The PRC’s New Man in Europe, Sino-Nordic Relations, and Accusations of Genetic Warfare

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TRANSCRIPT

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A video of the event is available: https://china-insider.simplecast.com/episodes/prc-in-europe-nordic-relations-genetic-warfare

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Wilson Shirley:

Hello and welcome back to the China Insider, a podcast from the China Center at Hudson Institute. It's Tuesday, May 16th, and we have three topics to discuss today. The first is the PRC's new special representative on Eurasian affairs, Lee Hu, who is traveling this week to Russia, as well as Ukraine and several other European countries. The second is a closeup on the PRC's changing relationship with the Nordic countries and where those countries fit into today's great power competition. And finally, we'll do Miles' take on a recent statement by the PRC's Ministry of Foreign Affairs that accused the United States of preparing to wage genetically engineered biological warfare. Miles. How are you doing?

Miles Yu:

Very good, Wilson.

Wilson Shirley:

Great. So Miles, our first topic today is the PRC's new man in Europe. His name is Lee Hu, and his title is Special Representative of the Chinese government on Eurasian Affairs. He was appointed shortly after Xi Jinping's, very long postponed, call with Ukrainian president Zelensky. And the reason we're talking about him today is that as we speak, Lee is on a European tour. He's visiting Ukraine, Poland, France, Germany, and Russia. The foreign ministry says that this trip is a testament to Chinese efforts to promote peace talks and our firm commitment to peace. So Miles, who is Lee Hu and what should we expect from this trip?

Miles Yu:

Lee is just one of the minor functionaries under the directed control of Xi. I mean, obviously, no, he cannot really deviate a nano inch from whatever the supreme leader wants him to say and to do. I think China's relationship with the EU is now in a great danger, not because now China has been very different from the past, but because the EU countries right now have a renewed awakening about the China threat and the EU is something that China always play as a wage between China and the United States, no longer is the case because EU right now is playing a very important role. They have their own definition of the nature of the EU-China relationship, which is something called the systemic rivalry. Now, rivalry is right, but the keyword is a systemic could be interpreted as the extent, right? It's the coverage. It involves every aspect of the EU China relationship. But another way to interpret it is political ideological, systematic, institutional rivalry. I ask the EU Chief Asia affair person, gunner Wiggin a couple weeks ago here in Washington dc, what does systemic rivalry mean? And he specifically says, systemic is institutional, political and ideological. And that's why China's right now is having a problem playing the European card against the United States, and that's why they anticipate the diplomatic effort in Europe.

Wilson Shirley:

That is clearly the EU position. They've put that term that you just described in their strategic documents. However, a concern that some people have is that there's a gap between EU rhetoric, EU positioning. We had this speech by Ursula of underline a couple of weeks ago talking about de-risking. And then there's the concern. The gap is between EU positioning and national positioning. So there are a lot of countries in Europe that are pretty hawkish on China.
You have Lithuania as an example, the UK as an example, the Czech Republic as an example. Over the last few months though, we've seen that Germany and France talking about strategic autonomy visiting China with a lot of business leaders might not be on the same page. Do you think that that's a worry?

Miles Yu:

I don't think that page has been actually written yet. I mean, they're tried to write something on different pages, but the messages have become increasingly clear. You might have some kind of national leaders who say things that China is important, which should not ignore it, which is true. But also that doesn't necessarily mean that the EU as a whole has changed its definition of systemic rivalry. That position has not changed. As a matter of fact, I can give you also other examples. China used to be very, very successful in the last couple years, particularly before Covid in Europe. I mean they had this 17 plus one, right? Mostly central and eastern European countries with China, try to bring that sphere into its own orbit. But that's no longer 17 plus one. Three of them has quit, right? Three of 'em have quit the three Baltic countries.

And then a European Union also has enhanced collaboration with NATO. NATO has a much more active role in sort of expanding the NATO's impact to Indo-Pacific country. Japan, for example, has become very close to NATO right now. Just a couple days ago, EU convened a Indo-Pacific Country Forum. They invited a lot of countries, Japan, South Korea, Indonesia. The only country of any significance that was not invited was China. So this is a really, really big signal to the Chinese regime. And speaking of a toughening up stance on China, the EU just a few days ago reached the agreement with the United States on something that's very, very important. That is US and EU agree on enhancing anti non-market behavior and which means also to have the joint export control of EU and China. This is not exactly the cold war like in the Paris coordination committed, but it's one step very close to that.

And you have this upcoming G seven which will be held in Japan, and Europeans have a very strong present representation in G seven, of course. But the G seven primary objective is to diversity supply chain, which means that we're going to lessen all the major economies reliance on China. So all in all, I think you see this formation of a global counter China alliance. It is a not anti-China is counter Chinese government alliance. So this is no longer just a China and the United States. You see, EU also has joined the United States, Japan, South Korea, Philippines, of course in the Indo-Pacific has also been very close, and firmed up this kind of a formation of quasi coalition of democracies.

Wilson Shirley:

And at the upcoming NATO summit in Lithuania, they invited not only, I think it's now 31 NATO allies with the addition of Finland. They also invited Japan and South Korea who came to the Madrid Summit last year and they invited Australia and New Zealand as well, I believe. So why you talked about it a little bit just now, but why does that matter so much and what are some tangible ways that this can move beyond symmetry and actually lead to real world outcomes in the vein that you just suggested?

Miles Yu:

The most important significance is that China has always trying to sell the world this falsity, that all the problem the world is suffering from is caused by the United States. Therefore, China has
now taken the leadership globally to challenge Americans' leadership, Americans' interest in the world that falsity has failed miserably. As you can see, we just talked about this in last several minutes, there is something called global awareness. So China's problem is no longer conceived as a US China confrontation, rather it's the Chinese model of governance versus the race of the world. So that's very, very important as a big deal. So we have to understand that the China challenge or China threat is not regional, it's not bilateral, it's multilateral, global. And because the model of governance represented by the Chinese Communist Party is danger to us all, and I think more and more country are realizing that. So it doesn't really matter who will be the new representative from the Chinese government to sell their stories narrative to the world or what kind of message they have. It's really the Chinese government's behavior, the nature of the regime that really speaks volume.

Wilson Shirley:

So I want to continue this conversation in the second section by talking about how that global competition, that global confrontation is playing out outside of gray powers outside of the G seven countries. And there's a reason that I'm doing this at this that's a little selfish because as we're this conversation right now, normally I record in New York today I'm at a conference in Denmark, and China is front and center. Throughout this conference, when I landed in Copenhagen, I saw a big Huawei sign over a public square. And at this conference, this conference is about democracy. There was a sculpture called the Pillar of Shame, which is part of a big series that first launched to commemorate the Tiananmen Square massacre that happened in 1989. So I want to drill down on this part of the world where I am because I can see the competition that you're talking about playing out in front of me. So the Nordic countries, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden. How does China view this part of the world and has this part of the world woken up in the way that you just described?

Miles Yu:

China has this imperial design for the world. China normally views the United States, as the world hegemon, is the word they use. So they’re trying to figure out the area where US is not nearly as powerful. And so this area that China can exploit northern countries was considered by the Chinese government decades ago as such area in the Chinese foreign politics, they use some kind of a fancy scientific word. It's called a terra nulla. In other words, this territory where nobody actually can claim. And this is kind of a very obnoxious concept because they assume that there’s nobody actually there have a sovereign claim in the country. You mentioned about Dimar, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and Finland. Those are five Nordic countries. That area is also very important, not only because of the melting of the Nordic area, pav way for possible new navigation route that will greatly shorten the time and distance between Asia market and Europe, but also has strategic importance as well because the Norgate region is where the ICBM would have to pass through in order to deter the United States. So this is very important for the Chinese. So they have been trying very hard to penetrate it into that, those countries for a long time, it has not really worked really well because China claim itself is a near Arctic country. You only have Arctic country or non-arctic country. So there is no such thing called the near Arctic country. So China basically try to play the conceptual game,

Wilson Shirley:

And there they’re about a thousand miles away, which is not that near (The Nordic Regions) That's
Miles Yu:

Right. So the China tried to try to march into the Arctic Council. That didn't really, really work out very well. They also have a heavy economic infiltration, and they're sending a lot of dominating states sponsored companies to these countries to squeeze out their national brand. But also northern country were known for their nice city. They were nice pacifist. But one by one China's aggression aggressive stance in these countries has basically angered almost all other countries. So you start with the Norway. Norway is obviously a very nice country, is the home of a Nobel Peace prize each year precisely because of that. In 2009, the Nobel Prize for Peace was awarded to the Chinese Lu. This basically aroused, aroused royal anger from the Chinese government. They created a very nasty diplomatic route there between the two countries and then Sweden, you couldn't find it nicer country than Sweden in most possible wherever. But then this Chinese based kid, number one of the Swedish citizens who is a Brooks seller based out of Hong Kong, this gentleman's name, I think he's still languishing in the Chinese prison system. Not only that the, it's the reaction to deal with this issue that show China's very arrogance. So Sweden and China right now are on a very bad terms.

Wilson Shirley:

And I want to interrupt you now because in this incident, this Swedish book seller, this, you told me about this when it happened, and I couldn't believe the Chinese reaction to it because there was a Swedish NGO of journalists and writers that awarded Gui Minhai a prize after he was taken. And China's ambassador to Sweden had a quote that I think is just the epitome of wolf warrior or diplomacy that he threw out there in response to this like prize being given to this book, speller. It was quote, and this is from the Chinese ambassador to Sweden "for our friends, we have fine wine. For our enemies, we have shotguns," which you told me about that, and I just couldn't believe it when that came out.

Miles Yu:

Well, this is one of the most popular phrases used by Chinese officials all the time. It during the Korean War, it was actually created for the Americans, but that has to become some kind of diplomatic cliche. I mean, the proper description of Chinese diplomats is not a wolf warrior. It's Yahoo.

Wilson Shirley:

So let's talk about a little bit more of how these countries matter. We've talked about how China perceives them and its global ambitions, how they've woken up. When I think of the Nordic countries, I think a little bit of the niceness that you just talked about, but also their Arctic countries, which means they not only have access to the passages that you talked about, they also have access to critical minerals, rare earths, Nokia and Ericsson are 5G alternatives here in this part of the world. So why do these countries matter in a counter China coalition? What is their importance from the more Western perspective?

Miles Yu:

Well, those are natural resources, the geographical locations, but also most importantly is about the Chinese imperial concept of terra nulleus. That is China is really into the game of ownership. It doesn't want to cooperate with any other countries, any other entities. The first instance of
Chinese government is the, I want to own it, this kind of a idea. This mentality is reflected in China's attitude toward, say, global energy market. They don't want to trade. They want to buy and sell. They want to own the production chain. You can see this from this territorial claims. China has more territorial disputes with the country within its neighbors than any other country in the world. It's because China always will try to own it. So instead of sort of working out a good operable, practical arrangement to deal with it, the very historical and complicated issues of territory dispute. So that's one reason why I think in the Nordic country, when China has no particular ownership of any claim, and you have to really stop China from there. China also has a lot of new ideas about the deep sea. They believe there's nobody actually owns anything, and the space China wants to cover up some part of the celestial kingdom to claim as its own. So this idea that somehow China must own the territories that nobody actually has claim and it's very dangerous.

Wilson Shirley:

Yeah, I think that's right. So I want to close this out with a brief conversation of another quote from Chinese diplomats. I read out the former ambassador to Sweden's quote. This one came out a few days ago on May 10th from the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs itself. It's still up on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Twitter account Listeners can go and see it for themselves. But like the quote from the ambassador to Sweden, I thought this was pretty shocking. The quote, and I'll just read it out for you, Miles, is “the Pentagon has reportedly made plans for hitting opponents with genetically engineered weapons, the genomic data of Asian, Chinese, Europeans and Middle Eastern Arabs, all on a list to be collected by the US military.” So Miles, the PRC in that quote is saying that the US military is planning on hitting its opponents with genetically engineered weapons that would target them by race. Where is this coming from and what does it mean?

Miles Yu:

Several things. Number one of the most telling episodes in the last several years since Covid in particular, is that the gap between Chinese domestic propaganda and China's international propaganda has been greatly narrowed. In other words, for those of us who are familiar with Chinese's domestic propaganda, this is nothing new. This is what Chinese government is doing to its domestic population on a daily basis, rumors, unfounded speculations, and to make it feel very, very real because there's no other source of information, there's no other legal interpretative frame of information. That's why indoctrination in China is very thorough and very, very bad. Now, that model of propaganda, indoctrination, brainwashing has been brought to the international arena without the much of the hesitation in the last several years. That's why it's so shocking to the world that you see this kind of a blatant manipulation of information, but it's not new there.

Now, secondly, this falls or falls into the pattern of China's mendacity that is in every major international conflict, China always spreads rumors. Just made up about the American using chemical and biological weapons and genetic weapons in this case as well, during the Korean war, China made up the evidence accusing the United States using biologic weapons, and which was totally refuted. Even the Soviet Union at the time, which was a hundred percent behind the Chinese, were embarrassed because the lies were so pleasantly porous and evident. And of course, China also accused the United States using chemical and biologic weapons in Ukraine, in the ongoing war. I mean, which echo what the Vladimir put has been saying. So number three, you were saying about the genetic weapons targeting specific
population. This is exactly what the Chinese People's Liberation Army biologic weapons program is all about. And you can read a lot of writings that some of my colleagues and including myself also have written quite a bit about this particular topic.

Chinese government has openly admitted to international biological and chemical convention that they have such weapons to be very specific. They have one thing called population specific generator marking weapon. Let me repeat that. Population specific genetic marking technology to be used specifically in the realm of biologic weapons. This is by China. This is by their own writing. So this is something that is very alarming. So we should be paying a lot of attention to what the Chinese government is saying. Even when they're lying, they're reflecting in a very dubious way, the reality of China itself. Sure.

Wilson Shirley:

And as you talked about just now, there was a similar lie that was said during the Korean War in 1952. And a question that I have about that is it was directed domestically, as you said. So what is the goal of this domestic rhetoric when the Chinese government tells the people of China that the US is making weapons like this, or within recent memory, they said that Covid didn't come from Wuhan, it came from a military base at Fort Detrick in Maryland. What are they trying to get the Chinese people to believe? What and does it work?

Miles Yu:

Well, actually, it was not entirely directed for the Chinese audience in the 1952 case, when China alleged US use of biological weapons in the Korean War, it was actually the director at the International Arena, China accused the US use of weapons through the UN forum. And when UN forum say, listen, let's investigate China, say no, you cannot come in. So

Wilson Shirley:

Very similar to Covid, you can't come in and investigate.

Miles Yu:

Very similar to Covid. If you ask 10 people in China, what is the origin of Covid 19, nine out of 10 people probably will say fourth district, Maryland, usa. That's because that's what the Chinese communist propaganda has been saying this all along. In the meantime, China never has and will allow international inquiry, particularly the W H O team to investigate without the hindrance. So this is something that's very, very dangerous and this falls into a pattern of mendacity as I see it.

Wilson Shirley:

Yeah, and it's a pattern to get used to recognizing, accusing different countries, mostly democratic countries of behavior, of malign behavior that they themselves are doing. I think that's all that we have time for this week. Miles, thank you so much for another great conversation. Looking forward to recording another episode with you next week.

Miles Yu:
Looking forward to it too, Wilson.

Wilson Shirley:

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