



### G-7 SUMMIT AND CHINA'S REACTION

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*(Views expressed in the brief are those of the author, and do not represent those of ISSI)*



The leaders of the Group of Seven (G-7) met in Cornwall, United Kingdom, on 11-13<sup>th</sup> June, 2021.<sup>1</sup> The agenda of the meeting was to discuss several major issues including the global economic recovery from COVID-19, to promote future prosperity by promoting free and fair trade, tackling climate change and preserving the planet's biodiversity.<sup>2</sup> Above all, the summit was aimed at brainstorming trans-Atlantic response to deal with China challenge.<sup>3</sup> The gathering turned out to be more about containing China than other issues on the agenda.

The joint statement released at the end of leaders' summit underscored the importance of maintaining security and stability across the strait of Taiwan and South China Sea as both the regions are considered highly militarized zones. The group called upon China to respect rights and freedoms of people of Hong Kong. President Biden demanded that China provide access to independent international inquiry commission to the laboratories in Wuhan with the aim of investigating the origin and real causes behind the emergence and spread of coronavirus. They also criticised China

<sup>1</sup> "CARBIS BAY G7 SUMMIT COMMUNIQUÉ." The White House. June 13, 2021. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/06/13/carbis-bay-g7-summit-communicue/>.

<sup>2</sup> "Policy Priorities," G7 UK Presidency 2021. Last modified June 16, 2021. <https://www.g7uk.org/policy-priorities/>.

<sup>3</sup> "G7 Calls for Peace Across Taiwan Strait and Backs Tokyo Olympics." *The Japan Times*, June 14, 2021. <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2021/06/14/world/g7-communicue-china-taiwan/>.

for its violation of human rights in Xinjiang, home to the Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities.<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile, the US wants the group of industrialized nations to offer multi-billion-dollars in loan and grants to the developing nations to challenging China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). However, the Biden administration has yet to share substantive information about its proposed new Build Back Better World (B3W) program to rival BRI about their new development program parallel to BRI.<sup>5</sup>

The prime objective of Biden in the meeting was supposed to be recruiting allies for another Cold War, this time with China. It is quite obvious that America is preparing itself for another prolonged proxy war with China. Biden's aggressive approach against China is driven by the fear of the latter's increasingly global economic, military and technological influence. The new administration in Washington seems to be following the footprints of its predecessor towards China.<sup>6</sup>

### **G-7 Split On Biden's Anti-China Push**

European allies of the US, however, took a nuanced view. A split is apparent among G-7 leaders on Biden's call to take aggressive measures against China. Some leaders of the group were reluctant to support forceful measures against China. Though, the group of industrialized countries agreed that the increasingly Chinese assertiveness was a real threat, differences over the response, to curtail Chinese assertiveness remained. The US, France, Britain and Canada are committed to pushing back against China while Italy, Japan and Germany want to avoid confrontation and are focusing on cooperation to address issues with China.<sup>7</sup>

The question of how to deal with China is divisive. According to BBC news, there is a lack of consensus among G-7 nations over whether China is a partner, a competitor or a security threat.<sup>8</sup> Europeans allies are reluctant to take confrontational approach against China especially those who have deepened trade with China over the last two decades. In fact, China became the top trading partner of EU, even surpassed the US, last year. Similarly, China is expected to become Germany's biggest trading partner and top export market.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, once German Chancellor, Angela Merkel,

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<sup>4</sup> "China Denounces G7 After Statement on Xinjiang and Hong Kong," *BBC News*, June 14, 2021. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-57466576>.

<sup>5</sup> David E. Sanger and Mark Landler, "Biden Tries to Rally G7 Nations to Counter China's Influence," *The New York Times*, June 12, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/12/world/europe/biden-china-g7.html>.

<sup>6</sup> Maleeha Lodi, "America's China Preoccupation," *Dawn Newspaper*, June 21, 2021. [https://epaper.dawn.com/?page=21\\_06\\_2021\\_006](https://epaper.dawn.com/?page=21_06_2021_006)

<sup>7</sup> Patsy Widakuswara, "G-7 split on Biden's Anti-China push," *Voice of America*, June 12, 2021. <https://www.voanews.com/usa/g-7-split-bidens-anti-china-push>

<sup>8</sup> "G7 summit: China says small groups do not rule the world," *BBC News*, June 13, 2021. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-57458822>

<sup>9</sup> Maleeha Lodi, "America's China Preoccupation," *Dawn Newspaper*, June 21, 2021. [https://epaper.dawn.com/?page=21\\_06\\_2021\\_006](https://epaper.dawn.com/?page=21_06_2021_006)

says that EU shares no identical interest with US on China and “That is absolutely clear.”<sup>10</sup> Italy is also a part of BRI and is reported to have agreed with Merkel, during the G-7 summit, that the action against China should be avoided.<sup>11</sup>

### Chinese Response to G-7 Summit

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman, Zhao Lijian, while responding to the joint statement of the G-7 said that the bullying behaviour of a small group reveals that the US and few other countries have malicious intentions to create confrontation and disputes with China. Chinese official, said that “The US is sick, very sick. We’d like to advise the G7 to save its prescription for the US.”<sup>12</sup> Lijian further reiterated that the issue of Xinjiang, Hong Kong and Taiwan are purely China’s internal matters and such moves of G-7 contravenes the principles of the UN Charter. He urged developed democratic states, outside the power blocs of the G-7, to declare the era ends when few had to dictate the whole world.<sup>13</sup>

A spokesman for Chinese embassy in London quickly responded to criticism on China by said that “The days when global decisions were dictated by a small group of countries are long gone.”<sup>14</sup> He further said, “We always believe that countries, big or small, strong or weak, poor or rich, are equals” and the global decisions should be taken through consultation.<sup>15</sup> The Chinese embassy officials accused the United States and G-7 of using Xinjiang card to engage in political manipulation as well as to interfere in the internal affairs of China. The embassy officials in response to investigation related to origin of coronavirus, said that the pandemic is still raging around the world, and there is a need to focus on the eradication of virus rather than politicized it.<sup>16</sup>

### Conclusion

Biden administration wants to frame the post-pandemic world as a struggle between democracies and autocracies at international arena. Interestingly, there is a divergence on the policy options,

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<sup>10</sup> “EU and US similar, but split on China, Merkel says,” *Deutsche Welle*, March 26, 2021. <https://www.dw.com/en/eu-and-us-similar-but-split-on-china-merkel-says/a-57009094>

<sup>11</sup> Lodi, dawn, June 21.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Bagshaw, E. “China on G7: The era of a Bloc of countries dictating world affairs is over,” *The Sydney Morning Herald*, June 16, 2021. <https://www.smh.com.au/world/asia/china-on-g7-the-era-of-a-bloc-of-countries-dictating-world-affairs-is-over-20210616-p581g2.html>

<sup>14</sup> Angus Mcneice, “Embassy says days when G7 dictates to the world are over,” *China Daily*, June 14, 2021. <https://www.chinadailyhk.com/article/223535>

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> “China accuses G7 of ‘manipulation’ after criticism over Xinjiang and Hong Kong,” *The Guardian*, 14 June, 2021. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/14/china-accuses-g7-of-manipulation-after-criticism-over-xinjiang-and-hong-kong>

among G-7 members, with regard to dealing with China. Meanwhile, Beijing is pursuing with democratic world and is reluctant to be part of any bloc competition. However, the US remained successful in persuading some important EU allies to take concrete measures to counter expanding Chinese influence as well as to launch a massive infrastructure project in competition with that of China's BRI. Hence, despite all differences between US and EU members, as far as China is concerned, the US will follow confrontational policy vis-a-vis China. In short, Washington and some EU members' hard stance against Beijing from the G-7 platform has added further complexities in already fragile relations between China and Western world.