

## Multilateralism Chinese Style

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The blockade of the World Trade Organization's Appellate Body since 11 December illustrates the threats being made to the multilateral international order. China, which presents itself as one of its defenders, only partially respects it, while simultaneously it tries to modify it to its advantage. It is urgent for Europeans, in the ilk of Phil Hogan on 12 December, to defend and reform the political and trade multilateralism embodied by the UN and the WTO as the guarantors

of international law.

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**Front page!** :

### Brexit, a test for nationalism



It is now certain that the United Kingdom will leave the Union on 31 January next. This event is a fundamental democratic test," said Jean-Dominique Giuliani. Is the return to the nation the solution, rather than the Union, which preserves identities by allowing national States to assume their prerogatives through close cooperation?.. [Read more](#)

**Elections** :

### Conservatives win the general elections



The Conservatives led by Boris Johnson won a majority in the House of Commons following the parliamentary elections on December 12. With 365 seats against 203 for Jeremy Corbyn's Labour, Boris Johnson obtained the majority necessary to take the United Kingdom out of the European Union at the end of January 2020. The Scottish National Party (SNP) led by

Scottish Prime Minister Nicola Sturgeon won 48 of the 59 seats in Scotland and has already called for a new referendum on self-determination... [Read more](#)

### First round of the presidential election on 22 December



On 22 December and 5 January, the Croats will be asked to nominate their President of the Republic from among 11 candidates. According to the latest opinion poll, former Prime Minister Zoran Milanovic (Social Democratic Party, SDP) is expected to lead the first round with 25.2% of the vote, ahead of outgoing President Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic (24.1%) and singer Miroslav Skoro (22.5%). In the second round, K. Grabar-Kitarovic would win ahead of Z. Milanovic as well as Mr. Skoro... [Read more](#)

### European Council :

#### European Council Conclusions



The Heads of State and Government meeting on 12 and 13 December approved the objective of climate neutrality in 2050. However, Poland did not commit itself to this objective. They discussed the main points of the negotiations for the 2021-2027 budget. They stressed that the priority for the Conference on the Future of Europe should be the implementation of the strategic programme. They discussed relations with Africa, Turkey and Russia, for which they decided to extend the economic sanctions for a further 6 months. They called for the ratification and implementation of the United Kingdom's withdrawal agreement as soon as possible, and confirmed their willingness to establish a close future relationship. Finally, at the euro zone summit, they reviewed the progress made, particularly in revising the treaty on the European Stability Mechanism and strengthening the Banking Union... [Read more](#)

#### Conclusions of the Asia-Europe Dialogue



Foreign Ministers meeting on 15-16 December in the framework of the Asia-Europe Dialogue (ASEM) discussed ways to strengthen cooperation between the 53 partner countries. They focused on issues of climate and sustainable development, cybersecurity, terrorism and maritime security. They discussed the situation in the Korean peninsula and the Middle East... [Read more](#)

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#### Conclusions of the Agriculture and Fisheries Council



On 16 December, EU Ministers of Agriculture and Fisheries discussed the reform of the post-2020 Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and adopted policy guidelines for the protection and restoration of the world's forests. They set fishing quotas for 2020 in the Mediterranean and Black Seas. They decided to stop fishing for western herring and cod in the Baltic Sea and proposed measures to assist fishermen... [Read more](#)

### Commission :

#### Presentation of the European Green Deal



On 11 December, the Commission presented its European Green Deal, a project that covers all areas of the economy, in particular transport, energy, agriculture, construction and sectors, such as steel, cement, new technologies, textiles and chemicals. A law setting the objective of carbon neutrality will be presented by March 2020, as well as an industrial strategy on green and digital transitions and an action plan on the circular economy. An investment plan for a sustainable Europe, which will include a fair transition mechanism, and a green financing strategy will be presented in 2020... [Read more](#)

#### New Trade Defence Measures



On 12 December, the Commission proposed to reform the Regulation on compliance with international trade rule to allow the Union to take countermeasures when a State blocks the dispute settling process at the World Trade Organisation. The proposal comes at a time when the WTO's Appellate Body has been paralysed since 11 December because

of the United States' decision to prevent the renewal of two members. The Commission has also announced the creation of the post of Chief Trade Enforcement Officer, which will come into effect in early 2020... [Read more](#)

#### Parliament :

##### Compromise over the reform of the social rules for hauliers



Parliament and Council negotiators reached a pre-agreement on 12 December to reform working conditions for truck drivers, a highly sensitive issue marked by opposition between East and West. "We have reached a preliminary agreement," said the Finnish representation, which is presiding over the Council for six months. However, this compromise still needs to be formally approved by the Council and Parliament... [Read more](#)

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#### Council :

##### Conclusions of the General Affairs Council



Ministers meeting on 10 December discussed the framework for negotiating the 2021-2027 budget and the objective of carbon neutrality by 2050 in preparation for the European Council. They discussed the situation of the rule of law in Hungary and Poland. They exchanged views on the legislative priorities of the new Commission and agreed on the need for a comprehensive approach to combat hybrid threats... [Read more](#)

##### Conclusions of the Employment, Social Policy, Healthcare and Consumer Council



Employment and Health Ministers, meeting on 9 and 10 December, discussed investment in health, including mental health, ageing and the relationship between well-being and the digital society. They discussed ways to ensure better access to the medicines. They adopted conclusions on gender equality and stressed the need to strengthen health and safety at work. They invite the Commission to review its long-term budget in this area. Finally, they called for the implementation of an inclusive labour market and encouraged the intensification of efforts and monitoring of the youth guarantee scheme... [Read more](#)

##### Fishing Opportunities 2020



On 16 December, Fisheries Ministers set catch limits for 2020 for certain fish stocks in the Mediterranean and Black Seas. They defined their position on measures to be taken to assist fishermen to cope with the restrictions on fishing for cod and herring in the Baltic Sea... [Read more](#)

#### Diplomacy :

##### Report on the implementation of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement



In a report on the implementation of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement published on 13 December, the Commission notes that Ukraine has adopted extensive legislation and strengthened its institutions during this year, particularly in the economic, energy and anti-corruption fields, but that further efforts are needed to improve the business and investment climate... [Read more](#)

##### EU-US Meeting on Security



At a ministerial meeting on 11 December, the European Union and the United States reaffirmed that the fight against terrorism remains the priority and discussed ways to improve cooperation in the fight against hybrid threats as well as cyber security challenges, in particular in the field of 5G and data encryption. They reiterated their commitment to combating interference in the electoral process and welcomed Poland's inclusion in the US Visa Waiver Programme... [Read more](#)

##### EU-Tajikistan Cooperation Council

The EU-Tajikistan Cooperation Council met on 10 December to review bilateral relations, and topics such as governance and human rights. The Union supports Tajikistan's role in promoting regional cooperation in Central Asia and in stabilising the situation in Afghanistan... [Read more](#)



#### Court of Justice :

##### Decision on issuing of the European Arrest Warrant



On 12 December, the Court of Justice of the European Union ruled that the French, Swedish and Belgian public prosecutors' offices met the necessary requirements, i.e. sufficient independence from the executive, to issue a European arrest warrant. This mandate is based on the principle of mutual recognition of judicial decisions between Member States of the Union and has replaced extradition procedures since 2004. The Court was questioned by the Dutch and Luxembourg courts... [Read more](#)

#### ECB :

##### Meeting of the Council of Governors



For its first meeting on 12th December the Council of Governors the President of the European Central Bank, Christine Lagarde, left the key interest rates unchanged. She declared that she wanted to maintain a balanced monetary policy. She indicated that the ECB will launch the strategic review of the monetary policy's tools in January... [Read more](#)

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#### Germany :

##### Revival of the financial transaction tax



German Finance Minister Olaf Scholz submitted a "final proposal" on 10 December to introduce a European Financial Transaction Tax (FTT). The proposal, sent to nine other countries (France, Belgium, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Austria, Slovakia, Slovenia), concerns a tax of 0.2% on the purchase of shares of companies with a market capitalisation exceeding €1 billion. Germany says it expects a rapid adoption of the FTT, which has been under discussion for several years... [Read more](#)

#### Spain :

##### Pedro Sanchez asked to form a government



On 11 December, King Felipe VI of Spain officially instructed outgoing Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez to form a government, even though he does not have sufficient majority support to be invested by deputies following the November 10 elections. The Socialist Party (PSOE), which has already concluded an agreement with the left-wing Podemos party, is also negotiating with the Republican Left of Catalonia (ERC)... [Read more](#)

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#### Finland :

##### New government led by Sanna Marin



Former Finnish Transport Minister, Sanna Marin, 34, became the country's youngest ever Prime Minister on 10th December. She formed a government of 19 ministers of whom are 12 women... [Read more](#)

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#### Hungary :

##### Anti-populist pact of the capitals in the Visegrad group



On 16 December, the mayors of Budapest, Warsaw, Bratislava and Prague signed a "Free Cities Alliance" in Budapest in resistance to the populist leaders of their country. The pact calls for "the protection of what is good about European membership " such as "freedom, human dignity, democracy, equality, the rule of law, social justice, tolerance and cultural diversity"... [Read more](#)

#### Romania :

### Klaus Iohannis winner of the Charlemagne Prize 2020



The 2020 Charlemagne Prize was awarded on 15 December to Romanian President Klaus Iohannis. The jury of the prize, which annually awards the "most valuable contribution to understanding in Europe", considered Klaus Iohannis to be "an outstanding defender of freedom and democracy, of the protection of minorities and cultural diversity". The award will be presented in spring 2020... [Read more](#)

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### UK :

#### Boris Johnson confirmed as Prime Minister



Boris Johnson was reappointed Prime Minister by Queen Elizabeth II on 13 December after the Conservative Party won the parliamentary elections on 12 December. Boris Johnson confirmed the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union on 31 January 2020... [Read more](#)

### Serbia :

#### Opening of a new membership negotiations chapter



On 10 December, at the 11th meeting of the Accession Conference, the Union opened a new chapter in the negotiations with Serbia, namely the free movement of capital. 18 chapters out of 35 have been opened in the procedure launched in January 2014, of which 2 have been provisionally closed... [Read more](#)

### Switzerland :

#### Election of the President 2020



On 11 December, the Swiss Federal Assembly re-elected the seven members of the Federal Council for a new four-year term (2020-2023). Simonetta Sommarug of the Socialist Party, elected by 186 votes out of 200, succeeds Ueli Maurer (Union démocratique du centre) as President of the Confederation for the year 2020... [Read more](#)

### Council of Europe :

#### GRECO Report: unsatisfactory assessment for Poland



In an assessment on the prevention of corruption of parliamentarians, judges and prosecutors, published on 16 December, the Council of Europe's Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) found Poland's level of compliance with the recommendations to be "generally unsatisfactory". Seven of the 16 recommendations were implemented and only one of the six was implemented under the "ad hoc" procedure for specific judicial reforms. Poland is due to provide a progress report on the implementation of outstanding recommendations by 31 December 2020... [Read more](#)

### ECHR :

#### Decisions regarding



The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) confirmed on 12 December that France could refuse the full transcription of the birth certificate of a child born abroad of a surrogate motherhood (GPA), as long as the filiation with his "intention" mother can be recognised by adoption. The Court declared definitively inadmissible the separate applications of two families who had been refused by the French courts the transcription on the French civil status registers of all birth certificates of children born abroad by surrogate gestation (GPA) of the father's spermatozoa and oocytes of a third donor... [Read more](#)

#### Demand for the immediate release of a Turkish opponent



The European Court of Human Rights demanded on 10 December the immediate release of businessman and philanthropist Osman Kavala, imprisoned in Turkey following the massive purges that resulted from the July 2016 coup attempt. The Court notes several violations of the European Convention on Human Rights and considers that the Turkish State is trying



to silence human rights defenders. O. Kavala is being prosecuted for attempting to overthrow the government. He is still in prison... [Read more](#)

## UN :

### Mitigated result of the COP25



The 25th UN Climate Conference (COP25) concluded its work on 15 December in Madrid, with disappointing results despite some progress. No agreement was reached on the more contentious issues of human-induced loss and damage, as well as the financing of adaptation to climate change. 73 States nevertheless declared their intention to submit an improved climate action plan and 177 companies committed themselves to setting important targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions... [Read more](#)

## WTO :

### Trade restrictions at historically high levels



On 12 December, at the Trade Policy Review Body meeting, the WTO showed that trade restrictions applied by its members remain at historically high levels. Between mid-October 2018 and mid-October 2019, the amount of trade covered by import restrictions was estimated at \$747 billion. This is the highest amount recorded since October 2012, and represents a 27% increase over the amount recorded in the previous annual report... [Read more](#)

## OECD :

### Unemployment remains stable



The unemployment rate in OECD Member States remained stable in October with 5.2% unemployed, according to OECD figures published on 10 December. In the euro zone, which has the highest rate (7.5%), there has been a slight decrease of 0.1%. Rates are also stabilizing in the various population groups, among women (5.2%) and men (5.1%), among 15-24 year-olds (11.4%) and those over 25 years of age (4.4%)... [Read more](#)

## Eurobarometer :

### Climate and Human Rights priorities for Europeans



Human rights in the world, freedom of expression and gender equality are the values that Europeans want Parliament to defend as a priority, according to a Eurobarometer survey published on 10 December. Respondents also believe that the climate, the fight against poverty and social exclusion, as well as the fight against terrorism and organised crime should be Parliament's priorities in its legislative work... [Read more](#)

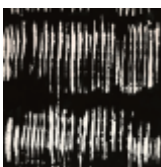
## Culture :

### Dublin Photography Exhibition



Until 22 March 2020, and for the first time in Europe, the National Gallery of Ireland in Dublin is hosting the photography exhibition "A moment in time" from the Beaumont and Nancy Newhall collection... [Read more](#)

### Soulages at the Louvre



Until March 9 2020, the Louvre will be hosting an exhibition devoted to Pierre Soulages on the occasion of his 100th birthday, featuring a selection of the French painter's major works as well as new pieces specially created for the exhibition... [Read more](#)

### Ice sculpture festival Netherlands



The city of Zwolle in the Netherlands is organising an ice sculpture festival until 1 March, where the greatest international artists are invited to sculpt on the theme of "Journey through time"... [Read more](#)

### Snow Leopard in Finland



Until 29 March 2020, the Haltia Finnish Nature Centre in Espoo is hosting the exhibition "In the Land of the Snow Leopard". The exhibition presents the photos and the expedition report of the French photographer Frédéric Larry who followed the snow leopard on the Tibetan plateau and the threats the animal faces. Other animals from the Tibetan plateau and the people who live there in harmony with the snow leopard are also on display... [Read more](#)

### Agenda :



16-17 December 2019  
Brussels  
Agriculture and Fisheries Council



16-19 December 2019  
Strasbourg  
Plenary Session of the European Parliament



19 December 2019  
Brussels  
Environment Council



22 December 2019  
Croatia  
Presidential Election (First Round)

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