

# A senior Merkel ally says China is an 'ever more powerful snake' that Germany will take the fight to



German Chancellor Angela Merkel speaks during a news conference after coalition meetings over stimulus measures to reboot post-coronavirus economy, at the Chancellery in Berlin, Germany June 3, 2020.

John Macdougall/Pool via REUTERS

- Germany will take the fight to China as an EU leader, a senior ally of Angela Merkel has said.
- Germany took on the European Council's rotating presidency last month.
- Michael Roth, a senior foreign minister in Merkel's government, said Berlin would prioritize standing up to Beijing, writing: 'One thing is clear: We urgently need more European action in our dealings with China.'
- Roth said China was an 'apparently ever more powerful snake' that must be met head-on by the EU.
- There is growing tension between China and the West over its treatment of Uighurs and Hong Kong.
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A senior member of Angela Merkel's government has warned China that a

European Union fronted by Germany will go toe-to-toe with Beijing, stating “there will be no ‘business as usual’ as far as the EU is concerned.”

Germany took on the European Council’s rotating presidency last month and has warned Beijing that it will not be afraid to “lock horns” over issues like its treatment of Hong Kong and Uighurs in the Chinese province of Xinjiang.

Writing in Spiegel on Sunday, Michael Roth, the state secretary for Europe in Germany’s foreign affairs ministry, described China as an “ever more powerful snake” that must be met head-on by a more confident EU.

“We must not be afraid to lock horns when it comes to difficult issues such as human rights, security, and technology. This, too, is about our own sovereignty at the end of the day,” Roth wrote.

“China will certainly not build one single coal-fired power station less if we remain silent when we have differences of opinion.”

Roth issued the warning amid growing tension between Beijing and governments in the West.

The senior German minister said that while the EU and China are “interconnected” economies and must work together to be successful, China is a “systemic rival” to Europe that is “increasingly going on the offensive.”

“The leadership of the authoritarian, one-party state passes up no opportunity to drive a wedge between the EU member states and weaken them. We are locked in a tough competition of values stemming from very different concepts of society,” he said.

Roth said Germany’s priority would be to encourage the EU to “act more confidently” towards China than it has done before.

“We will not bring our influence to bear in Beijing if we are not united and if we do not stand up for our values and interests with the combined strength of the EU.”

He said: “What can the EU do to ensure it does not find itself paralyzed like the proverbial rabbit when faced with an apparently ever more powerful snake?”

“One thing is clear: We urgently need more European action in our dealings with China.

“A consistent ‘Team Europe policy’ is long overdue.

“This is a priority of Germany’s presidency of the Council of the European Union, during which we bear particular responsibility. The EU must act more confidently vis-à-vis China and speak with one voice.”



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Roth warned that Beijing’s imposition of a draconian new security law on Hong Kong and its suppression of Uighurs in the Chinese province of Xinjiang showed “how uncompromisingly it is prepared to assert its claim to power.”

“China is therefore not afraid to violate central principles of the rules-based international order before the eyes of the world,” he said.

Germany on Friday followed the UK, Australia, and Canada by suspending its extradition agreement with Hong Kong.

Roth added that the EU must aim to become less economically dependent on China.

The bloc should increase efforts to look to firms in Europe for technology like 5g,

he said, describing the row over whether Chinese firm Huawei should be allowed to develop 5g in Western countries as a “litmus test” for the EU.

“Nothing less than the security of our citizens is at stake here,” he said.

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