-missions/

Not to do so damages the security of all people, including Chinese citizens, who do not wish to be associated with the CPC. It is of great importance to note that Chinese people in Europe also require protection from the CPC.

9. **Prohibit Chinese Tech:** Prohibit EU bodies, member state governments, and employees, from conducting official business on Chinese owned or controlled tech platforms such as WeChat or other Tencent products to push back against both information control and technology surveillance. A recent decision by the Bundeswehr to close its TikTok account is a model that should be followed by others.

10. **Take Cybersecurity Seriously:** Increase funding for civil society organizations and businesses in Europe to help people evade censorship systems such as China's Great Firewall, and secure their own online privacy, including everywhere where these are growing in countries closely allied with China, for example in African countries. This should apply to US companies, too, and Europe should work together with interested US companies, states and citizens. Overall, the EU has standards- and norm-setting powers and should widen them in the technological arena. This is a unique and potentially powerful way for European nations and the EU to build a global constituency of support, grounded in the wish for, and necessity of, privacy in a networked world, which is itself a vital part of democratic security.