

## **Sino-German Relations: friends or foes?**

A Talk by Dr. Narumit Hinshiranan at the meeting room of SPP on Monday 21 November 2022 during 14:00-15:00 hrs.

### **1 Introduction**

Three years during which the world has changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic since the end of 2019 and Russia's invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022.

Chancellor Olaf Scholz's 11-hour official visit to China on 5 November 2022 and later to Southeast Asia and the G20 summit in Bali, Indonesia whereas President Walter Steinmeier of Germany will visit Japan and the Republic of Korea during the same period.

The points were made by Chancellor Olaf Scholz for the vaccination of mRNA to expats in China. By the BioNTech company which permission was granted by the Chinese side on the COVID-19 pandemic and on the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Chancellor Olaf Scholz got assurance from President Xi that "the international community should call on parties concerned to exercise rationality and restraint, conduct direct contacts as soon as possible and create conditions for the resumption of negotiations and jointly oppose the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons".

### **2 German political situation**

Germany's 3-party coalition (SD, the liberals, and the Greens) is developing a new China strategy (public policy -> foreign policy).

China decried a visit by a delegation of German lawmakers to Taiwan amid concerns that Beijing could invade the Island.

Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said mistakes made in the past that led to heavy dependence on Russian (gas) must not be repeated with China.

Scholz was criticized as he allowed a Chinese state-owned shipping company (COSCO) to buy a minority 24.9% stake in one of Hamburg's port terminals. Scholz responded that the purchase of a minority stake in a terminal at Hamburg port by the Chinese shipping firm COSCO was clear and regulated. Clear conditions were imposed, and the terminal will now remain fully under the control of the City of Hamburg and the port operator.

### **3 Chinese political situation**

President and General Secretary Xi Jinping strengthened his hold on power at the end of the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) during 16-22 October 2022. The appointment to the Politburo of 7 members was united only by loyalty to Xi Jinping and the appointment of its standing committee of 24 members confirms even more clearly that President Xi's top priority is to maximize his control of the CPC.

The standing committee will rule China for the next 5 years. Shanghai CP Chief Li Qiang will be the next Prime Minister will be appointed by NPC during its session in March 2023 replacing Li Keqiang. (the Politburo newcomers were Cai Qi, Ding Xuexiang, and Li Xi.)

The actual problems in China:(1) Policy of “Zero tolerance” on COVID-19 (pandemic lockdowns) and (2)Real estate bubbles (ailing property sector).

#### **4 Bilateral relations**

Scholz was “sticking his neck out” by going to Beijing as domestic and international criticism over his trip mounted.

Germany’s heavy dependence on China but Scholz emphasized the need for continued economic cooperation with China. Nevertheless, climate change, food security, disease prevention, and indebted countries were also on the talking points.

Scholz told President Xi that is important for China to use its influence on Russia. Scholz said we have agreed that threatening nuclear attack is irresponsible and dangerous.

Scholz stressed that human rights are universally recognized and urged the rights of Uyghurs and other ethnic groups in China’s Xinjiang to be upheld.

China is the biggest trade partner of Germany

#### **5 EU-China relations**

At an EU summit in Brussels on 21 October, 2022 focusing on relations with China, the 3 Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania) said it was important to speak to Beijing with a “single voice”.

Croatia will be the 20th country of the EU members to use the Euro as its currency.

Greek port PIRAEUS near Athens which is the largest port in Greece and one of the largest in Europe was owned by the Chinese COSCO shipping company as it holds majority in the port stakes

## **6 Conclusion**

### **6.1 Uyghurs**

From 26-28 May 2022, the world Uyghur Congress (WUC), in collaboration with 21 other Uyghur organisations, organised an “Uyghur summit” in Munich, Germany, bringing together over 200 prominent activists, legal and academic experts, policymakers, as well as East Turkistan diaspora leaders from 70 organization and camp survivors.

### **6.2 Possible reunification of China and Taiwan(Chinese Taipei)**

Germany may serve as a model for peaceful reunification of both China and Taiwan(Chinese Taipei) on one hand and North and South Korea on the other hand.

Berlin wall collapsed on 9 November 1989

### **6.3 Trade - Induced change**

Scholz's visit was a straightforward throwback to the days of Angela Merkel and “Wandel durch Handel” -loosely translated as “Change through trade” This can be compared with Prime Minister Chatchai Chunhawan’s “change the battlefield into the marketplace” (เปลี่ยนสนามรบเป็นสนามการค้า) in 1988.

## 6.4 Complimentary

A significant amount of trade between Germany and China concerns products where there is neither a lack of alternative suppliers nor a risk of dangerous monopolies. Instead, China, Germany, and Europe benefit equally.

Where risky dependencies have developed - for important raw materials, some rare earths, or certain cutting-edge technologies. German businesses put their supply chains on a broader footing. The German Government supports these firms with new raw materials partnerships.