



The Significance of International Organisations in China's Policy

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China treats its involvement in international organisations as pragmatic support for its economic growth and foreign policy, as well as a tool for the modification of the world order. It has increased its financial input and activity in the UN and other such forums and tries to revive less-visible institutions or initiate new ones. China also effectively promotes its own candidates to leadership positions in international organisations. The current U.S. approach to multilateral diplomacy has helped China promote its initiatives. The Union should be judicious in its support of these initiatives, analysing each with a view to maintaining EU standards.

China's Involvement in International Organisations. Membership in international organisations has occupied an important place in China's policy since 1971, with the change of formal representation in the United Nations from the Republic of China (Taiwan) to the People's Republic of China (China). Since then, China has successively joined the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank (WB), and World Trade Organisation (WTO). Since taking over as chairman in 2013, Xi Jinping's has increased China's activity in international organisations. Primarily, its financial inputs are greater—China is now the second-largest contributor to the UN, the third-largest to the WTO, and it has raised its capital level and voting weight in the IMF. China actively participates in the debate on WTO reform and more frequently uses its veto power in the UN Security Council—13 times in total, but in 2011–2019, seven times, all together with Russia. China has also increased the number of soldiers participating in UN peacekeeping missions.

The importance of international organisations' in China's policy is also reflected in attempts to boost the operations of several regional groupings, including the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA). This effort was demonstrated at last year's SCO summit in Qingdao, which China wanted to promote as an alternative to the G7, and at the high-level CICA meeting in Shanghai in 2014 in which Russian President Vladimir Putin and other leaders participated. During the CICA summit, Xi suggested building up Asian security infrastructure.

Simultaneously, China creates new institutions as counterweights to organisations created by the U.S. and other industrialised countries. In 2014, China initiated the creation of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) to finance projects in Asia where the founding members were the EU and Southeast Asian states. In 2015, China helped bring forward the New Development Bank under the BRICS format.

The Role of Organisations in China's Policy. China believes that the functional format and rules of such organisations as the UN, WB, WTO, and IMF comprise an international order that favours the U.S. and other Western states. China emphasizes that it is insufficiently represented in these organisations because it has too few votes compared to its potential. Above all, they believe that certain rules such as the subordination of access to financial assistance to fulfilling political standards limit the development of China and other states. They view them as a barrier to the achievement of, for example, key Chinese "centennial

goals”, popularised by Xi and calling for doubling GDP per capita by 2021 (based on 2010 levels) and reaching the level of a developed state by 2049.

China uses its activity in multilateral organizations to gain partners to fulfil its foreign policy targets. It promotes multilateral cooperation based on a view it describes as respecting countries’ diversity and not imposing political solutions, supposedly as a balance against the U.S. approach. The activities are supposed to support China’s economic development and spread its position on various issues, such as internet regulations. Because it has the support of other states, such as Russia and some African and Southeast Asian states, and its high-level activity in the UN and WTO, China can easily avoid the consequences of its controversial practices, such as subsidizing companies, clearly visible in the discussion on the future of the WTO. China also is well-placed to neutralise allegations that it or its partners violate human rights, confirmed by its voting record in the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva. In 2017, China forced a resolution through the council that tied state responsibility for human rights to its level of economic development (India, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia, among others, also voted for this change).

Another example of China using its membership in international organisations to its own ends is its practice of limiting Taiwan’s international activity. Using the “one China” concept, the Chinese authorities block Taiwan from having observer status in organisations such as UNESCO or WHO impossible, even under the name Chinese Taipei.

Chinese in Key Roles in International Organisations. Chinese citizens stand as the current or next head of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU, Zhao Houlin), AIIB (Jin Liqun), International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO, Fang Liu), International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO, Zhang Xiaogang), Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO, Qu Dongyu) and United Nations Industrial Development Organization (Li Yong). The number of Chinese in the leadership of international organisations is comparable to the number of U.S. citizens, for example. Other Chinese citizens at this level include Deputy Secretary General of the UN and head of UN DESA Liu Zhenmin and the Vice Chairman of the International Court of Justice Xue Hanqin. Chinese also have a leadership position in the World Health Organisation, IMF, WB, New Development Bank BRICS, and International Atomic Energy Agency.

Although international representatives are required to be impartial, in practice the Chinese in these positions support the implementation of China’s foreign policy. Their position is treated as another level in their party career and nomination simply means that this person is subordinated to the Chinese Communist Party (CPC). This was confirmed by Wu Hongbo’s declaration that he, as the head of UN DESA (2012–2017), prioritised China’s interests, and he blocked the participation of the president of the World Uyghur Congress in one UN conference. Zhao Houlin many times has spoken out positively about Chinese tech firm Huawei’s competence with 5G infrastructure and accused the U.S. of political motivations in its actions against this company. Soon after, Fang Liu took over leadership of ICAO in 2015, the organisation initially approved new flight routes over the Taiwan Strait requested by China’s Civil Aviation Authority but protested by Taiwan over security concerns and as an infringement of sovereignty. In 2018, China, this time simultaneously and without consultation with the Taiwanese side, opened further flight routes in the region.

On the other hand, a loss of trust from China’s central authorities can result in immediate dismissal of these organisation leaders, symbolised by the example of Meng Hongwei, the now former Interpol president and CPC vice minister of public security. During a visit back to China in 2018, he was detained and accused of corruption and insubordination to the party. The probable reason for his imprisonment and subsequent absence from Interpol, forcing his removal, was his ineffectiveness of pursuing fugitive Uyghurs through Interpol’s arrest warrants.

Conclusions and Perspectives. The reluctance of the current U.S. administration to engage in multilateral diplomacy (demonstrated by the U.S. leaving the Trans-Pacific Partnership and UNESCO, among others) has meant there is a vacuum of power that is now being filled by China. Some other countries (e.g., Pakistan, Egypt, and Cambodia) that see a chance to implement their own interests mainly through multilateral diplomacy will support China’s initiatives.

China’s engagement in international organisations will rise together with its influence on the policy of these institutions, mostly because they are a useful forum in the rivalry with the U.S. and enable, with the support of China’s partners, favourable Chinese solutions. Even Meng’s case does not harm its plans. China will still promote its citizens to leadership positions and require them to pursue its interests.

China’s increased activity in organisations is also a challenge for the EU and Poland, especially in the context of changes in the international order, namely the fragmentation of international law. The EU and Poland support multilateral diplomacy but do not share China’s demands, views on individual rights, or cooperation with Russia. This implies that cooperation with China in international organisations should be treated with caution and that support for various initiatives must be considered individually for the repercussions on multilateral institutions and rules stemming from international law.