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Short Curriculum Vitae – Li Yongshu

Born in Shandong Province, People's Republic of China, Dr. Li Yongshu graduated from the Ocean University of China with a bachelor's degree in English literature in 2007. Immediately after graduation, he entered the East Asian Studies Program in the Centre for East Asian Studies at the University of Bristol. Upon receiving his master's degree in 2009, he entered the Political Science Program in the Meiji University Graduate School of Political Science and Economics, and pursued studies mainly on the theme of arms trade between the European Union (EU) and China. He received his doctoral degree in Political Science in 2013, and has since performed research in areas including EU policy on high-tech export, lobbying activities in the EU, military cooperation between Ukraine and China, and Brexit. He assumed his current position in 2015 after serving as Research Associate and Lecturer in the Meiji University School of Political Science and Economics.

Evaluating the Influence of Human Rights to Policy-Making: from the Point of View of the US and the UK's China Policy

The US-UK Relation Heading towards Iceberg

At the very start of 2018, the US President, Donald Trump, continues to make waves. Although he was scheduled to attend the opening of the new US embassy in London in February after its relocation, he cancelled his trip to the United Kingdom out of

dissatisfaction with the site of the new embassy and the cost of its construction.¹ The real reasons for cancellation of the UK trip, however, are widely believed to include apprehensions over anti-Trump demonstrations near the embassy, critical remarks by UK Prime Minister, Theresa May, about far-right videos retweeted by Trump, and criticism of Trump's policy on immigration by London Mayor, Sadiq Khan. It appears that the so-called "special relationship" between the United States and the United Kingdom is not particularly important to President Trump.

The first foreign head of state to visit the United States after President Trump's inauguration was Prime Minister May (her visit began on January 26, 2017). Nevertheless, a look at the record of visits to other countries by President Trump in 2017 shows that, of the G7 countries, he has yet to visit Canada and the United Kingdom. The G7 Summit was held in Italy in May 2017, and the G20 Summit, in Germany in July 2017. Both were presumably good opportunities for President Trump to pay a visit to the United Kingdom. The US presidents have almost always visited the United Kingdom within the first year of their term.

The United States and the United Kingdom seem to have drifted apart in their relationship since the inauguration of President Trump. This state of US-UK relations, nevertheless, has been typical, particularly in respect of diplomatic ties with the People's Republic of China (hereinafter referred to as "China"). This column takes a retrospective look at the difference in outlook between the United States and United Kingdom in their relations with China while reviewing the history of these ties.

The Cold War Era

Differences between the United States and the United Kingdom as regards their diplomatic stance toward China had already surfaced in the early part of the Cold War era. Until 1972, the United States was in a confrontational relationship with China. The United Kingdom, on the other hand, recognized the government established by the Chinese Communist Party, and sent a chargé d'affaires ad interim to Beijing in 1950.²

¹ 'Donald Trump cancels February visit to UK', BBC, available at <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-42657954>, accessed on 17th January, 2018

² The UK Government at the time hoped for a swift exchange of ambassadors. However, the

Several other European countries also took this stance. The Communist Government was recognized by Sweden, Denmark, and Finland in the 1950s, France in the 1960s, and Italy and Austria in the 1970s.

Along with the diplomatic rapprochement between the United States and China, the European Community (EC), which later became the European Union (EU), likewise established diplomatic relations with China in 1975. At the time, the United Kingdom was hesitant about joining the EC. As far as the United States was concerned, the shape of EC policy was unclear, and there were apprehensions that, under the leadership of France and Germany, the EC could possibly act without regard for the US interests. Furthermore, the United States wanted to entrust the United Kingdom with the role of halting the development of any such situation. Partly as a reflection of these US intentions, the United Kingdom joined the EC in January 1973. Towards the end of the 1970s and with the start of the Reform and Openness by Deng Xiaoping, relations between the EC and China took on a tone of cooperation, and trade between them increased, too. Thereafter, ties of cooperation also deepened between the United States and China, who even began trading arms. The early 1980s similarly saw the start of arms trade between China and the United Kingdom.

Influence of the Tiananmen Square Incident

Following the Tiananmen Square Incident in June 1989, a change appeared in Western countries' perceptions of China. The United States and EC imposed an embargo on arms exports to China, based on what they regarded as human rights issues. While the attitude evinced by developed Western countries toward the Tiananmen Square Incident has basically been critical right up to the present, the diplomatic stance taken by the United Kingdom toward China has been much friendlier than that taken by the United States. Western diplomatic documents disclosed over the last few years indicate that the UK and the US policymaking regarding China in the wake of the Tiananmen Square Incident were the direct opposite of their official stances. Neither

Communist Government demanded that the UK Government back the removal of the Nationalist Government from the United Nations Security Council, and refused to appoint an ambassador to the United Kingdom until it did.

apparently were prepared to let the Tiananmen Square Incident worsen their ties with China.

Right after the Tiananmen Square Incident, the EC European Council released an official statement criticizing China. In addition to this statement, EC member countries each took initiatives against China. Belgium, Germany, and Italy, for example, halted their official development assistance (ODA), aid, and loans to China, but did not go as far as to ban arms exports to it.³ France and the Netherlands temporarily suspended diplomatic relations with China.⁴ The United Kingdom placed an embargo on arms exports to China, which put the UK in the minority.⁵

The United Kingdom, however, took an ambiguous attitude toward the unified measures and embargo against China in the EC. On June 6, 1989, the very day on which the EC released its joint statement, the UK Foreign Office announced its policy on arms exports to China already in progress. In the related opinion statement, it was noted that, among the arms currently being exported to China, the embargo covered all those usable for repression, but that there was no problem with export of any items to be mounted on aircraft.⁶ In addition, the United Nations Department of the UK Foreign Office told the government that emphasis on human rights issues at the United Nations was not in the best interests of the United Kingdom.⁷ The United Kingdom appears inclined to refrain from taking a tough attitude on human rights issues in China.

On June 12, 1989, a ministerial meeting on European Political Cooperation was held in Luxembourg. At this meeting, the UK Government expressed that positions should be taken, if not already taken by a member state; further statements could be made on the basis of the 6 June statement; however, it appeared not necessary to do so.

1. Urge that any member states who have not yet taken any specific measures to register their disapproval of the brutality of the Chinese Government should now do so. Nature of events in Peking demands firm response.

³ Eugene Kogan, 2005, *The European Union Defence Industry and the Appeal of the Chinese Market*, p. 12

⁴ Jerker Hellstrom, 2010, *The EU Arms embargo on China: a Swedish Perspective*, p. 13

⁵ Geoffrey Howe, FEC 014/3, *Statement on Events in China and Their Implications for Hong Kong*, House of Commons (6 June 1989)

⁶ Far Eastern Department, FEC 014/3 (6 June 1989), p. AS3AAU

⁷ United Nations Department, 101A (6 June 1989), p. N59AJA

2. Since many member states have already taken national measures no need for coordinated response or for a further statement at this stage.⁸

In light of this opinion, it is clear that the United Kingdom did not see a need for an embargo on arms exports to China by the EC. On some day before June 22, nevertheless, the French Government proposed to the UK Government that the EC response to China should not be confined to critical remarks but extend to the imposition of more detailed sanctions at the meeting of the European Council to be held in Madrid.⁹ A similar request was also received from the Dutch Government. As a result, on June 26, the EC imposed an embargo on arms exports to China, in the form of a suspension of military cooperation and arms trade with China by member countries.¹⁰ A similar situation prevailed in the United States at the time. Then-President George Bush was leaning in the direction of maintaining ties with China. While formally criticizing China, he was pursuing dialogue with it behind the scenes.

After the Cold War

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States came to see China as the next threat, and toughened its stance toward China. The United States linked human rights issues to the most-favored-nation status. Even after dissolving this link, it has offered hard-hitting criticism of human rights abuses in China and legislated an embargo on arms exports to China. Its ties with China were further strained by the strife in Kosovo and developments in the Taiwan Strait. In the 1990s, as if in opposition to this movement in the United States, the EU refrained from bringing up human rights issues with China, examined approaches to military cooperation, and attempted to build partnerships with it. The EU approaches to China became increasingly conciliatory. Under these circumstances, the United Kingdom also sought to improve its relations with China. It proposed lifting the EU embargo on several occasions, and resumed arms exports to China in 1997.

⁸ European Political Cooperation: Ministerial Meeting Brief No. 5 (Luxembourg: 12 June 1989), p. AS4AAQ

⁹ Secretary of State, FEC 020/7, Anglo-Chinese Relations (22 June 1989)

¹⁰ European Council, Declaration of European Council (Madrid: 26 June 1989)

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	Total
France	120	137	155	101	97	128	123	139	1000
Germany	16	12	18	8	15	20	15	14	294
United Kingdom				10	20	50	60	60	200
United States	14	2	2						18

Table 1 Arms Exports to China (unit: millions of dollars)¹¹

Table 1 shows that the United Kingdom has been steadily exporting arms to China. Although this data has not been disclosed by the UK Government, it is the most credible available at this stage. One of the current tasks in the author's research is the collection of the actual facts regarding UK arms exports to China from the 1980s to the present.

US-UK confrontation over the embargo on arms exports to China

The embargo on arms exports to China is linked to human rights issues in the wake of the Tiananmen Square Incident. Formal discussion in the EU on the lifting or continuation of the embargo appears in the EC Presidency Conclusion released at the end of 2003. In the Conclusion, the European Council stated that it was "calling on the General Affairs and External Relations Council to review the question" of removal of the embargo on arms exports to China.¹² The European Council and the representatives of the European Commission noted two points supporting a lifting of the ban. The first was that the Code of Conduct would adequately function in place of the embargo, and the second, that the embargo was not working and therefore made no sense. It was also asserted that a sufficient amount of time had passed since the Tiananmen Square Incident. The European Parliament emphasized the human rights problems in China and opposed a lifting of the embargo, but did not raise any objection to the application of the Code of Conduct.¹³ The European Council, European Commission, and European Parliament shared the perception that the Code of Conduct would adequately function (to prevent arms exports) in place of the embargo. In addition, no representatives from

¹¹ Unit: Million US Dollars. Extracts from SIPRI Arms Transfers Database, data available from <http://www.sipri.org/databases/armstransfers/armstransfers>, accessed 30 December, 2017

¹² European Council, 12 December 2003, Presidency Conclusion

¹³ European Parliament (17 December, 2003), available at <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20031217+ITEM-003+DOC+XML+V0//EN>, accessed on 26 October, 2017

any country, including the United Kingdom, mentioned the strategic interest of the United States, a partner of the EU.

The United States was adamantly opposed to the removal of the EU embargo on arms exports to China. EU Trade Commissioner, Peter Mandelson, a close friend of former UK Prime Minister, Tony Blair, commented, “Washington would be wrong to pick a fight” with Europe over the issue.¹⁴ The embargo on arms exports to China consequently remained in place due to US opposition, but the stance taken by the United Kingdom was clearly pro-Chinese.

Obama administration and thereafter

The divergence between the United States and the United Kingdom as regards policy on China continued under the Obama administration. In March 2015, the UK Government announced that it was becoming a founding member of the Chinese-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB).¹⁵ In response, the United States stated that it was “wary about a trend of constant accommodation of China.”¹⁶ A human rights group also released a statement on the UK decision to join the AIIB, with particular concern about the autonomy of Hong Kong. In this statement, it voiced deep disappointment with the way in which the governments of various countries were according precedence to economic interests and compromising on human rights issues in China.¹⁷ Regarding the 24th UK-China Human Rights Dialogue held in Beijing in June 2017, the media were told only that the discussions covered “the full range of human rights concerns.”¹⁸ Virtually all conferences for dialogue with China on human rights by the United Kingdom and other European countries are held behind closed

¹⁴ ‘Arms embargo against China must stay, says Bush’, Asianews, available at <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Arms-embargo-against-China-must-stay,-says-Bush-2627.html>, accessed on 10 January, 2018

¹⁵ UK announces plans to join Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank’, UK Government, available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-announces-plans-to-join-asian-infrastructure-investment-bank>, accessed on 17 January, 2018

¹⁶ ‘US anger at Britain joining Chinese-led investment bank AIIB’, The Guardian, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/mar/13/white-house-pointedly-asks-uk-to-use-its-voice-as-part-of-chinese-led-bank>, accessed on 17 January, 2018

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ ‘Mark Field welcomes continued UK-China dialogue on human rights’, UK Government, available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/mark-field-welcomes-continued-uk-china-dialogue-on-human-rights>, accessed on 17 January, 2018

doors. This situation invites vehement criticism from human rights groups.

It was learned that, in spite of this criticism about the UK's pro-Chinese policy, former Prime Minister, David Cameron, was appointed to be a manager of the AIIB in December of 2017 and placed in charge of managing funds totalling about one billion dollars.¹⁹ This step was taken to ensure the economic advancement of the United Kingdom after its exit from the EU, and was praised by the government as ushering in a "golden era" in UK-China relations.²⁰

Thoughts on human rights

In the wake of the Tiananmen Square Incident, human rights issues in China became a major policy factor concerning China in both the United States and the United Kingdom. In addition, with the end of the Cold War, human rights issues in China took on a more political flavor. The discussion on human rights, however, is nothing more than a tool. Diplomacy toward China revolves around economic interests in the United Kingdom and security in the United States. Following the inauguration of the Trump administration in 2017, the US Government stopped making its former assertion that it would aid Taiwan "in order to defend democracy" and proclaimed that it would do so "if China doesn't make concessions on trade."²¹ To some degree, this could be termed the result of a resonance by the United Kingdom and the United States.

¹⁹ 'David Cameron takes senior role in China infrastructure fund', Financial Times, available at <https://www.ft.com/content/07a05ac2-e238-11e7-97e2-916d4fbac0da>, accessed on 17 January, 2018

²⁰ The UK Government, available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-phase-in-golden-era-for-uk-china-relations>, accessed on 17 January, 2018

²¹ 'Trump agrees to honour 'One China' policy despite threats', BBC, available at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-38927891>, accessed on 17 January, 2018