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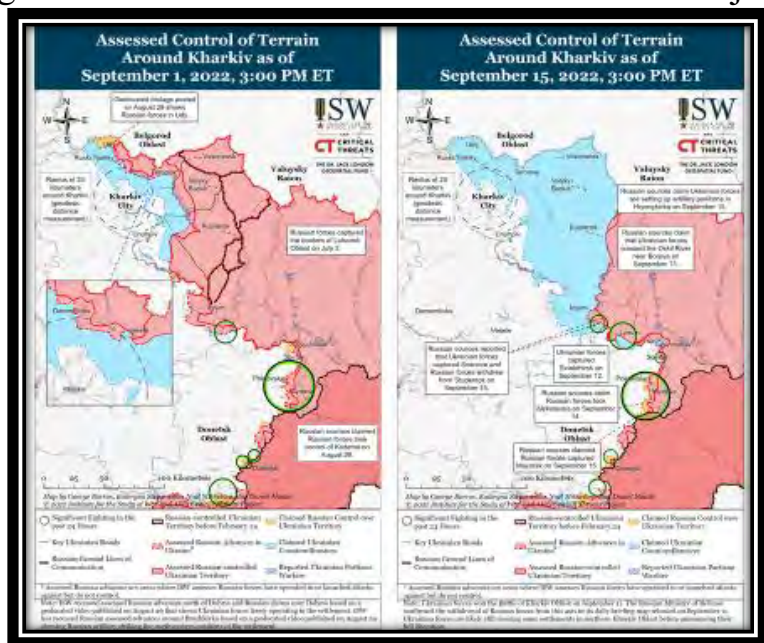
On 14 Sep 2022, President Zelensky visited Izyum, a frontline city in the Kharkiv region, reclaimed just days ago in a stunning counterattack by Ukrainian forces. The Kharkiv offensive is the most consequential military action of the war since Russia abandoned northern Ukraine in late March. As per President Zelensky, this operation has liberated over 6,000 square kilometres of territory. The president’s unannounced appearance in Izyum, about nine miles from the front in Ukraine’s northeast, was a tangible sign of Ukraine’s growing boldness.



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The Ukrainian counter-offensive in the north-eastern Kharkiv region began on September 5th and liberated virtually the whole province in a matter of days. Ukrainian troops arrived on the outskirts of Izyum on September 8th, just three days after the start of a lightning offensive that overwhelmed Russia’s northeastern flank. Within 24 hours Ukraine’s army had encircled Balakliya, a town close to the front line. Two days later, it seized Kupyansk, a critical rail hub connected to Moscow. At dawn on September 10th, Ukrainian units entered the centre of Izyum itself.

Ukraine has been signalling for months that it intended to launch a major counteroffensive in the southern Kherson region to retake its lost territory. The Ukrainian preparation for the southern offensive compelled Russia to redeploy some of its better-equipped units to the South leaving Kharkiv front rather thinly manned. In any case, The operation in Kherson was not a feint in the true sense—it involves more troops than the one in Kharkiv did—but Ukraine



successfully deceived Russia into believing that it was the sole object of Ukraine's attention. As per reports, the strategy behind Ukraine's latest offensive has begun to shape a few months ago in consultation with the US. The US advised Kyiv to keep the operation limited in both its objectives and its geography to avoid getting overextended and bogged down on multiple fronts.

The northeastern thrust had also benefited from "cunning" deception. The Ukrainians deliberately thinned out heavy weaponry from the attack force, with the initial breakthrough at Balakliya said to involve only 15 or so tanks, according to Russian reports. That was a ruse to make it seem as if the attack was a feint, intended merely to pin down Russian forces and prevent them from redeploying to defend against the supposed main counter-offensive further south, in the Kherson region. Ukraine disguised its preparations by thinning out some weapons, such as HIMARS rocket launchers, from the attack force in Kharkiv, with a relatively small number of tanks punching through in the first wave. With the rapid collapse of the Russian front, the offensive grew in a "domino" fashion. Ukraine has performed well in this battle with operational security (OPSEC), keeping its adversary poorly informed regarding its planned manoeuvres and capabilities.

Though the offensive has showcased Ukraine's strengths and exposed Russia's systemic vulnerabilities, such a blitzkrieg will not be easy to repeat elsewhere. Russian Forces in the Kherson region despite being isolated on the west bank of the Dnieper River due to a damaged bridge have shown the tenacity to hold their defensive position blunting Ukrainian advance by imposing high casualty. Even in the northeast, the prospect of Ukraine retaking part of the Luhansk region, including the towns of Severodonetsk and Lysychansk remains uncertain. The forward lines remain fuzzy and could be reversed if Ukraine pushes too deep and fast.

Germany Drafting a New China Trade Policy- 'No More Naivety'

Since early September, media reports have been highlighting that Germany's economy ministry is considering a raft of measures to make business with China less attractive as it seeks to reduce its dependency on Asia's economic superpower. As per reports, measures could include reducing or even scrapping investment and export guarantees for China. Screening of not just Chinese investments in Germany but also German investments in China is reportedly under contemplation. Citing unnamed sources, reports highlighted that Germany is considering submitting a complaint to the World Trade Organization about unfair Chinese trade practices along with G-7 countries.



On 13 Sep 2022, German Economy and Climate Minister Robert Habeck confirmed the ministry was considering policy changes to protect competition in Germany, such as by auditing certain Chinese investments and infrastructure projects in Europe. Germany would also be more selective in

its investments in China. He highlighted that the new trade policy with China aims to reduce dependence on Chinese raw materials, batteries and semiconductors.

He promised "no more naivety" in trade dealings with Beijing. According to Habeck, China was a welcome trading partner, but Germany could not allow Beijing's protectionism to distort competition and would not hold back criticism of human rights violations due to the risk of losing business. "We cannot allow ourselves to be blackmailed," he said in an interview with Reuters.

Habeck did not provide a complete description of the new policy measures under consideration but indicated that such measures will entail a deeper investigation of Chinese infrastructure investments made in Europe. Habeck highlighted imperatives for Germany to diversify its trade by identifying trading partners and regions as many sectors were heavily dependent on selling to China. He added that the economy ministry was contributing to the new German-China policy, much of which is already in place.

Chinese investment in strategic infrastructure in Europe and Beijing's increasing efforts to influence the trade policy of EU members under the guise of BRI investment was highlighted by the minister as an issue of concern. He indicated that Berlin wants to examine Chinese investments in Europe more critically. Habeck signalled he was opposed to plans by China's Cosco to buy a stake in a container operator at Germany's Hafen Hamburg port. He also highlighted concerns about Chinese takeover deals are spreading out from the technology arena into other industry sectors, such as logistics.

The new China trade policy under consideration by the German government marks a significant departure from Berlin's policies under former Chancellor Angela Merkel, who took vast business delegations with her on her frequent trips to China and oversaw a boom in Chinese-German economic ties. China became

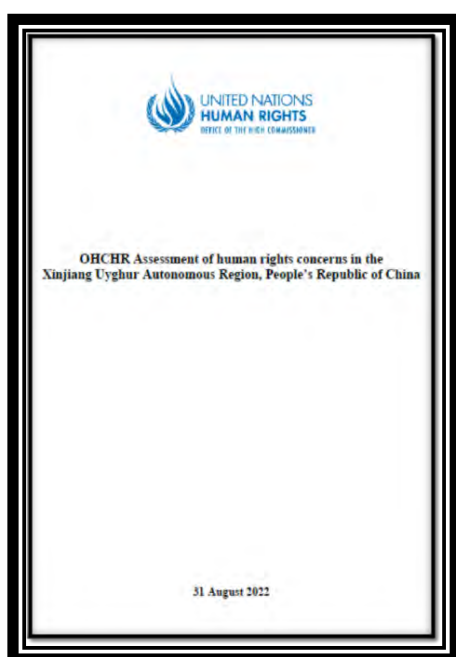
Germany's top trade partner in 2016, with a volume of trade of over 245 billion euros last year, helping fuel growth in Europe's largest, export-driven, economy.

Over time, the general mood in Germany towards China had become more unfavourable. According to Reuters, shortly before demitting office last year, Merkel admitted she may have been naive at first in some areas of cooperation with China. The new government agreed to a tougher line on China in its coalition deal, vowing to reduce strategic dependencies on its "systemic rival". Berlin is reportedly working on a national security strategy that is due to mention China, and a specific China strategy that it intends to publish next year.

German China policy appears to be at an inflection point. Although full decoupling of the German economy from China is not expected, the golden era in German-Chinese relations seems to be over.

The OHCHR Assessment of Human Rights Concerns in the Xinjiang, China

In recent years, Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) of the People's Republic of China (PRC, or China) has received widespread attention on the state of human rights there. There have been international wide-coverage of allegations of violation of human, civil, religious and cultural rights of the ethnic Uyghur minority, who generally follow Islam. These allegations have been recurring in the international media. More importantly, the issue of the alleged violation of rights in XUAR has become an issue between China and the US. While the latter has enacted Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act (2020) to report on human rights violations in XUAR and Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act (2021) to ensure that American companies do not fund forced labour in the region. China considers these laws as gross interference in its domestic affairs.



The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) of the United Nations investigated the allegations of violations of human rights emanating from Xinjiang province of China from late 2017 onwards. The investigation had found evidences of “serious human rights violations” in Xinjiang by the Chinese government.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Ms Michelle Bachelet, a former Chilean president, was under pressure to block publication of the report from Beijing. At the same time, European nations saw the report as a critical piece of leverage in efforts to respond to human rights violations against the Uyghurs and

strongly pushed for its publication. Finally, the report, “OHCHR Assessment of Human Rights Concerns in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, the People’s Republic of China” was released on the last day of Ms Bachelet’s tenure on 31 Aug 2022.

The report notes that the Uyghur Muslim minority, primarily, has been at receiving end of the violations of rights, though the assessment informs that victimisation of other ethnic minorities such as Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Uzbeks and Huis, including their non-Muslim section, and other groups cannot be ruled out. During this period, particularly in 2018, a sudden and “dramatic” spike in disappearance cases was noted that coincided with the setting up of infamous “re-education” camps [Vocational and Education Training Centres (VETC)] in XUAR. Apart from the disappearance cases, there was an increasing number of allegations of forced labour, torture and other forms of ill-treatment, including sexual violence. The assessment asserts that the pattern of allegations and “individual incidents of sexual and gendered-based violence” are “credible”. However, it admits that “the available information at this stage does not allow OHCHR to draw firm conclusions regarding the exact extent of such abuses.”

The assessment explains that the violations have taken place in the context of the Chinese government’s “application of counter-terrorism and counter-‘extremism’ strategies” in Xinjiang. The “undefined and open ended” scope of such directives provides “wide discretion to officials to interpret and apply broad investigative, preventive and coercive powers.” This situation has the potential to acquire draconian dimensions in “a context of limited safeguards and scant independent oversight.” The violations of rights and persecution in Xinjiang disregard so many international conventions “to which China is a State Party.”

The assessment forthrightly argues that “the extent of arbitrary and discriminatory detention of members of Uyghur and other predominantly Muslim groups” “also raises concerns from the perspective of international crime” and “in context of restrictions and deprivation more generally of fundamental rights enjoyed individually and collectively, may constitute international crimes, in particular crimes against humanity.”

China has denounced the report as “disinformation and lies fabricated by anti-China forces” and has conveyed that publication of the report meant Beijing would no longer co-operate with the OHCHR. The incoming high commissioner Volker Türk, currently under-secretary-general for policy in the UN’s executive office, inherits the task of navigating the geopolitical rift.