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Cooperation between China and Europe in Combating the Spread of the Coronavirus Outbreak

LANGJIA Zeren¹

Introduction

The Coronavirus ruthlessly opened the new year and stole the show at the front-page headlines of international news. In the Chinese media, it is an oft-used parlance that the outbreak of the pneumonia caused by the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is not merely a crisis but also an ordeal for the country.² Yes, that's true. It is a crisis because the Coronavirus is a huge menace for nationwide public security, and it is an ordeal because the Coronavirus tests China's competence of standing up to the very threat. To place ground zero of the outbreak Wuhan and Hubei province on lockdown is one of the most old-fashioned but decisive measures taken by the Chinese government to contain the spread of the virus. Since then, China has implemented serious actions and cooperated closely with Europe and other international communities, including the World Health Organization (WHO).³ Right after China's decision to quarantine the epicenter of the epidemic Wuhan on 23 January 2020 and the whole country later, international community and countries came to be continuously supportive for China in its efforts to fight the Coronavirus outbreak. In particular, the EU and European countries stood ready to aid China at the very outset of the outbreak. While some countries having issued travel bans to and from China, the EU and European countries did not show any hesitation to provide aid and have been "working on all fronts"

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² Viruses and diseases are named on a basis of different processes and purposes. Viruses are named according to their genetic structure to facilitate the development of diagnostic tests, vaccines and medicines, which is done by virologists and their community, and thus viruses are named by the International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses (ICTV). Diseases are named to enable discussion on disease prevention, spread, transmissibility, severity and treatment, which falls in the function scope of WHO's human disease preparedness and response, and thus diseases are named by WHO in the International Classification of Diseases (ICD). On 11 February 2020, ICTV announced "severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2)" as the name of the new virus due to its genetic proximity to the coronavirus responsible for the SARS outbreak of 2003 (but these two viruses are different). On the same day, WHO announced "COVID-19" as the new disease.

³ On 28 January 2020, the Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO), Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, with his delegation, met Xi Jinping, President of the People's Republic of China in Beijing. The two sides exchanged the latest information on the novel Coronavirus 2019 (2019-nCoV) outbreak and agreed upon a series of containment measures to bring its spread under control. However, this report will not focus on cooperation between China and the WHO, which certainly does not mean to play down the importance of the bilateral cooperation.

to help the Chinese authorities to fight the disease¹.

This report aims to explore cooperation between China and Europe in combating the spread of the Coronavirus from five respects, including intensive interactions between high-level leaderships, evacuation of European nationals from Wuhan, European material support, European moral support and China's confidence in winning the battle of the 'plague'. The beginning part covers the intensive communications between the Chinese leaders and their European counterparts and shows the strong solidarity and support from high-level European leaderships, which is followed by the complex issue of evacuating European nationals from Wuhan in the second part. Following the third part that presents how the EU and European countries help China through considerable material support, the fourth part gives an overall view of moral support from all walks of life of Europe towards China in its efforts to curb the outbreak. In the final part, the endeavors are made to comprehensively interpret China's confidence vis-à-vis such an urgent challenge.

Data collection for this report, if not otherwise specified, closed as of 29 February 2020.

Part One

Intensive Communications

Between Chinese and European High-level Leaderships

Since the outbreak of the Coronavirus, China and its European partners have witnessed a series of high-level exchanges signaling the strong determination to fight together the spread of the Coronavirus. In particular, at this very critical and special moment, an intensive line-up of talks became the optimal and safest fashion of diplomatic interaction between Chinese and European leaderships in high positions.

On 22 January, Chinese President Xi Jinping, via a phone call, spoke to German Chancellor Angela Merkel and emphasized China's willingness to strengthen with the international community, including Germany and the WHO. In the conversation, Chancellor Merkel expressed her appreciation of China's efforts to respond in a timely manner on the outbreak of the pneumonia, to stay open and transparent and to proactively carry out international cooperation, and added that her country would do its best to provide China with support and assistance².

On the same day, Chinese President Xi, via phone call, spoke to French President Emmanuel Macron, who expressed that France supports China to proactively address the outbreak and would like to strengthen health cooperation with China.³ At the same time, President Xi sent a positive signal to the outside world about the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. By doing so, the international community, including France, will have a better understanding of the epidemic situation in China and know how to further react

¹ Wendy Wu and Catherine Wong, "Europe 'working on all fronts' with China to help fight Coronavirus outbreak", South China Morning Post, 4 February 2020, retrieved: www.scmp.com (1 March 2020).

² "Xi, Merkel exchange greetings over phone ahead of Chinese Lunar New Year", www.xinhuanet.com, 22 January 2020, retrieved from: http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-01/22/c_138727003.htm (24 February 2020).

³ "Xi, Macron exchange greetings over phone ahead of Chinese New Year", www.xinhuanet.com, 22 January 2020, retrieved from: http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-01/22/c_138727021.htm (24 February 2020).

to the epidemic in the following time, which also explains the significance of timely communications between high-level leaderships.

On 18 February, President Xi had a telephone conversation again with French President Macron who showed solidarity and support at this critical moment of China's fight against the epidemic outbreak¹. President Macron called twice since the Coronavirus outbreak, which is widely interpreted as a strong sign of profound friendship between the two countries.

Following the second call between President Xi and President Macron, President Xi also talked with UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson on the phone and once again stressed China's firm stance and strong determination to fight against the virus. President Xi emphasized that "since the outbreak, China has put people's life and health first, fully leveraged the strengths of the Chinese system, and rallied the whole nation to fight the epidemic with the most comprehensive, rigorous and thorough measures"².

Since the outset of the outbreak, President Xi "has used diplomacy to boost international confidence in the fight against the epidemic"³. In the series of talks with high-level European leaderships, Chinese leaders keep sending important messages that the Chinese government has been making tremendous epidemic-control efforts and prioritizing the life, safety and health of its people, calling on international community and countries to recognize, respect and support China's continuous endeavors under the personal direction of President Xi Jinping and the professional recommendations from the WHO, and emphasizing China's transparency and openness to share the information and its confidence, capability and determination to win the battle against the Coronavirus. It is of great importance to keep international community and countries informed about China's efforts and Coronavirus situation in the country in order to gain time for getting prepared. At the same time, China highly appreciates and pays close attention to international support to and recognition of its efforts to combat the Coronavirus epidemic.

On 1 February, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang talked on the phone with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen about the Novel Coronavirus outbreak⁴. Premier Li made the position of the Chinese government very clear on the one hand that China has given top priority to its people's life, safety and health and was making every effort to ensure medical supplies and hoped on the other hand that the EU could facilitate China's emergency procurement of medical supplies from EU countries. Meanwhile, he also said that China is ready to strengthen information exchanges and cooperation with the international community. In response, Von der Leyen replied that the EU respects and recognizes China's

¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, "President Xi Jinping Speaks with French President Emmanuel Macron on the Phone", 18 February 2020, retrieved: <https://www.fmprc.gov.cn> (25 February 2020).

² Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, "President Xi Jinping Speaks with UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson on the Phone", 18 February 2020, retrieved: <https://www.fmprc.gov.cn> (25 February 2020).

³ Cao Desheng, "Xi's diplomacy bolsters epidemic fight", 26 February 2020, China Daily, retrieved: <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202002/26/WS5e5568f7a31012821727a43b.html> (26 February 2020).

⁴ China Global Television Network, "Chinese Premier Li holds phone call with European Commission president", youtube video, 1 February 2020, retrieved: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nknipc4hwgo> (25 February 2020).

containment measures and stands ready to try its best to help China and to coordinate with relevant Member States in terms of China's procurement of medical supplies. The same idea was also expressed during the phone conversation between Premier Li and Chancellor Merkel on 9 February. Premier Li hoped that Germany, along with international community, "can stay rational, support China's efforts in containing the epidemic, maintain normal bilateral exchanges, and strengthen international cooperation on public health security" and that necessary convenience is offered for China to purchase medical supplies through commercial channels¹. In response, Chancellor Merkel, acknowledging that the decisive measures taken by the Chinese government have earned strong support from Chinese people, said that Germany has never taken any excessive restrictive measures and reversely has coordinated with relevant EU Member States with an aim of helping China contain the outbreak². Besides, Premier Li sent an important and positive message that the Chinese government and its people have "confidence, resolution and ability to win the battle against the epidemic"³.

On 4 February, Yang Jiechi, Member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and Director of the Office of the Central Commission for Foreign Affairs, spoke to Mark Sedwill, Cabinet Secretary and National Security Adviser of the United Kingdom, on the phone, asking Sedwill to realize China's epidemic-control endeavors, respect professional recommendations from the WHO and protect UK-China cooperation⁴. Sedwill replied that China's great efforts and efficiency are fully acknowledged by the UK, who shares and upholds the critical importance of pacifying the panicky public, and that the UK is ready to further its cooperation with China and try its best to maximize its assistance to China⁵. On 14 February, following the event of China-Germany strategic dialogue on diplomacy and security in Berlin, Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi said at a joint press conference with his German counterpart Heiko Maas that "A concerted international response as well as mutual understanding, trust and support across borders is required to fight the novel Coronavirus epidemic"⁶. In the interview with Reuters after the strategic dialogue, FM Wang Yi called for international cooperation by saying that "This

¹ Beijing Review, "Chinese, German Leaders Hold Phone Talks on Novel Coronavirus", 10 February 2020, retrieved: http://www.bjreview.com/Latest_Headlines/202002/t20200210_800192303.html (25 February 2020).

² Ibid., Beijing Review, "Chinese, German Leaders...", 10 February 2020.

³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, "Li Keqiang Holds Telephone Talks with President of European Commission Ursula von der Leyen", 1 February 2020, retrieved: <https://www.fmprc.gov.cn> (25 February 2020).

⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, "Director of the Central Commission for Foreign Affairs Office Yang Jiechi Speaks to UK Cabinet Secretary and National Security Adviser on the Phone", 5 February 2020, retrieved: https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1740696.shtml (25 February 2020). The UK left the EU on 31 January 2020 and is not an EU member state. However, the EU and the UK cooperated together in fighting the outbreak and particularly on the evacuation issue.

⁵ China.org.cn, "Senior Chinese, British officials hold phone talks on Coronavirus, bilateral ties", 5 February 2020, retrieved: http://www.china.org.cn/world/Off_the_Wire/2020-02/05/content_75673131.htm (25 February 2020).

⁶ Xin Hua, "Virus knows no boundaries', Chinese FM seeks global cooperation", The Express Tribune, 14 February 2020, retrieved: www.tribune.com.pk (25 February 2020).

disease knows no boundaries, [and] it requires a collective response from the international community”¹. It not only takes the international community and international joint efforts to effectively bring the epidemic under control, but also needs international understanding regarding the epidemic-control measures that may lead to some travel restrictions temporarily.

The frequent high-level exchanges between Chinese and European leaderships have demonstrated that European partners extended continuous solidarity, support and sympathies for China and that both sides have intention of better promoting mutual understanding. Through these high-level communications, China is also seeking for international understanding of its efforts to fight against the virus. The Chinese government attaches great importance not merely to how Chinese citizens view its endeavors, but also to how the international public perceives its efforts. The international community is strongly hoped to recognize, understand and support China’s efforts to bring the Coronavirus outbreak under control, and international opinions are highly valued and taken as a criterion of evaluating the work of the Chinese government.

Part Two

China’s Proactive Coordination

For the Evacuation of European Nationals

The EU and its Member States have had intensive communications with Chinese authorities with regard to the evacuation of European nationals. However, it cannot be denied that repatriation is “a complex operation”.² It deals with various procedures, such as to screen, quarantine and even hospitalize evacuees. At the meantime, evacuation also deals with other issues, of which (dual) nationality stands out.

At the beginning days of the Coronavirus outbreak, Chinese authorities encouraged foreign nationals to stay indoors and take protection measures locally and did not suggest foreign countries to evacuate their nationals in a rush. This is partly because the then situation was not as serious as it became to be at a later time and partly because China was confident in bringing the outbreak under control. However, European countries proposed to repatriate their nationals when some of their nationals sent the request to leave China. One explanation for this scenario is that these countries worried about the safety and health of their expats, and the other explanation is that travel restrictions got stricter in China and lockdown areas were quickly expanded, which would make it difficult for European nationals to leave China if they wanted to do so afterwards. Consequently, when European countries insisted to evacuate their nationals, the Chinese government chose to respect their decision to bring their nationals back home and proactively coordinated with them for the evacuation operation. Nevertheless, it needs to be noted that safety and well-being of foreign nationals in China are equally valued. As Chinese Vice FM Ma Zhaoxu conveyed, during the third briefing on the epidemic control of the COVID-19 on 19 February, FM Wang Yi’s verbal message to

¹ TODAY, “Epidemic under control” - Quotes from interview with senior China diplomat”, 14 February 2020, retrieved: <https://www.todayonline.com/world/epidemic-under-control-quotes-interview-senior-china-diplomat> (25 February 2020).

² EURACTIV.com with AFP, “600 Europeans seeking to leave China amid virus: EU”, 30 January 2020, retrieved: www.euractiv.com (29 February 2020).

diplomatic envoys in China that the Chinese government attaches great importance to and will take all the necessary measures to protect the safety and well-being of foreign nationals in China¹.

Evacuation work is not easy. That's why divergent opinions on the issue exist. Le Figaro news reported², Beijing resisted European countries' efforts to evacuate their nationals and saw this operation as distrust of China's capability of tackling the crisis. This possibility cannot be ruled out considering the complexity of evacuating foreign nationals. However, on 28 January, following a request for assistance from the European Commission to provide consular support to EU citizens in Wuhan, France activated the EU Civil Protection Mechanism, under which the Commission could cover the cost of the two flights planned for repatriations, in order to coordinate the repatriation of European nationals from Wuhan (the epicentre of the epidemic)³. According to the EU commissioner for crisis management Janez Lenarčič, "There are a number of EU citizens in China who would like to leave the country, the current number is about 600, and they cannot do so at the moment," and those affected come from Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Germany, Spain, Finland, France, Italy, Latvia, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania and Britain.⁴ By the time, some non-EU Member States also participated in the Mechanism, including Iceland, Norway, Serbia, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Turkey⁵. The European Commission has been playing an important role in coordinating the evacuation work both among the EU member states and with Chinese authorities. More importantly, the Commission provides generous funding to EU Member States to cover up to 75% of the transport costs of these repatriation flights via the EU Civil Protection Mechanism, and its 24/7 Emergency Response Coordination Centre has been coordinating repatriation flights with EU MSs⁶.

While the US evacuated first on 28 January (and then on 30 January and 2 February), France is the first EU country repatriating its citizens. However, France would first evacuate nationals without symptoms and then those showing symptoms at a later, though without giving specified date⁷. The requirements for evacuation are French citizenship and good health condition. The first evacuation flight carrying 180 evacuees left Wuhan to Marseille on 30 January, the second one with 291 evacuees took the same route on 2 February, and the third one with 28 French nationals and 36 foreigners landed in Paris from Wuhan on

¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, "State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi's Verbal Message to Diplomatic Envoys in China", 21 February 2020, retrieved: <https://www.fmprc.gov.cn> (26 February 2020).

² Sébastien Falletti, "Coronavirus: la Chine renâcle à l'évacuation des Français de Wuhan", Le Figaro, 29 January 2020, retrieved: www.lefigaro.fr (29 February 2020).

³ EURACTIV.com with AFP, "600 Europeans seeking to leave China amid virus: EU", 30 January 2020, retrieved: www.euractiv.com (29 February 2020).

⁴ Ibid., EURACTIV.com with AFP, "600 Europeans seeking...", 30 January 2020.

⁵ European Commission, "Coronavirus: EU Civil Protection Mechanism activated for the repatriation of EU citizens", Press release, Brussels, 28 January 2020, retrieved: www.ec.europa.eu (29 February 2020).

⁶ European Commission, "The EU's Response to COVID-19", 24 February 2020, retrieved: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/qanda_20_307 (26 February 2020). For details about the number of repatriated citizens and flights, see the website of the European Commission.

⁷ U.S. News, "Countries Evacuating Nationals From Coronavirus-Hit Areas", 17 February 2020, retrieved: www.usnews.com (27 February 2020).

21 February¹. When the evacuees arrived in France, at the request of the countries concerned, most European nationals were transferred to their countries of origin.² To leave Coronavirus-hit Wuhan was considered as a precautionary containment measure by the French Consulate General in Wuhan, who was in conjunction with the Chinese authorities.³ Most importantly, the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs' Crisis and Support Center (CDCS) coordinated and led the repatriation operation in coordination with the Ministry for Solidarity and Health, the Ministry for the Armed Forces, and the Ministry of the Interior on the one hand, and in close coordination with foreign partners, notably EU institutions and its member states and the third countries concerned on the other hand.⁴ For instance, French Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Jean-Yves Le Drian had talked about the repatriation with his Chinese counterpart FM Wang Yi. So far, three evacuation flights successfully carried French nationals back to French territory. Le Drian "hailed Chinese authorities for assisting the departures of all French nationals who wanted to leave,"⁵ and "France wishes to underscore the effective cooperation with the Chinese authorities that made the smooth conduct of this operation possible."⁶ However, all French diplomatic personnel are not back in France, but Minister said that "If by chance there are difficult cases suspected, a medical plane will be sent."⁷

Likewise, the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) has been proactively taking measures. On 29 January, a British Foreign Office spokesperson said, "We continue working urgently to organise a flight to the UK as soon as possible" and "remain in close contact with the Chinese authorities and conversations are ongoing at all levels"⁸. Encouraging to leave China became one of the first precaution measures taken by the British side. As the foreign secretary Dominic Raab said in a statement that: "We now advise British nationals in China to leave the country if they can, to minimise their risk of exposure to the virus."⁹ However, Britons in China are not so happy with this unplanned advice of 'if they can'. Some British expats said, the advice left them 'baffled' and put them 'in an impossible position'. The Shadow Foreign Secretary, Emily Thornberry, also accused British government of abandoning Britons, saying that

¹ Finnish Broadcasting Company, "Finns arrive in France after repatriation from Wuhan", 21 February 2020, retrieved: www.yle.fi (1 March 2020). This is the source for the information about the third French evacuation operation.

² French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, "Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) – Repatriation operations involving direct flights organized by France", 2 February 2020, retrieved: www.diplomatie.gouv.org.fr (1 March 2020).

³ Consulat général de France à Wuhan, «Coronavirus 2019-nCov », 26 January 2020, retrieved : www.cn.ambafrance.org (28 February 2020).

⁴ Ibid., French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, "Coronavirus (2019-nCoV)...", 2 February 2020.

⁵ RFI, "Second plane of evacuees from China lands in France", 2 February 2020 (updated on 3 Feb.), retrieved: www.rfi.fr (1 March 2020).

⁶ Ibid., French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, "Coronavirus (2019-nCoV)...", 2 February 2020.

⁷ RFI, "Second plane of evacuees from China lands in France", 2 February 2020 (updated on 3 Feb.), retrieved: www.rfi.fr (1 March 2020).

⁸ GOV.UK, "UK assisted departure from Wuhan, China: Foreign Office statement", 29 January 2020, retrieved: www.gov.uk (27 February 2020).

⁹ Aamna Mohdin, Lily Kuo, Patrick Wintour and Jedidajah Otte, "Coronavirus crisis: Raab urges Britons to leave China", The Guardian, 4 February 2020, retrieved: www.theguardian.com (27 February 2020).

“How on earth has the Foreign Office not got plans and protocols in place for how these crises are managed.”¹ Apparently, the British Foreign Office underestimated the complexity of evacuation. Exiting from China for expats is neither an easy nor a simple issue because a series of concerns need to be clarified, including job arrangement, children’s schooling and families. On the other hand, the British Foreign Office advises “against all travel to Hubei Province and all but essential travel to the rest of mainland China”² so as to reduce the risks of being infected and the pressure for local medical equipment. The recommended ban was partly due to concerns that “the Chinese government is struggling to control the spread of the virus, but also because of the dwindling number of British officials who remain in the country”³. In doing so, the burden for China can also be abated.

On 31 January, the first evacuation flight left Coronavirus-hit Wuhan for RAF Brize Norton, from where eighty-three Britons were transported to Arrowe Park Hospital by bus and the remaining twenty-seven non-British evacuees (including 4 Danish citizens and one Norwegian) later landed in Spain, which was processed by EU countries⁴. The first evacuation flight was ensured after the original one planned for Thursday (one day before) failed to get clearance from Chinese authorities⁵. As there are not so many Spanish expats in Wuhan, Spain took a joint evacuation action with the UK. This is clearly in line with what Spain’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that “Close coordination is being carried out with the rest of the European partners to expedite the necessary procedures, and also with the Chinese authorities in compliance with the sanitary protocols required for repatriation.”⁶ On 8 February, the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office chartered a second evacuation flight to repatriate British and other European nationals from Wuhan with over 200 passengers on board totally,⁷ which landed at a Royal Air Force base in central England on 9 February⁸. It took lots of efforts to witness the safe scenarios of the evacuation flights, just as what Matt Crow, First Secretary (Foreign and Security Policy) at the UK Embassy in Beijing, said that “Our colleagues in Beijing and London had been working long hours for many days to make the flight happen, building up good relationships with the local authorities and sorting out much

¹ Ibid., Aamna Mohdin, Lily Kuo, Patrick Wintour and Jedidajah Otte, “Coronavirus crisis...”, 4 February 2020.

² GOV.UK, “Coronavirus outbreak: flights from China”, 5 February 2020, news story, retrieved: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/corona-virus-outbreak-flights-from-china> (27 February 2020).

³ Ibid., Aamna Mohdin, Lily Kuo, Patrick Wintour and Jedidajah Otte, “Coronavirus crisis...”, 4 February 2020.

⁴ According to the website of GOV.UK, there are 41 foreign nationals in the evacuation flights, but the number of 83 British nationals are confirmed and the same in different media.

⁵ ITV News, “Evacuated Britons to land in UK after flight from Coronavirus-hit Wuhan”, 31 January 2020, retrieved: <https://www.itv.com> (27 February 2020).

⁶ Tara John and Tatiana Arias, “These countries have evacuated citizens from Wuhan because of the Coronavirus”, 29 January 2020, retrieved: www.edition.cnn.com (27 February 2020).

⁷ GOV.UK, “Evacuation plane departs Wuhan for UK”, Press release, 8 February 2020, retrieved: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/evacuation-plane-departs-wuhan-for-uk> (27 February 2020).

⁸ U.S.NEWS, “Countries Evacuating Nationals From Coronavirus-Hit Areas”, 17 February 2020, retrieved: www.usnews.com (27 February 2020).

needed medical supplies with help from our colleagues across the world.”¹

Following the UK evacuation, the German government sent a military flight and repatriated 102 German citizens and 22 their dependents from Wuhan to Frankfurt on 1 February², but two evacuees were confirmed positive at the designated hospital in Frankfurt. By 16 February, it is said that all these evacuees were released and reunited with their families after they finished two weeks of quarantine in Gernersheim³. On 9 February, twenty German evacuees as the second evacuation group arrived in Berlin from Wuhan via Oxford by a British charter jet also carrying some 200 Britons and other European citizens and by a connection flight respectively⁴. The third evacuation flight, which is a gray Air Force Airbus, took off by carrying 15 Germans from Wuhan to Stuttgart on 21 February.⁵ Given that Chinese side helped and coordinated on German repatriation, Chancellor Merkel extended her thanks to Chinese government for supporting and helping German expats in China⁶.

On 31 January, Italy became the first European country to declare state of emergency (by Italian Council of Ministers) for six months in a response to the first two Coronavirus infections in the country.⁷ As these two cases are from Coronavirus-hit Wuhan and visiting Rome via Milan and Parma, it made the community atmosphere tense in a sudden. On the other hand, according to the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, the Italian community in China is composed of over 11,600 people, over 80 of which are in the area of Wuhan, of which approximately 70 Italian nationals requested to leave Wuhan⁸. Thus, it urged the Italian government to take proper and prompt measures and bring them home with an aim of protecting the safety and health of Italian expats. It is said that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Italy made the evacuation plan and communicated the plan with Wuhan-based Italian nationals, who were said to refuse Italian government’s offer as they considered it risky to evacuate together with French citizens (who were supposed to move from Wuhan to Changsha by bus), which is Italy’s original

¹ GOV.UK, “My pride in evacuation of Coronavirus Britons from Wuhan – Matt Crow”, 27 February 2020, retrieved: www.gov.uk (27 February 2020).

² Xu Qingyang, “浅析新冠疫情下外国撤侨行动[An Analysis of Evacuation of Foreign Nationals since the Coronavirus Outbreak]”, 18 February 2020, retrieved: www.pkulaw.com (28 February 2020).

³ “德9名新冠肺炎患者出院首批撤侨归国者结束隔离[9 infected patients were discharged from hospital and all the evacuees of the first evacuation flight finished their quarantine]”, 18 February 2020, retrieved: www.chinanews.com (28 February 2020).

⁴ Imanuel Marcus, “German Evacuees from Wuhan Arrive in Berlin”, The Berlin Spectator, 22 February 2020, retrieved: www.berlinspectator.com (28 February 2020).

⁵ Tobias Becker, Violetta Sadri, Melissa Sperber and Jason Blaschke, “CORONAVIRUS: SO GEHT'S DEN CHINA-RÜCKKEHRERN IM QUARANTÄNE-HOTEL [Coronavirus: How are the China Returnees in the Quarantine Hotel]”, 24 February 2020, retrieved: www.echo24.de (1 March 2020).

⁶ The State Council of the People’s Republic of China, “Premier Li, German chancellor hold phone talks on anti-epidemic campaign”, 9 February 2020, retrieved: http://english.www.gov.cn/premier/news/202002/09/content_WS5e4026b9c6d0a585c76cad43.html (25 February 2020).

⁷ RT, “Italian Council of Ministers declares state of emergency due to Coronavirus health risk”, 31 January 2020, retrieved: www.rt.com (27 February 2020).

⁸ Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, “Statement to the press by Minister Luigi Di Maio on the Coronavirus”, 31 January 2020, retrieved: www.esteri.it (27 February 2020).

plan (to cooperate with France). The Italian government's first evacuation flight carrying 56 Italian nationals from Wuhan took off on Sunday night and landed at the military airport near Rome on 3 February¹. Another ten Italians chose to stay in Wuhan and one had to stay in a local hospital due to a fever². On the same day, at the Foreign Ministry, Italian FM Luigi Di Maio received Chinese Ambassador in Rome, Li Junhua, pledged Italy's heartfelt support to China to cope with the emergency, and thanked Ambassador Li for the collaboration by the Chinese Authorities in repatriating the Italian expats from Wuhan and the surrounding towns³.

There are many other European nationals living in Wuhan and Hubei. However, considering the less population of each country, these countries chose to cooperate with major EU countries. As Dutch Foreign Minister Stef Blok said, The Netherlands is preparing the voluntary evacuation of 20 Dutch nationals and their families from Hubei and is finalizing arrangements with EU partners and Chinese authorities⁴. For detailed information about the evacuation of European nationals, see the Table 2.1 below.

Table 2.1: Evacuation of European Nationals from Wuhan						
Departure Date	Countries	Destinations	Flight	No. of Evacuees	Quarantine	
30 Jan. 2020	France	Wuhan-Istres, Marseille	French military plane	180 in total	Carry-le-Rouet	
31 Jan. 2020	UK	Wuhan-Oxford, England	Wamos Air plane	83 Britons	Arrowe Park Hospital	
				27 Non-British		
1 Feb.	Germany	Wuhan-Fran	German air	124 Germans	Germersheim	

¹ TheLocal, "Coronavirus: Italians evacuated from China quarantined in Rome", 3 February 2020, retrieved: www.thelocal.it (27 February 2020).

² LaRepubblica, "Coronavirus, test negativo su un paziente irlandese sbarcato ieri a Civitavecchia. Tutte le notizie: le vittime salgono a 361", 3 February 2020, retrieved: www.repubblica.it (27 February 2020).

³ Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, "Meeting of Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio with the Ambassador in Rome of the People's Republic of China, Li Junhua", 3 February 2020, retrieved: www.esteri.it (27 February 2020).

⁴ U.S.News, "Countries Evacuating Nationals From Coronavirus-Hit Areas", 17 February 2020, retrieved: www.usnews.com (27 February 2020).

2020			kfurt	force	and 20+ foreigners	
2 Feb. 2020	France	Wuhan-Istres, Marseille	French civilian plane Airbus A380	64 French nationals out of 291 evacuees ¹	A site at nearby Aix-en-Provence	
2 Feb. 2020	Italy	Wuhan-Rome	Government's repatriation flight	56 Italian nationals	In a military hospital	
8 Feb. 2020	UK	Wuhan-Oxford	British jet; from Oxford to Berlin by another flight	Ca. 200 Britons 20 Germans Other Europeans	Oxford Berlin	
20 Feb. 2020	France	Wuhan-Paris	An EU-organized French evacuation flight	28 French people, 26 foreigners including Finns	Normandy	
21 Feb. 2020	Germany	Wuhan-Stuttgart	Air Force Airbus	15 Germans	Esslingen	
Note	In all cases, a fortnight quarantine is required immediately upon their arrivals in final destinations. Departure date refers to the take-off time in China.					

Source: Elaborated by the author from open data.

Part Three

Material Support from the European Union

And European Countries

¹ 254 passengers: 64 French nationals and eligible persons as well as 190 foreigners, including 135 nationals from the EU (Austria, Belgium[9], Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Czech Republic, Romania, Slovakia and Sweden) and 55 nationals of third countries (Brazil, Georgia, North Macedonia, Mauritius, Mexico, Peru, the United Kingdom, Rwanda, Serbia, the Seychelles and Switzerland); 37 support staff, including 31 French nationals (25 government officials and 6 employees of the aircraft charter company) and 6 consular officials of third countries; The two evacuation planes (twice) chartered by the French government also delivered medical equipment to Wuhan, donated by France to China to help address the Coronavirus crisis.

Following information from China about the need for protective equipment, the EU's Emergency Response Coordination Centre immediately coordinated all EU Member States to facilitate the delivery of needed personal protective equipment¹. The EU has supported China in various ways. Firstly, the Commission, under the Cross-border Health Threat Decision, coordinates with Member States through three key mechanisms (the Early Warning and Response System, the Health Security Committee, and the Health Security Committee's Communicators' network), which "support cooperation, rapid exchange of information, swift monitoring and coordination of preparedness and response measures to COVID-19"; secondly, the Commission, with support from relevant EU agencies, is providing technical guidance related to case definition for diagnosis, infection prevention and control in health care settings, updated information on therapeutics and vaccines, etc.; thirdly, the Commission, with an aim of boosting global preparedness, prevention and containment of the Coronavirus, offered fund that is allocated to various sectors; fourthly, the Commission, through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism, has been coordinating the delivery of assistance to China and financing the transport costs of EU Member States' repatriation flights². Specifically, as an immediate response, EU Member States, under the call of the EU's Emergency Response Coordination Centre, had mobilized a total of 12 tons of protective equipment by 1 February 2020.³ As of 21 February, over 30.5 tonnes of personal protective equipment (including surgical masks, gloves, thermometers, protective clothing and disinfectant) to China has been provided by France, Germany, Italy, Latvia and Estonia, and the transport costs were co-financed by the EU Civil Protection Mechanism⁴. The Commission said, the EU stands ready to provide for any further assistance to China in its efforts to protect frontline health worker and contain the outbreak. Of the 30.5 tonnes of protective equipment, Italy sent 1.5 tonnes of protective overalls and masks to the Chinese Red Cross in Beijing on 14 February, and a 20-tonne cargo of the protective equipment was sent by an Airbus A380 chartered by France taking off from Paris Charles de Gaulle Airport for Wuhan on 19 February and French support accounts for the majority (17 out of 20 tonnes)⁵. The 20-tonne cargo action was coordinated by the Crisis and Support Center of the French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, in close collaboration with the French Embassy in Beijing and the French Consulate General in Wuhan, and the contributions are composed of support from the public sectors mobilized by the French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Solidarity and Health, the financial support of the LVMH group, which agreed to join this operation, as well as contributions from civil society, in particular the Alumni Association of

¹ Delegation of the European Union to China, "Share Statement by Commissioner for Crisis Management Janez Lenarčič on EU support to China for the Coronavirus outbreak", 3 February 2020, retrieved: www.eeas.europa.eu (29 February 2020).

² European Commission, "The EU's Response to COVID-19", 24 February 2020, retrieved: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/qanda_20_307 (26 February 2020).

³ European Commission, *Statement by Commissioner for Crisis Management Janez Lenarčič on EU support to China for the Coronavirus outbreak*, 1 February 2020, Brussels, Statement/20/178.

⁴ Ibid., European Commission, "The EU's Response to COVID-19", 24 February 2020.

⁵ Ambassade de France à Pékin, «Envoi de fret médical en solidarité avec la Chine à destination des structures hospitalières de Wuhan et de la province du Hubei», 25 February 2020, retrieved: <https://cn.ambafrance.org> (26 February 2020).

the University of Wuhan¹. Through cooperation, the Airbus A380 made it possible to transport materials offered by Latvia and Estonia. Admittedly, it can be noted that EU Member States are strongly cooperative in helping China so that the emergency materials can be delivered timely.

On 1 February, Germany brought 6 tons of consumables to Wuhan with a special flight, which was immediately in use in the relevant hospitals, and German companies, who are based in China, have also given extensive direct support including financial aid and goods². On 18 February, as there is still a growing need for protective equipment and disinfection material and China has been facing a shortage, a second flight took off from Frankfurt to Shanghai with a total of 8.7 tonnes of aid supplies worth more than 150,000 euros, which was made available by the German Red Cross and the Red Cross in Saxony, as well as the companies Beiersdorf and Scholz Recycling, and the German Federal Foreign Office organized and funded the transport in close consultation with the Chinese authorities so as to distribute quickly the goods to the areas where they are in a urgent need³. The evacuation flights sent to bring back European expats in Coronavirus-hit Wuhan are used to carry medical protective supplies requested by the Chinese authorities.

Within the EU, as the situation in Italy gets more serious and currently 11 towns have been placed on lockdown, the EU has made more budget for fighting the Coronavirus globally. Janez Lenarčič, the Commission's emergency response chief, who sees the Coronavirus "a global challenge", announced an additional 232 million euros in funding to fight the outbreak, of which 114 million euros go towards the World Health Organization's appeal to fight the disease, 15 million towards Africa for boost the continent's diagnostic abilities, around 90 million towards a public-private partnership pharmaceutical development, 10 million for research on prevention, treatment and containment, and €3 million toward the EU Civil Protection Mechanism to bring EU citizens home from Wuhan.⁴ While China managed to gradually bring the outbreak under control, Europe is possibly exposed to the virus. Right after the surge of Coronavirus cases in Italy, the anxiety in the country and Europe in general is quite palpable. Precautionary measures have been taken. For instance, people are required to go to supermarkets in small group, citizens try to stockpile food and pharmacies serve customers via a small window. However, some people are more afraid of the unintended consequence of an extended lockdown than of the Coronavirus, and uncertainty about the job after the quarantine is a typical instance.⁵

Medical protective supplies were also offered by various British civil societies. It is said that Hongkong

¹ Ibid., Ambassade de France à Pékin, « Envoi de fret médical en solidarité... », 25 February 2020.

² Deutsche Vertretungen in China, "Deutschland steht solidarisch an der Seite der chinesischen Bevölkerung", 14 February 2020, retrieved: <https://china.diplo.de/cn-de/aktuelles/erklarungen/-/2306838> (26 February 2020).

³ German Federal Foreign Office, "Germany supporting China in the fight against the Coronavirus", 18 February 2020, retrieved: <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/aussenpolitik/laenderinformationen/china-node/-/2307830> (26 February 2020).

⁴ Sarah, Wheaton "EU pumps €232M toward Coronavirus as alarm grows in Italy", POLITICO, 24 February 2020, retrieved: www.politico.eu (28 February 2020).

⁵ Luciana Grosso, "In Italy's Coronavirus epicenter, life is on hold", 25 February 2020, retrieved: www.politico.eu (28 February 2020).

and Shanghai Banking (HSBC), Jaguar Land Rover, GlaxoSmithKline Plc (GSK) and Standard Chartered Bank have donated money, GV Health Ltd has donated over 270 boxes of disinfection goods, Royal Mail and other logistical enterprises offered logistical services for the donations.¹ Apart from this, some countries gave direct support to the WHO, who is assessing the situation both in China and globally. For instance, the Dutch government offered an additional one million euro as emergency money to the WHO and expressed its strong solidarity with China and the WHO to fight together the Coronavirus.²

According to the latest report of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as of 2 March, among 62 countries and 7 international organizations, who have committed to provide aid for prevention and control of the disease, aid supplies of 46 countries and one international organization (including the EU and 11 EU Member States) have arrived in China.³ Some other European countries also dispatched or announced to provide supplies, such as the UK, Norway and Serbia. Undoubtedly, through providing material assistance, the international community and countries have been very supportive of China to fight the Coronavirus outbreak.

Part Four

Moral Support from Various Sectors of European Society

First of all, many European leaders, on behalf of their countries and people, extended their strong solidarity with and moral support for the Chinese government and people and expressed their willingness to further cooperation in epidemic control and continuously provide medical supplies for China to contain the spread of the virus. These leaders include German Chancellor Merkel, French President Macron, UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson, German Foreign Minister Maas, Italian FM Luigi Di Maio, just to name a few. They officially sent the supportive messages to the Chinese government and people in a formal approach. For instance, right before the second flight taking off with aid supplies to Shanghai, Minister Maas stated, “Germany stands firmly at China’s side in fighting the Coronavirus epidemic and is working closely and in a spirit of trust with the Chinese authorities”, expressing his sincere gratitude to the donors who had made it possible to deliver this equipment swiftly and without any red tape⁴. They have

¹ Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in the United Kingdom of the Great Britain and Northern Ireland: “英国工商界积极支持中国抗击疫情[British Business Circles Proactively Support China in Its Efforts to Fight the Outbreak]”, 1 February 2020, retrieved: www.chinese-embassy.org.uk (27 February 2020).

² Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, “荷兰国王和王后及首相分别致电致函习近平主席支持中国抗击新冠肺炎疫情[King and Queen of the Netherlands, and Prime Minister respectively called with and wrote to President Xi Jinping and expressed their support for China in its efforts to fight the Coronavirus]”, 14 February 2020, retrieved: www.nl.chineseembassy.org (28 February 2020).

³ The 11 EU Member States, whose supplies have arrived in China, are Austria, the Republic of Czech, Estonia, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Poland, Slovenia and Luxembourg. Besides, Denmark has also announced to provide aid supplies for prevention and control of the Coronavirus outbreak. This is the only data collected as of 2 March in this report.

⁴ German Federal Foreign Office, “Germany supporting China in the fight against the Coronavirus”, 18

expressed solid encouragement and continuous solidarity with China in many occasions and through various channels.

At the meantime, it's of great importance to notice the supportive voices from European civil societies. An exemplary case is that a Belgian director Jonathan Lambinet recorded a video as a part of social experiment called "would you react?", which deals with how bystanders react or don't react, when they are confronted with certain situations. Specifically, the video addresses anti-Asian racism related to the coronavirus (Covid-19), which was taken on the Brussels metro. The aim of the video is to point out the increased racism that the Asian communities in several parts of the world are experiencing since the spread of the Covid-19 virus.¹ While racism is very present on the internet, Lambinet's video team got only good reactions in the video, which is "a message of hope that we also want to convey by showing that our Belgium and our compatriots still have a lot of heart and humanity in them to react well"². When being uploaded on Youtube, the anti-Asian racism video was quite influential and generating tremendous discussion among various civil societies. The video has also made oversea Chinese believe that many more people are supporting them. Another inspirational case is that 40 well-known French musical actors gathered together to sing the charity song "Together" and conveyed a message of love and hope through vocal power for Wuhan. These are some typical examples to show that efforts from European civil societies are made to show encouragement, solidarity, support and so forth.

Italian civil societies have shown their moral support for China through fashion events. Italy is one of the first European countries who realized the seriousness of the Coronavirus and gave top priority to containment of the its outbreak. As early as 31 January, Italian FM Luigi Di Maio said³, Italy, who is friend of the Chinese people and is close to the Chinese Government, has the intention of providing all the support the Chinese Authorities may request and overcoming the difficult situation as swiftly as possible. The positive message signaled by FM Di Maio is quite supportive for the Chinese government and people, and obviously China is not alone in its efforts to fight the virus. In particular, during the event of Milan Fashion Week 2020, National Chamber of Italian Fashion launched a solidarity campaign entitled "China, we are with you", and Undersecretary Scalfarotto expressed his "closeness and support to the Chinese people affected by the terrible Coronavirus epidemic" and sent "a message of confidence and courage" to the Chinese friends⁴. Through the initiative, some emerging Chinese designer had the chance to present a digital exhibition of their new collections, and apparently the message behind this effort is that Italian people take fashion as a way of expressing their solidarity and support for China.

February 2020, retrieved: <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/aussenpolitik/laenderinformationen/china-node/-/2307830> (26 February 2020).

¹ Maïthé Chini, "Would you react?: experiment shows anti-Asian racism on Brussels metro", The Brussels Times, 18 February 2020, retrieved: www.brusselstimes.com (29 February 2020).

² Ibid., Maïthé Chini, "Would you react? ...", The Brussels Times, 18 February 2020.

³ Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, "Statement to the press by Minister Luigi Di Maio on the Coronavirus", 31 January 2020, retrieved: www.esteri.it (27 February 2020).

⁴ Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, "Scalfarotto at the event 'China, We Are With You'", 18 February 2020, retrieved: www.esteri.it (27 February 2020).

Additionally, various European sport clubs have shown their strong support and solidarity with China and its people. Yannick Carrasco, a Belgian football star, sent his special greetings in a video to Hong Chengcheng, which is said to be his best wishes, by saying that “I know you are helping control the epidemic in Wuhan, which is quite difficult and dangerous. Stay strong and healthy, I believe you will win the fight”¹. Except Carrasco, Real Madrid players dedicated a special T-shirt and a banner with encouraging words to China (“United, we will be like a fortress. Come on, China!”), Espanyol actively raised medical protective supplies in Spain to support China, Czech top-flight team SK Slavia Praha expressed solidarity with China by wearing jerseys with the message “Stay Strong Wuhan” in English and Mandarin to show support, slogans at San Siro Stadium during the Inter Milan and AC Milan match and at Estadio de Luz during a match between Benfica and Braga have also shown support to China and could be seen on banners and big screens². The support from these clubs and players have made China stronger and more confident in face of the epidemic challenge. As Zhang Jianmin, Chinese Ambassador to the Czech Republic, said during the game between SK Slavia Praha and SFC Opava on 22 February that “This has shown the friendship between the people of our two countries, which gives us more confidence in fighting against the virus” and that “With strong support from all over the world including the Czech Republic, China has the confidence and ability to win this battle”³.

Apart from all these supports, British people from all walks of life sent quite supportive messages to China and Chinese people. They include Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, Lord Dafydd Wigley (on behalf of British and particularly Welsh people), First Minister Arlene Foster and Deputy First Minister Michelle O’Neill of Northern Ireland, UK Home Secretary Priti Patel, Chair of the UK All Party Parliamentary China Group Richard Graham MP, Director and Chief Executive of Scottish Chambers of Commerce Dr. Liz Cameron OBE, just to name a few, who wrote to the Embassy to express sympathy, solidarity and support for China. All these people have provided strong backing to the Chinese government and people and will remain staunch supporters of China in its efforts to contain and eventually achieve a complete victory against the Coronavirus.

China highly appreciates all the supports from European Institutions and Member States. It is widely and strongly believed that international moral support could further embolden China’s confidence in winning the battle and strengthen China’s determination in recovering from the temporary economic loss. Without much doubt, the Coronavirus challenge actually approved the trueness of the old saying “True friendship stands out in difficult times”, which is commonly shared in many cultures.

Part Five

China’s Strong Confidence

¹ Outlook, “European FCs show solidarity with China over COVID-19”, 27 February 2020, retrieved: www.outlookindia.com (27 February 2020).

² Ibid, Outlook, “European FCs...”, 27 February 2020.

³ Ibid, Outlook, “European FCs...”, 27 February 2020.

In Winning the Battle against the Coronavirus

China's confidence in combating the Coronavirus outbreak comes from its nationwide determination and efforts to fight the virus. As of 1 March, it can be seen that China's efforts have effectively contained the outbreak of the epidemic. This is ascribed to China's decisive, robust and prompt containment measures. Chinese President Xi said:

*International community widely holds that, thanks to the decisive and robust containment measures, strong leadership, response capability, ability of organization and mobilization, ability of implementation and execution, China has done a great job that can hardly be done by others and sets an excellent example for global epidemic prevention.*¹

China believes that epidemic impact on Chinese economy is temporary and new opportunities for international cooperation in health are possible. As "the pent-up consumer demand will be released quickly and the economic momentum will rebound strongly" after the epidemic, China will do its best to 'minimize the impact' of the epidemic on China's economy that is believed to be 'temporary'². During the phone call with French President Macron, President Xi also reiterated the same view on the impact³. New opportunities for various types of international cooperation may be discovered. One exemplary instance is that China-Germany⁴ and China-France⁵ cooperation will be strengthened in health and hygiene that will further bring new opportunities to ensure public health security both at regional and international levels. Besides, as the measures taken have already produced some positive results, the Chinese government is "supporting and facilitating the resumption of work and production by enterprises and public institutions to ensure sufficient provisions"⁶. As China is a resilient economy with robust domestic demand and a strong industrial base, the country is confident that "we can and we will meet this year's economic and social development goals, in particular the key tasks of securing a decisive victory in establishing a moderately prosperous society in all respects and in eliminating absolute poverty in China"⁷.

¹ 中华人民共和国中央政府, "习近平: 在统筹推进新冠肺炎疫情防控和经济社会发展工作部署会议上的讲话 [Xi Jinping's Speech at the Conference on Advancing the Work on Coordinating the Prevention and Control of the COVID-19 and Economic and Social Development]", 23 February 2020, retrieved: www.gov.com (2 March 2020).

² Xin Hua, "Virus knows no boundaries', Chinese FM seeks global cooperation", The Express Tribune, 14 February 2020, retrieved: www.tribune.com.pk (25 February 2020).

³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, "President Xi Jinping Speaks with French President Emmanuel Macron on the Phone", 18 February 2020, retrieved: https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1746793.shtml (25 February 2020).

⁴ Xin Hua, "Virus knows no boundaries', Chinese FM seeks global cooperation", The Express Tribune, 14 February 2020, retrieved: www.tribune.com.pk (25 February 2020).

⁵ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, "President Xi Jinping Speaks with French President Emmanuel Macron on the Phone", 18 February 2020, retrieved: https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1746793.shtml (25 February 2020).

⁶ Ibid., Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, "President Xi ... President Macron on the Phone", 18 February 2020.

⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, "President Xi Jinping Speaks with UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson on the Phone", 18 February 2020, retrieved: <https://www.fmprc.gov.cn> (25 February 2020).

The sense of responsibility as a major country and for (global) public security has been urging China to be confident in its competence in combating the outbreak. On the one hand, as a major international player, China has strong confidence and commitment in itself. Since the outbreak of the Coronavirus, the country has been rising to the challenge of rapidly and effectively containing the spread of the virus. According to Chinese experts, “China’s active, open and transparent cooperation with the World Health Organization and relevant countries” has demonstrated that the country “shoulders its responsibility as a major international player in helping the world curb the contagion”¹. Namely, responsibility as a major country becomes a firm principle that is guiding the direction of China’s development, its action and its policy. On the other hand, the sense of responsibility to protect the safety and health of Chinese people and the global public security forced and pressured China to be confident.

Strong and continuous international support for and acknowledge of China’s efforts further emboldens the country’s confidence in winning the battle against the Coronavirus. During a video conference on coordinating epidemic control and socioeconomic development on 23 February, President Xi said that “leaders of more than 170 countries and over 40 international and regional organizations had expressed sympathy with China over the outbreak, and also voiced their support for the nation in its battle against the contagion.”² All these international partners have explicitly expressed their strong solidarity with the Chinese government and people on the one hand and their strong confidence in China’s competence in fighting the outbreak. In particular, international acknowledge of China’s efforts is conspicuously noticeable in international media, and China’s decisive measures are appreciated by WHO and various countries. Chinese government’s efforts are believed to earn valuable time for other countries and regions to prevent and curb the outbreak. Particularly, at the beginning of the outbreak, China’s efforts did effectively control the spread of the virus to other regions as WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said at a conference in Geneva, “We would have seen many more cases outside China by now if it were not for the government’s efforts”³. Unfortunately, the Coronavirus outbreak outside China is increasingly challenging, but the world is “simply not ready” for it⁴. Dr. Bruce Aylward, a physician and public-health expert with the World Health Organization and team lead of 25 health experts from around the world, said right after his disembarking in Geneva from the team’s China trip that “Big conclusion for the world is—it’s simply not ready.”⁵ According to Aylward, the techniques taken by China are

¹ Cao Desheng, “Xi’s diplomacy bolsters epidemic fight”, 26 February 2020, China Daily, retrieved: <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202002/26/WS5e5568f7a31012821727a43b.html> (26 February 2020).

² 中华人民共和国中央政府 [Central Government of the People’s Republic of China], “习近平：在统筹推进新冠肺炎疫情防控和经济社会发展工作部署会议上的讲话 [Xi Jinping’s Speech at the Conference on Advancing the Work on Coordinating the Prevention and Control of the COVID-19 and Economic and Social Development]”, 23 February 2020, retrieved: www.gov.com (2 March 2020).

³ World Health Organization, “WHO Director-General’s statement on IHR Emergency Committee on Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV)”, 30 January 2020, retrieved: www.who.int (2 March 2020).

⁴ Hilary Brueck, “The rest of the world is ‘simply not ready’ for the Coronavirus, according to a WHO envoy who just returned from China”, Business Insider, 25 February 2020, retrieved: www.businessinsider.com (28 February 2020).

⁵ Ibid., Hilary Brueck, 2020.

“old-fashioned public-health tools”, but they were applied “with a rigor and innovation of approach on a scale that we’ve never seen in history”, which clearly made considerable contributions to controlling the spread of the virus in China and are recommended for other countries to mimic. European Commissioner for Health Stella Kyriakides said, “We need to be extremely vigilant, but on the other hand base our decisions on risk assessment and scientific advice.”¹

Additionally, China is confident not only in curbing the outbreak within the country, but also in containing the Coronavirus-control globally. As the situation in China is getting better on the one hand and the trend in other countries is getting worse on the other hand, China is now devoting itself to helping the relevant countries through experience-sharing, good communication and international cooperation. For instance, as the number of the infected cases in Japan is rapidly increasing, “China has donated novel Coronavirus testing kits to Japan” so as to confirm the infections as soon as possible². Bruce Aylward, head of the foreign expert panel of the WHO-China Joint Mission on COVID-19, said at a news conference in Beijing that China’s measures provided experience of improving the international response to the outbreak at the global level and China’s strategies can be carried out in other countries considering the increasingly urgent situation in other countries and regions³.

China’s confidence also comes from its strong belief in its concept of a community with a shared future for mankind. As the Coronavirus outbreak keeps requiring efficient coordination and close international cooperation, China becomes more confident in its belief of a community with a shared future for mankind. The outbreak has clearly demonstrated that countries on this planet are closely connected and that the world is sharing the same community, where everyone is interdependent and interplaying. It is the time for countries to think about the shared future by human beings. In the letter in reply to Bill Gates, co-chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, President Xi said:

*As I often say, mankind is a community with a shared future. To prevail over a disease that threatens all, unity and cooperation is the most powerful weapon. The Foundation has been quick in joining the global action and has played an active role in the global response against the outbreak. I support your cooperation with relevant Chinese institutions, and look forward to enhanced coordination and concerted efforts in the international community for the sake of health and well-being of all.*⁴

UK Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab supports the idea of international cooperation. As he said, no single country can overcome or fully defend the unprecedented global public challenge, and the international community must work together either in the case of repatriating foreign nationals or finding a vaccine for the virus.⁵

¹ Sarah Wheaton, “Brussels thinks global on Coronavirus, but local fears mount”, POLITICO, 24 February 2020, retrieved: www.politico.eu (28 February 2020). The author is POLITICO's senior health reporter.

² Cao Desheng, “Xi’s diplomacy bolsters epidemic fight”, 26 February 2020, China Daily, retrieved: <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202002/26/WS5e5568f7a31012821727a43b.html> (26 February 2020).

³ Ibid., Cao Desheng, 2020.

⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, “President Xi Jinping Writes a Reply Letter to Bill Gates”, 22 February 2020, retrieved: www.fmprc.gov.cn (2 March 2020).

⁵ Dominic Raab, “Coronavirus: we must stop it turning into a global pandemic”, 16 February 2020, retrieved:

Furthermore, China's confidence is firmly grounded in its strong determination to eradicate the virus. To gain a complete victory, further requirements are proposed. At a key meeting on 23 February, President Xi laid out seven priorities for prevention and containment of the virus¹: (1) Hubei province, as well as its capital city Wuhan, should be safeguarded with resolute effort, with great attention paid to containing the spread in communities and treating patients; (2) epidemic prevention and control work in Beijing should be carried out with all-out effort (both imported cases and spread within the city should be prevented); (3) Medical resources and key supplies should be allocated in a scientific manner, providing more protection for medical workers; (4) Scientific research should be accelerated in terms of drug and vaccine development, and effective diagnosis and treatment plans should be summarized and promoted in time; (5) International and regional cooperation should be expanded, and good communication with the World Health Organization and experience sharing with relevant countries should be continued; (6) Public communication through the news media should be more effective, and release of epidemic information should be improved; and (7) Social stability should be safeguarded while illegal activities disturbing medical treatment, epidemic prevention and market and social order should be severely punished. These priorities are highly emphasized. Even though the outbreak is brought under control, but the Chinese government keeps calling for full vigilance in control and prevention tasks to avoid any possible risks. At the meeting of the Party on 26 February, President Xi said, while the positive momentum of the overall epidemic situation is expanding and economic and social development is recovering in China, it is still necessary to remain vigilant in the epidemic prevention work².

Finally, it is widely believed that China's confidence in conquering the disease is also strongly grounded in its institutional strength, efficiency and effectiveness. The former Prime Minister of France Jean-Pierre Raffarin, who as the then French Prime Minister visited China at the same critical moment of the 2003 SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome), said, he is impressed by the Chinese government's powerful and effective capability to organize and mobilize social resources in face of the Coronavirus challenge and perceives this scenario as a result of China's institutional strength, further adding that China has taken swifter, more robust and more powerful measures this time.³

Conclusion

While the Coronavirus respects no borders, people from different countries and regions are strongly determined and closely united to curb its outbreak. China's efforts are widely recognized, European partners' efforts are highly appreciated, and great importance and expectation are attached to the

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/Coronavirus-we-must-stop-it-turning-into-a-global-pandemic-article-by-dominic-raab> (27 February 2020).

¹ China.com.cn, "Xi's seven priorities in combating the epidemic", 24 February 2020, retrieved: http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202002/24/WS5e53a2bea310128217279e57_1.html (26 February 2020).

² Mo Jingxi, "Coronavirus fight remains challenging", China Daily, 27 February 2020, retrieved: <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202002/27/WS5e56d339a31012821727a952.html> (27 February 2020).

³ 拉法兰[Jean-Pierre Raffarin]:“中国制度优势令人印象深刻[Chinese Institutional Strength Is Impressive]”,《人民日报》, 2020年2月24日, 03版, retrieved: www.paper.people.com.cn (28 February 2020).

cooperation and synergy between China and Europe. Based upon the analytical overview of Sino-European interaction regarding the Coronavirus outbreak, some preliminary conclusions can be drawn as follows.

Firstly, while the Chinese government repeatedly emphasized (1) its priority to people's safety and health, (2) its openness and transparency regarding Coronavirus information, (3) its appeal for international support and understanding of China's efforts to combat the virus, and (4) its confidence, capacity and determination in winning the battle of the 'plague', European partners (1) extended strong solidarity with, support for and sympathies to the Chinese government and people, (2) commended China's swift, rigorous, decisive and effective containment measures, and (3) recognized, understood and acknowledged China's efforts in fighting the Coronavirus outbreak.

Secondly, the EU and its Member States closely cooperated and proactively coordinated with China in its efforts to fight the outbreak of the Coronavirus. While facing the challenge, both sides are believing in and seeking for new opportunities and potentials for further cooperation.

Thirdly, both China and its European counterparts are in favor of concerted international cooperation and coordination, which apparently needs to be further strengthened considering the less optimistic scene in Europe and globally. As French President Emmanuel Macron said, "We are facing a crisis, an epidemic, that is coming."¹

Fourthly, the EU has a global vision with regard to its containment measures since the outbreak of the pneumonia. According to Commissioner Janez Lenarčič², the EU efforts are (1) protecting its citizens, both in the most affected regions and in Europe, (2) supporting the development of vaccine, as well as detection and therapeutics that will benefit people across the globe, (3) helping China (still the major epicentre of the epidemics), and (4) stepping up assistance to countries with weaker health systems, many of which are in Africa.

Finally, while the situation of the Coronavirus outbreak in China brought under good control, the risk in Europe is increasing. This further demands intensive cooperation between China and Europe as major partners. Particularly, as countries become more interdependent and related in a globalized world, they can easily be influenced by one another. In the case of Coronavirus outbreak, no country can escape from its influence without international cooperation.

In a nutshell, the Coronavirus respects no borders, and thus countries and people need to be united to contain its outbreak. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that the Coronavirus outbreak creates an opportunity for mankind to reflect upon its history and think about its behaviours. History is a mirror. Only when people humbly learn from the past, can we really know ourselves and the surroundings better. Otherwise, we may follow the tracks of an overthrown chariot. British writer-director Nicholas Hulbert, who is making an independent short film entitled *The Heptameron* in Italian town Veneto and loosely

¹ Laurie Tritschler, "France faces Coronavirus 'epidemic,' Macron warns", 27 February 2020, retrieved: www.politico.eu (28 February 2020).

² European Commission, "Statement by Commissioner Janez Lenarčič: EU measures to contain the COVID-19 outbreak and protect people in the EU and throughout the world", Statement, Brussels, 24 February 2020, retrieved: www.ec.europa.eu (29 February 2020).

based on Giovanni Boccaccio's 14th century classic *The Decameron*, said, "It's all a bit crazy that this is all happening while we're telling a story about a very similar thing."¹ That's true. It sounds all a bit surreal. This is because it's hard for people to be personally on the scene only by hearing stories or watching movies. Instead, people need to reflect upon their behaviours, their past and their future.

¹ Eddy Wax, "Life mimics art for plague drama in Coronavirus-hit Italy", POLITICO, 26 February 2020, retrieved: www.politico.eu (28 February 2020).