

Chinese President Xi Jinping's British State Visit: Red Flag Over London

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As ever, the world of international relations is abuzz with sizzling news. American presidential hopeful Hillary Clinton is being grilled over her failings during the Libyan crisis, Bashar al-Assad has visited Moscow to pay homage to his master Russian president Vladimir Putin, the Taliban have withdrawn from Kunduz, British prime minister David Cameron has amended the ministerial code to try to preclude legal liability (for the Cabinet and his government) arising out of “international law”, Tony Blair has accepted that the 2003 invasion of Iraq fostered the creation of ISIS, and Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu has offloaded the Holocaust on the Mufti of Jerusalem but German chancellor Angela Merkel has criticised him and has claimed liability for the genocide as Germany's and not attributable to the Palestinians.

But these gloomy events are less glamorous than Chinese president Xi Jinping and his elegant wife first lady Peng Liyuan's recent state visit to Britain to enhance Sino-UK relations. Eager to assist the British prime minister, the Queen, the longest reigning British monarch who recently surpassed the milestone established by Queen Victoria's reign, adopted a culturally relative tone and praised China for its achievement of one country two systems. Having witnessed the destruction of the Second World War and rationing the British dealt with in its aftermath, Her Majesty was eager for future British and Chinese generations to be economically self-sufficient and financially robust. Notably, the Chinese president addressed both Houses of Parliament – an honour reserved only for the loftiest dignitaries. The deals between London and Beijing included themes such as trade links, nuclear energy, visas and cultural exchange, creative industries, industry, property and finance. All this aims to begin a “golden era” of Sino-UK relations.

According to 10 Downing Street, the two countries have signed business deals worth £40 billion. However, criticism of the scope of the level of cooperation has arisen amid concerns that David Cameron and George Osborne are exaggerating the figures because contrary sums of £25 billion rather than £40 billion had been floated by British business secretary Sajid Javed himself.

Notably, the Chinese president played hard to get with president Obama in a recent state visit to Washington in September 2015 where the two leaders discussed global and regional challenges such as Afghanistan, peacekeeping, nuclear security, wildlife trafficking, ocean conservation and strengthening development coordination. They also discussed strengthening bilateral ties turning on themes such as military relations, cyber-security, law enforcement and people-to-people exchange.

The seriousness surrounding the deal-making in London during president Xi's state visit was so profound that even Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn succumbed to pressure and decided not to engage in political grandstanding by upsetting Xi Jinping – who was clear that opportunity may knock just once. On his best behaviour, a conciliatory Corbyn even shook Her Majesty's hand to mark of the solemnity of the occasion. This is so notwithstanding the fact that his fellow trade unionists are urging Cameron to put pressure on the Chinese president to tackle cheap Chinese steel imports that are wreaking havoc on the British steel industry which is near collapse – thousands of jobs have been axed because of the closure of Tata steel plants in Scunthorpe and Larnakshire and more layoffs are expected elsewhere.

The speaker of the House of Commons John Bercow, who seems to have a testing family life, could not resist heckling president Xi by reprimanding China's lack of respect for "individual liberty" and made pointless threats about how the world was "watching" Beijing's political moves. However, the Chinese leader, who is by western standards a "dictator", decided to rise above the provocative remarks and insults levelled at him. Acknowledging that he was addressing the "mother of parliaments", he nevertheless asserted that ancient Chinese legal texts predated the English legal system and stressed that one Chinese legal charter was 2,000 years old.

A clever statesman, he could probably see a bright red flag flying over London for the foreseeable future and much to his delight even the Duchess of Cambridge went out her way to please him by wearing a spectacular red dress. The president is clearly on a mission to expand China's domination of the UK and in advancing his designs he simply repeated the Chinese proverb:

an opportunity missed is an opportunity lost.

Equally, the beautiful Chinese first lady Peng Liyuan, who is also a famous singer in China, was keen to please her western hosts and she reciprocated their flattery by wearing clothes that pleased them and the British public.

In response to the Dutchess's red dress, first lady Peng Liyuan wore a modest midnight blue silk, inverted pleat gown. She also wore a cape and a classy white skirt suit during the visit. On the first day of the visit, Tuesday 20 October 2015, the Queen and the Chinese president shared a ride in the royal carriage along the Mall where supporters cheered for them; in the evening the Queen hosted a state banquet in honour of president Xi. The next day, prime minister David Cameron and president Xi looked on as chancellor George Osborne and Chinese minister Yu Guangzhou signed a business agreement in 10 Downing Street. The Chinese president also spent time in Chequers, the British prime minister's country home, and accompanied David Cameron to a local pub to share a basket of fish and chips and president Xi also visited Manchester.

When questioned by the BBC for being the head of an undemocratic and oppressive state, president Xi said that China respects human rights within its own framework of law and David Cameron argued that he is on a twin mission for China to invest billions in the UK and simultaneously also improve its human rights record with Downing Street's help and guidance. President Xi indulged in cultural relativism and defended China's "troubling" human rights record by arguing that his country had produced "a path of human rights suitable for Chinese conditions". Understandably, David Cameron is under attack for letting China buy the UK's silence in relation to human rights atrocities in Tibet.

However, David Cameron is keen to avoid confrontation with Beijing and wants to erase the memories of his meeting with the Dalai Lama in 2012, a mistake after which he had to rush off on a visit to Beijing in 2013 in order to mend fences with angry Communist Party bosses.

Her Majesty was acutely aware that it was a critical moment in the bilateral relations between the two countries and that Chinese investors are set to provide a third of the money (or £6 billion of £18 billion) to fund the UK's nuclear reactor in Hinkley Point C; termed the "flagship project of cooperation" by president Xi. Possessing much superior diplomatic skills in comparison to the vain, pompous and incompetent politicians who surround her, the Queen also encouraged cultural relativism and Her Majesty applauded China's "visionary concept of One Country Two Systems" as propounded by the former Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping whose open-ended economic policies exposed China to capitalism. Deng Xiaoping thought that socialism does not mean shared poverty and envisioned China as a socialist market economy; for such radical thoughts he was, of course, victimised by Chairman Mao during the Cultural Revolution.

The visit promises other cooperation between the UK and China and apparently measures are being taken to ease visa restrictions on Chinese nationals. With 185,000 Chinese visitors in 2014, the number of tourists have more than doubled since 2009 (89,000 visitors) and it is expected that from January 2017 the fee for a multiple entry two-year visit visa will be slashed from £324 to £85 and that enrolment facilities for biometrics will be expanded from nine Chinese cities to 50. However, the relaxation of the visa rules for Chinese visitors and the new £85 fee does not match the £65 fee for access to 25 European countries with a Schengen visa.

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor

In April 2015, under the aegis of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC, see here), China and Pakistan entered into deals for energy and infrastructure projects in Pakistan worth \$46 billion, enhancing their economic cooperation and arguably signalling further an expansion of China's global "great game".

In April 2015, President Xi Jinping visited Pakistan to sign agreements aimed at establishing the CPEC in Pakistan's Gwadar port on the Arabian Sea and the western Xinjiang region in China. In light of the CPEC, Washington's economic activity in Pakistan has been dwarfed by Beijing's drive to create a "Silk Road" by land and sea to forge deeper ties with South Asian, Middle Eastern and European markets. The CPEC envisages creating a network of roads, railways and pipelines, in Baluchistan province to facilitate trade and economic development.

Unlike the western powers which have only created the problem of jihad for Pakistan and China by nurturing the Taliban under former puppet Pakistani governments, despite all the dangers they are exposed to in a country bubbling with militancy, Chinese engineers courageously continue to put their lives at risk for the sake improving things for the poor in underdeveloped parts of Pakistan.

During his visit to Pakistan, president Xi that the CPEC sealed an "all-weather strategic cooperative partnership" and our own prime minister Nawaz Sharif hailed impending developments to enhance cooperation in civil nuclear energy, space and maritime technology, counter-terrorism and defence by saying:

Friendship with China is the cornerstone of Pakistan's foreign policy.

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