



External evaluation of Federal Council's China Strategy (March 2021)

Produced by China Macro Group AG (CMG) on behalf of the State Secretariat of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA)

Original evaluation text in German – this version is machine translated and merely edited for accuracy/clarity

November 2024

Abstract:

This report is an external evaluation of the Federal Council's China Strategy (March 2021), conducted between August and October 2024. The China Strategy is evaluated on the basis of five aspects and is based on findings from interviews with the Federal Administration, a survey conducted with stakeholders of the China Strategy in line with the “whole of Switzerland” approach, documents provided by the Federal Administration, and our own analyses and research into public sources. The evaluation does not consider the political or substantive correctness or adequacy of the analyses, judgments or the defined principles, objectives and measures contained in the China Strategy. Finally, the evaluation makes recommendations for the future implementation and formalization of China policy as part of the Federal Council's broader framework of foreign policy strategies.



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1 Introduction

In August 2024, China Macro Group (CMG)¹ owing to its qualifications as a research and consulting company specializing in China and geopolitics was commissioned by the State Secretariat of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) to externally evaluate the Federal Council's China Strategy (March 2021)². A mid-term evaluation had already been carried out for internal purposes.

The China Strategy is part of the Federal Council's broader framework for foreign policy strategies³ and is intended to contribute to the coherence of Swiss foreign policy. It is a so-called follow-up strategy to the Foreign Policy Strategy 2020-2023 (FPS 20-23) and, as one of five geographical strategies, the only country-specific one. Its period of validity is defined as the years 2021 to 2024. In principle, geographical and thematic strategies should be updated in each legislative period.

However, according to reports in various Swiss media, the FDFA informed the Foreign Affairs Committee of the National Council (APK-N) at the beginning of July 2024 that the China Strategy should no longer be formally continued on a country-specific basis, but that "the new strategy [...] will also include other Asian countries, namely India, Japan, South Korea and Indonesia"⁴. A motion submitted on August 27, 2024⁵ calls for the continuation of the China Strategy as a geographical, country-specific strategy of the Federal Council, with a view to China as a "global superpower" and its "striving for technological world leadership". As of today, it is not yet clear which approach will prevail.

The objective of the evaluation is to gain insights into the implementation and value-add of the China Strategy since March 2021 and to make recommendations for the future implementation and formalization of the Federal Council's China policy as part of the Federal Council's broader framework for foreign policy strategies⁶. Since this framework itself does not provide any concrete specifications on how a strategy is to be evaluated, the concept developed by CMG was coordinated on a case-by-case basis with the FDFA Asia and Pacific Division (APD) and the Policy Planning department that was newly created in December 2020.

The five evaluation dimensions of this report are: 1) comparison of Switzerland's China Strategy with selected countries, 2) implementation of the thematic focus areas by the Federal Administration, 3) coordination instruments and resources of the Federal Administration, 4) content-conceptual adoption, public communication and referencing to Parliament and 5) value-add of the China Strategy for stakeholders in Switzerland according to the "whole of Switzerland" approach.

Methodologically, the analytical or political correctness or adequacy of the content of the China Strategy are explicitly not the subject of this evaluation. Moreover, evaluated is only what the Federal Council and the Federal Administration can fundamentally influence themselves. Empirically, the evaluation is based on interviews with the Federal Administration, a survey conducted with stakeholders of the China Strategy in Switzerland, internal documents of the Federal Administration (e.g. meeting minutes of the interdepartmental China working group, meetings with the Chinese side at Federal Council level and consultations with "like-minded" countries) as well as on the evaluation's own research of public sources. Finally, it should be noted that some of the evidence work could only be carried out selectively due to the large amount of information (e.g. parliamentary business relating to China).

A first limitation of an evaluation of the China Strategy is that relevant administrative action or the added value achieved cannot usually be causally linked to the effect of the China Strategy as a specific foreign policy

¹<https://www.chinamacro.eu/>

²The evaluators are not aware of any government that has its China policy or strategy externally evaluated and published.

³<https://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/de/home/aussenpolitik/strategies.html>

⁴<https://www.nzz.ch/schweiz/cassis-beerdigt-die-china-strategie-ld.1838093>

⁵<https://www.parlament.ch/de/ratsbetrieb/suche-curia-vista/geschaefte?AffairId=20243822>

⁶Recommendations on the Federal Council's broader framework for foreign policy strategies of this evaluation require targeted discussion with policy planning.

instrument of the Federal Council. On the other hand, with the Covid pandemic and China's rigorous "zero Covid" policy as well as the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian army on February 24, 2022, two influencing factors of great importance for the implementation of the China Strategy that were not present in March 2021 have emerged. These factors are taken into account in the respective conclusions, even if they are not explicitly mentioned in every objectively relevant place in this report.

What the Federal Council's China Strategy triggered in the Chinese government and how this in turn influenced the bilateral relationship is not part of this evaluation. It can, however, be stated that the commitment of the Chinese side has not really changed, especially after the lifting of the "zero Covid" policy, despite a critical reaction by the Ambassador of the People's Republic of China WANG Shiting in Bern shortly after the publication of the Federal Council's China Strategy ⁷. On the contrary, the then Chinese Vice Premier LIU He characterized China's policy towards Switzerland as "Switzerland first" on the way to the World Economic Forum in Davos after a meeting with Federal Councilor Karin Keller-Sutter in Zurich in January 2023 ⁸.



Illustration 1 – Evaluation dimensions

⁷ China's official reaction to the Federal Council's China Strategy was cautious and limited to a media conference by the Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Switzerland on March 22, 2021 and a statement by Vice Foreign Minister and Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hua Chunying on March 22, 2021. Unofficial reactions, for example by Chinese think tanks or media, were also marginal. In terms of the choice of words, the Chinese reaction was similar to that to the German or Dutch China strategy, for example. China welcomes the Swiss government's willingness to "continue dialogue with China and expand bilateral relations", but protests against "unfounded accusations and attacks on China's political system, human rights situation and domestic and foreign policy that deviate from the facts" and complains about an "outdated, Cold War-influenced mentality" and a practice of "ideological demarcation". For statements by the Chinese ambassador to Switzerland, WANG Shiting, see the Tages-Anzeiger at: <https://www.tagesanzeiger.ch/dagegen-protestieren-wir-mit-nachdruck-298246642308>.

⁸ <https://v.ifeng.com/c/8MTAgm3h8E1> as a Chinese video source, where LIU He states: „China-Switzerland relations are very good. When dealing with bilateral relations, we have always implemented a specific policy called "Switzerland first", across various cooperation areas such as finance, trade, and others. We don't give such a market opening policy to other countries, and it's always "Switzerland first". The reason is very simple. We respect Switzerland and the great miracle created by the Swiss people." (unofficial translation)

2 Evaluation dimension 1: Comparison of Switzerland's China Strategy with selected countries

This chapter compares the Federal Council's China Strategy (March 2021) with China strategies or other relevant formalizations of China policy (e.g. speeches) of **eight selected countries** – the four EU member states Germany, the Netherlands, France and Sweden as well as four other OECD countries Norway, Singapore, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. All the selected countries have either also recently adopted a China strategy or otherwise serve as an interesting comparison for Switzerland with regard to their foreign policy positioning efforts.

These country examples are analyzed from three perspectives: first, the **formal aspects**, for example whether a country-specific strategy is formalized or whether an explicit period of validity has been defined; second, the **contextual factors** that influence the respective government in formalizing its China policy; and third, the extent to which the respective China strategies or China policies define a **positioning in the international context**, particularly with regard to the "strategic competition"⁹ between China and the US. The effectiveness and implementation of these China strategies or China policies are not analyzed. The Federal Council's China Strategy is then analyzed comparatively.

2.1 China strategies or formalizations of China policy of selected countries

On basis of publicly accessible sources									
Formalized China policies in comparison: four EU member states and four other OECD countries as benchmarks									
China dedicated strategy document	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
Type	China strategy	China strategy	China position paper	China strategy	China strategy	Last 2007 with a China strategy ¹	Last 2012 with a China strategy ¹	N/A ¹	N/A ¹
Year of publication	2021	2023	2019	2019	Not public ²				
Page numbers	40 p.	64 p.	104 p.	22 p.					
Other aspects									
Scope / Content ²	Comprehensive, narrow	Comprehensive, broad	Comprehensive, narrow	Comprehensive, narrow				Concise (2 pages in IRR 2023), narrow	
China specific objectives	✓	✓	✓	✓		✗	✗	✓	✗
China specific measures	✓	✓	✓	✓		✗	✗	✓	✗
Resource implications	✗	✗	✓ (Establish Netherlands Enterprise Agency)	✓ (Establish National China Centre)				✓ (Develop China competences)	



Source: CMG research; Note: ¹ If no current China strategy is available, other relevant documents (e.g. FR Indo-Pacific Strategy, UK Integrated Review Refresh) and speeches were consulted for analysis; ² Only assessed if a dedicated longer strategy statement on China is available; 2 Dimensions: 1) Scope of the fields of action addressed, 2) Content exclusively on China vs. also general topics

Illustration 2 – Formalized China policies in comparison

Formal aspects: Of the eight countries analyzed, the four EU member states have formalized their China policy as a China strategy – or in the case of the Netherlands, as a “position paper”¹⁰. Germany and the Netherlands also have an Indo-Pacific strategy, each with no formal connection to their respective China strategy. The four other OECD countries define their China policy using geographically or thematically broader or overarching strategy documents and key speeches. It is striking that Norway and New Zealand later abandoned an earlier practice of formalizing their respective China policy as a China strategy. A broader look at Europe shows that, regardless of the type of formalization, virtually all European countries have sought a more strategic approach to dealing with China in recent years, while only six have developed a formal China strategy.¹¹

⁹ China Strategy 2021-2024, p. 6.

¹⁰ The French China Strategy is not public, which is why this evaluation is using the French Indo-Pacific Strategy from 2021.

¹¹ See ETNC Report 2023 "From a China Strategy to no strategy at all - Exploring the diversity of European approaches".

The three China strategies differ considerably from one another in terms of *scope*. Nevertheless, the Swedish (22 pages), Dutch (104 pages) and German (64 pages) China strategies are similar in terms of content, which primarily includes the elements of China analysis, description of the respective bilateral relationship and definition of fields of action and priorities. The German China strategy also addresses non-China-specific topics such as Germany's location policy or the state of supply chain diversification in the German economy.

Objectives and measures are formally mentioned in all three documents, but remain abstract or vaguely formulated. It should also be noted that these documents neither index objectives and measures nor assign clear responsibilities. No period of validity or budget implications are specified¹². In some cases, operational factors such as new committees or formats are described, e.g. the creation of new exchange and coordination formats for the government with domestic stakeholders in the Netherlands or the establishment of a round table of state secretaries on China in Germany. Overall, however, the documents say almost nothing about this. The Dutch position paper is the most explicit in this regard, with 25 objectives and 32 defined measures.

The five China policies that are not formalized as a strategy also address substantive aspects such as analyses of China, but to a much lesser extent. The United Kingdom takes a middle path and devotes two pages to China policy in the *Integrated Review Refresh 2023*, the United Kingdom's foreign policy strategy. It is the only one of these five countries to define concrete objectives and measures for dealing with China and also commits to doubling the resources to strengthen China expertise¹³.

Context factors: All the countries analyzed here are EU member states or OECD members and are committed to a liberal economic policy and international economic and trade order. China is an important economic partner for all these countries. Of all the EU member states, Germany has the strongest economic ties with China.

Norway, the United Kingdom and New Zealand are each in at least one US-led foreign, intelligence or security policy alliance or partnership (e.g. NATO, AUKUS, 5 Eyes). New Zealand is also currently considering joining AUKUS. Geographically, New Zealand and Singapore are located in a region where, from the US perspective, China wants to “displace” the US and which has consequently received increased strategic attention since the US National Security Strategy under Trump in December 2017¹⁴ as part of the Indo-Pacific policy continued by Joe Biden.

The political discourse in these countries has recently dealt with a wide range of issues related to China, notably economic security, knowledge security, industrial competitiveness, influence operations and human rights. The pandemic and Russia's attack on Ukraine have brought the issue of import dependence on China and China's position on this war to the fore.

The need to take an explicit position on China in one form or another on the issue of national or economic security has increased in all countries. The issue of human rights was a key factor for Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom in particular, while the perception of Chinese influence had a major impact in Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden. Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand and the United Kingdom in particular also felt pressured by Washington and its escalating conflict with Beijing to take a clearer position.¹⁵

Overall, internal or external political pressure on governments against the backdrop of the US-China relationship seem to be the key factors determining how to formalize China policy. With a view to the

¹²The Swedish strategy simply states that the government will begin work on establishing a China competence center.

¹³“We will double funding to build China capabilities across government to better understand China and allow us to engage confidently where it is in our interests to do so.”

¹⁴<https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>

¹⁵ See ETNC Report 2023 “From a China Strategy to no strategy at all - Exploring the diversity of European approaches”.

domestic political discourse, the current German government wrote itself the task of developing a China strategy into the coalition agreement. In the Netherlands, it was the Parliament that demanded the creation of such a paper, while in Sweden and the United Kingdom the governments each decided, albeit in a minimalist form, to formalize China policy.

Positioning: The analysis of the eight countries compared with regard to their respective positioning behavior shows that the increasing tensions between Washington and Beijing are the key influencing factor for the formulation of China policy. The most important effects of these tensions are seen to be greater political polarization, geoeconomic fragmentation, more competition in the multilateral system and a greater geopolitical relevance of the “Indo-Pacific” region.

In their *descriptions of how they see and characterize China*, the documents at times choose clear words: the German China Strategy, for example, sees China “pursuing its own interests far more assertively” in foreign policy and notes a striving for “regional hegemony”. The French Indo-Pacific strategy ascribes China an “aggressive diplomacy”, while the United Kingdom even describes China as an “epoch-defining and systemic challenge”. The other governments remain more moderate in their choice of words, but note similar tendencies in substance.

The *US as leading global power* remains an explicitly mentioned and strategically important reference point for most of the countries analyzed, including in their China policy. For the UK, relations with Washington are “an absolutely essential pillar of [its] security”. Germany speaks of a “close, trusting partnership”, and Norway also sees Washington as a close partner and the most important ally, while Singapore considers the US to be “indispensable” for its own security and stability. Only Sweden does not explicitly mention the US in the documents analyzed.

In the descriptions of *bilateral relations with China*, the ambivalences of the respective dealings with Beijing come to the fore. The German China strategy, for example, in line with EU China policy, sees China simultaneously as a “partner, competitor and systemic rival”, with elements of rivalry and competition having increased. The Dutch paper, meanwhile, speaks of “wide-ranging and intensive” relations and frames China both an opportunity and a challenge, while Singapore sees “long-standing, significant” and “close and diverse” relations with Beijing and New Zealand maintains “mature” and “complex” relations with China as an “essential economic partner”.

Not surprisingly, but important for the question of positioning, all EU member states explicitly reference the EU's China strategy in their China policy¹⁶ – even the non-EU states Norway and the UK do this. Singapore, as a small state in the Asia-Pacific, is explicitly positioning itself independently (“pro-Singapore”), while New Zealand sees itself as a “bridge builder” with an “independent foreign policy”.

After all, all countries are committed to the *rules-based international order* in one form or another. The German strategy, for example, expresses “concern” about China’s “efforts” to “relativize” this order and sees its strengthening as the “core of our foreign policy.”

2.2 Switzerland's China Strategy in comparison

The Federal Council's China Strategy is **formally** designed as a geographical strategy within Federal Council's broader framework for foreign policy strategies. It is country-specific and focuses on the People's Republic of China. It is structured into five chapters, comprises 40 pages, is valid from 2021 to 2024 and has been published in English as well as in the four official languages.

¹⁶<https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2019-03/communication-eu-china-a-strategic-outlook.pdf>

As a follow-up strategy to the Foreign Policy Strategy 2020-2023 (FPS 20-23), the China Strategy is based on it in terms of thematic priorities¹⁷. In terms of content, it first analyses China and the geopolitical implications of its development, describes relations between Switzerland and China, defines three principles, 22 objectives and 45 measures, and finally describes internal and external coordination instruments for the implementation of the China Strategy.

In comparison with the countries mentioned, it is noticeable that in terms of formal aspects, the Federal Council's China Strategy is formally more precise and structured, even if the objectives and measures are also not indexed and do not have responsibilities assigned. Switzerland's China Strategy is also the only one of those analyzed that sets an explicit period of validity and is embedded in a comprehensive framework of foreign policy strategies. Although its fifth chapter deals explicitly with resources, the Federal Council, like almost all other governments, does not commit any new resources.

The **context** of Switzerland's China Strategy is primarily influenced by three factors: Firstly, China remains an important trading partner for Switzerland to this day¹⁸. Secondly, until 2019 – the year in which the so-called “BRI MoU”¹⁹ was signed with China, supposedly the last important bilateral milestone to date – Switzerland had a fundamentally open attitude towards cooperation with China. Thirdly, domestic political factors became more important from 2018 onwards – culminating politically in the “Motion Molina” (18.4336²⁰) – when the Swiss China policy for the first time became the subject of broader parliamentary and societal discussions. Thus, the China Strategy itself, with its publication, sees the postulate of the APK-N (20.4334²¹) and the “Motion Nidegger” (20.3738²²) as fulfilled. In other words, as in most of the countries analyzed, in Switzerland too it is thanks to Parliament that the Federal Council has formalized its China policy with a country-dedicated strategy. The China discourse and the economic factors are similar to those in other countries, but in Switzerland there is no real discussion on the topic of “de-risking”.

How *China is described* is also relevant for Switzerland's **positioning**: “authoritarian tendencies have increased in recent years”, and political power “has become even more centralized” since Xi Jinping took over the party and state leadership in 2012 and 2013. The human rights situation in China is also described as having “deteriorated”, particularly with increased pressure on ethnic minorities and religious groups. Finally, the “Belt and Road Initiative” (BRI) is seen as development model with which China aims to “brand its growing economic and geopolitical presence in the international arena, while strategically expanding and emphasizing its leadership ambitions”.

The China Strategy describes China as a so-called “priority country” in *the bilateral relationship* and, unlike the EU²³, refrains from using terms such as “economic competitor” or “system rival”. Membership of the EU as a supranational organization generally means that EU member states have a different starting point in positioning issues relating to geopolitics and China than Switzerland with its independent foreign policy.

Against this background, what stands out most is that Switzerland is the only one of the countries analyzed that has defined an explicit chapter (3.2)²⁴ on its international position as part of its China Strategy. Chapter 3.2 describes Switzerland as a neutral country, not belonging to any bloc and with an independent and universally oriented foreign policy. It goes on to say, in an implicit form, about relations with the US and the “West” in general, that Switzerland “in the event of doubt, [it] will stand up for freedom”. With regard to

¹⁷The four thematic focus areas are: peace and security, prosperity, sustainability and digitalization.

¹⁸ 10.8% of Swiss exports and 5.6% of imports as well as 2.1% of all direct investments abroad go to China.

¹⁹<https://www.news.admin.ch/news/message/attachments/56683.pdf>

²⁰<https://www.parlament.ch/de/ratsbetrieb/amtliches-bulletin/amtliches-bulletin-die-handlungen?SubjectId=47978>

²¹<https://www.parlament.ch/de/ratsbetrieb/suche-curia-vista/geschaefte?AffairId=20204334>

²²<https://www.parlament.ch/de/ratsbetrieb/suche-curia-vista/geschaefte?AffairId=20203738>

²³<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/DE/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52019JC0005>

²⁴The title of the chapter is “Positioning in the international context”.

Europe and the EU, the China Strategy states that “structured relations with the EU [...] are even more important in the current geopolitical situation”.

The chapter also argues from a positioning logic on the *relationship with China*: “The Federal Council nonetheless believes firmly that Switzerland can most effectively continue to safeguard its interests and values through broadly diversified relations with China. Turning away from China would not have a positive effect on domestic policy developments there, but it would harm Swiss interests and fuel uncertainty about Switzerland’s foreign policy positioning in general.” This reference to the disadvantages or “costs” of turning away from China is intended to show that a unilateral change in Swiss China policy can have an impact on Switzerland’s relations with third countries, which in turn sometimes have their own complex, balanced relationships with China.

This chapter created important new positioning concepts for Swiss foreign policy with a view to “global political developments”, as can be seen from the partly verbatim adoption in the subsequent, hierarchically superior FPS 2024-2027²⁵ in the form of an important separate chapter – aptly numbered 3.2.

Meanwhile, *Chapter 3.2 of the FPS 24-27 has been* further developed in several respects: Firstly, the chapter appears to be more “offensive” and creatively designed, which is also reflected in the title “What does Switzerland stand for in the world?” Secondly, the term “liberal international order”²⁶ is replaced with “(rules-based) international order”, which supposedly addressed a previously existing conceptual vagueness (see Chapter 5.1). Thirdly, it is more explicitly stated that Switzerland must also work with “authoritarian states”²⁷. Fourthly, the US – alongside the EU, EFTA states and the United Kingdom – is now explicitly named as Switzerland’s “most important partner” and NATO’s role in European security is recognized. Fifthly, Switzerland’s self-image as “part of the European community of shared values” is unequivocally underlined even more strongly in normative terms. Sixthly, against the backdrop of increasing geopolitical polarization and the formation of Sino-American blocs, Switzerland is portrayed even more strongly as a “bridge builder”. Seventh, Switzerland’s neutrality is now defined only as an instrument (see Chapter 6.2 FPS 24-27) and no longer as an attribute of its identity or positioning. Eighth, the definition of Switzerland’s “non-alignment”²⁸ is now refined as “not institutionally belonging to any of the global centers of power”.

Interestingly, the survey of stakeholders in Switzerland in the spirit of the “whole of Switzerland” approach (see Chapter 6) shows that this clarification of Switzerland’s positioning in the international context is seen as particularly useful. In contrast, the evaluation interviews with representatives of the interdepartmental China working group found that, surprisingly, the clarification of Switzerland’s positioning in administrative activities around China provided in the China Strategy is neither seen as important nor has it been reflected in references or in any other way.

Main conclusions

In summary, in comparison with the selected countries, it can be stated that – firstly – the Swiss China Strategy is formally exceptional in terms of structure, clarity and detail, but is similar to most in terms of its content (scope); secondly, its creation was catalyzed by parliamentary activity, as in most of the countries analyzed; and that – thirdly – with regard to Switzerland’s specific foreign policy situation, it expresses itself in the most substantial and explicit way with regard to its international positioning.

²⁵So-called level 1 of the Federal Council’s broader framework for foreign policy strategies.

²⁶This term was previously used consistently in FPS 20-23, China Strategy as well as in AVIS28 (<https://www.eda.admin.ch/avis28>).

²⁷“When dealing with authoritarian states, Switzerland assumes a position that does not play off values and realpolitik against each other”. Compare this in particular with the “Integrated Review Refresh 2023”, the foreign policy The UK’s strategy, which states: “As IR2021 identified, an expanding group of ‘middle-ground powers’ are of growing importance to UK interests as well as global affairs more generally, and do not want to be drawn into zero-sum competition any more than the UK does. We will need to work with these countries to protect our shared higher interest in an open and stable international order, accepting that we may not share all of the same values and national interests.”

²⁸See China Strategy, Chapter 3.2: “Switzerland is neutral, *does not belong to any bloc* and is committed to dialogue with all states.”

3 Evaluation dimension 2: Implementation of thematic focus areas by the Federal Administration

The China Strategy has defined 22 objectives and 45 measures in Chapter 4. Objectives and measures are based on the four thematic focus areas defined in the FPS 2020-2023 and the principles defined in Chapter 3.3. In evaluation interviews and written inquiries, measures were evaluated for *activity* and objectives for the *degree to which they were achieved*.²⁹ The substantive correctness and adequacy of objectives and measures are not evaluated.

3.1 Implementation

The analysis shows that, according to the Federal Administration's assessment, a large proportion of the objectives set out in the strategy have been *partially* or *fully achieved*.³⁰ Of 22 objectives, 9 were *achieved*. 12 were *partially achieved* and only one was *not achieved*. The measures taken to achieve the objectives were mostly considered *sufficient* or even *much*. The activity was assessed as *much* in 13 cases, *sufficient* in 26 cases, *little* in 5 cases and *too little* in one case. In the opinion of those surveyed, Switzerland was most active in the area of *Peace and Security*.

Objectives/measures		Activity				Contribution to reaching goal			Objectives/measures		Activity				Contribution to reaching goal		
		1	2	3	4	1	2	3			1	2	3	4	1	2	3
Peace and Security	A Security policy								Prosperity	K Working conditions							
	A.1 Security policy			X				X		K.1 Support projects			X				X
	A.2 Exchange				X					K.2 Dialogue on labor & empl.				X			
	A.3 Security dialogue			X						L Tourist destination						X	
	B International order							X		L.1 Switzerland Tourism			X				
	B.1 Bil. dialogue				X					L.2 Visa processing				X			
	B.2 Exchange on China			X						L.3 Flight connections			X				
	C Arms control							X		M GHG emissions							X
	C.1 Non-proliferation				X					M.1 Expertise and technology				X			
	C.2 Arms control				X					M.2 Mitigate GHG emissions			X				
	D Espionage/interference							X		N Financial participation						X	
	D.1 Awareness				X					N.1 Implementation				X			
	D.2 Internal security			X						O Public health guidelines						X	
Prosperity	E Human rights							X	Sustainability	P Fintech/Sust. Finance						X	
	E.1 HR dialogue			X						P.1 Fintech			X				
	E.2 Respect for basic rights			X						Q BRI						X	
	E.3 Universality of HR				X					Q.1 Large-scale projects			X				
	E.4 Expertise exchange		X							Q.2 Knowledge transfer			X				
	F Predictable intl. system							X		R Intl. development coop.						X	
	F.1 Bil. cooperation		X							R.1 Development finance				X			
	F.2 International bodies			X						S Open/secure digital space							X
	G Market access							X		S.1 Coordination			X				
	G.1 Free Trade Agreement			X						S.2 Intl. Law in digital space			X				
	G.2 Level playing field	X								T International Geneva							X
	G.3 Analyze other agreements			X						T.1 Engage China				X			
	H Reform agenda							X	Digitalization	T.2 Geneva Dialogue				X			
Digitalization	H.1 Business environment				X					U Framework conditions						X	
	I Taiwan							X		U.1 Challenges		X					
	I.1 Exchange with Taiwan			X						U.2 Taxation			X				
	J ERI							X		V Div. supplier market							X
	J.1 Research dialogue			X						V.1 Mobile networks			X				
	J.2 Academic freedom			X						V.2 Security in digital space			X				
Digitalization	J.3 Initiatives at federal level			X													

Illustration 3 – Objectives and measures formulated in the China Strategy

The objectives (5) in the thematic focus area **Peace and Security** were *achieved* in full (2) or *partially* (3). The activity of the measures (13) is assessed overall as *little* (1), *sufficient* (6) or *much* (6).

- For example, a lot of investment was made in exchanges with other actors in Switzerland (see measure A2). This includes, for example, regular cooperation between the International Security Division (AIS)³¹ in the FDFA and the Geneva Center for Security Policy (GCSP) or the Zermatt

²⁹The following twelve bodies were interviewed in person in evaluation interviews: Benedikt Wechsler (DIGI), Daniel Cavegn (Policy Planning), Benno Zogg (SEPOS), Natalie Rast / Felix Rosenberger (both SECO), Christoph Küng / Thomas Koch (both SIF), Pascal Hubatka (AFM), Martine Rohn (BAFU), Thierry Umbehr / Christian Engler (both DEZA), Hans-Christian Baumann (AIS), Yves Morath (AWN), Manuel Eugster (UNA), Régis Nyffeler (SBFI). Six additional bodies were interviewed in writing: Ursula Siegfried (IGE), Nino Seiler (AE), Christian Andres (BAZL), Sarah Waldemer (BAG), Katharina Lautschke (DV), Thomas Schneider / René Dönni (BAKOM). See also Appendix B. The detailed information on the implementation of the respective measures mentioned in this chapter - in particular the examples - is based on the evaluation interviews. Due to time constraints, they were not revalidated with the relevant authorities.

³⁰Where there are different assessments for objectives/measures, the assessment of the interdepartmental China working group unit with first leadership was prioritized.

³¹<https://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/de/home/das-eda/organisation-deseda/staatssekretariat/abteilung-sicherheitspolitik.html>

Roundtable – a Track 1.5 initiative. In addition, the bilateral dialogue on security policy (see measure A3) was one of the few dialogues to be held once despite Covid and possible escalation scenarios were played out internally (see measure A1).

- The bilateral dialogue with China on Swiss priorities in the UN and other multilateral bodies (see Measure B1) has also been noticeably intensified. For example, Switzerland maintains two UN dialogues with China and exchanged views with Beijing twice as part of the relevant consultations before taking up its seat on the Security Council. The exchange with like-minded partners (see Measure B2), meanwhile, has been less active and is only partially formalized in Geneva and New York.
- For example, AIS has actively attempted to bring China closer to the Missile Technology Control Regime through an institutionalized annual exchange (see Measure C1). In addition, Switzerland has tried for more than a year, together with New Zealand and Ireland, to demand China's accountability under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (see Measure C2).
- To counter Chinese espionage and influence activities, the Federal Government has invested heavily in raising awareness (see measure D1). To this end, the FDFA has held various meetings with the FIS, SERI and universities. There has also been regular exchange with SECO and associations on this subject. However, cooperation with like-minded countries in this regard (see measure D2) has been pushed forward less strongly.
- The bilateral human rights dialogue between Switzerland and China was temporarily suspended by the Chinese side in summer 2019, but was held again for the first time in 2023. Switzerland has also made various démarches – also with other countries – to promote individual fundamental rights in China (see measure E2) and has now given the previously existing human rights role at the Embassy a diplomatic profile. In addition, the Peace and Human Rights Division³² supports NGOs financially for analyses, has – with a few exceptions – consistently supported the most recent joint declarations on human rights issues in the UN context (see measure E3) and is conducting an internationally unique exchange of experts in the penal system with the Chinese Ministry of Justice (see measure E4).

The objectives (7) in the thematic focus area **Prosperity** were *partially* (4) or *fully* (3) *achieved*. The activity of the measures (15) is overall assessed as *too little* (1), *little* (1), *sufficient* (10) or *much* (3).

- Due to the pandemic, the Joint Economic Commission (JEC) was only able to meet in 2021. Bilateral cooperation (see Measure F1) between SECO and its Chinese partners in connection with strengthening the international trade, financial and monetary system was relatively low. Meanwhile, SIF met its partners continuously, for example for the Financial Dialogue or the Stock Connect. In multilateral bodies, such as the 12th and 13th WTO Ministerial Conferences, SECO represented Swiss interests as expected (see Measure F2). SIF reported difficulties in reaching Chinese actors during the pandemic.
- Talks on modernizing the bilateral free trade agreement with China were officially launched during Premier Li Qiang's visit to Switzerland in early 2024 and negotiations on this matter began on September 23, 2024 (see Measure G1).
- In addition, Switzerland was actively involved in promoting an open and competitive business environment in China both bilaterally and multilaterally (see measure H1). In addition to the JEC and the Economic Mission 2024, it was also actively involved multilaterally in the 9th WTO Trade Policy Review (TPR) on China³³, as well as within the framework of the IMF and the OECD Paris Club.
- With regard to Taiwan, Switzerland has continued its close economic, scientific and cultural exchange with Taipei (see Measure I1). On April 19, 2021, the Federal Council published a report on the fulfillment of the postulate submitted by the APK-N (21.3967) "Relations with Taiwan (Chinese Taipei): current status and opportunities for deepening". There was no economic dialogue, but there was a lively exchange on scientific issues.

³²<https://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/de/home/das-eda/organisation-deseda/staatssekretariat/abteilung-menschensicherheit.html>

³³https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/tpr_e/tp558_e.htm

- In the field of education, research and innovation, Switzerland has continued the dialogue with China in both bilateral and multilateral bodies (see measure J1), regularly advocated the aspect of academic freedom in the discussions (see measure J2) and continued the corresponding initiatives at the federal level (see measure J3). In July 2024, for example, Federal Councilor Guy Parmelin met his Chinese counterparts in the MOST and MOE at ministerial level. The initiatives at the federal level include Swissnex, the “Leading House Asia” and an SNSF research project.
- To improve working conditions and productivity in companies in China, the projects previously supported within the framework of the ILO³⁴ (see Measure K1) were continued. However, SECO was more active here with the tripartite labor dialogue – a dialogue with the Chinese Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security (MoHRSS) and Chinese social partners, involving Swiss trade unions and employer representatives (see Measure K2).
- Following the reopening of China as part of the relaxation of Covid measures, the Swiss Embassy in Beijing has done a lot to be able to process visa applications efficiently (see measure L2). In addition, cooperation with Switzerland Tourism (see measure L1) and discussions on improving flight connections (see measure L3) have been continued.

The objectives (6) in the thematic focus area **Sustainability** were *not achieved* (1), *partially achieved* (4) or *fully achieved* (1). The activity of the measures (9) is assessed overall as *little* (2), *sufficient* (5) or *much* (2).

- For example, the SDC has actively supported China with expertise (see measure M1), such as a “Zero Emission Building Code” or research projects at the PSI on clean air. The SDC’s further climate policy commitment to mitigating climate-damaging emissions (see measure M2) has shifted from China to third countries. Meanwhile, it is now the FOEN that is actively advocating for greater financial participation by China in the multilateral context within the framework of the UNFCCC, CBD and the UN Convention on Environmental Issues (see measure N1).
- With regard to compliance with international health regulations in China (see Objective O), the FOPH signed an action plan (“plan of action”) with the Chinese Ministry of Health in summer 2024 within the framework of the Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2005 (see Measure O1), with the initiative coming primarily from the Chinese side. The exchange of experts (see Measure O2) was also continued.
- In addition, SIF has taken a number of steps through the Financial Dialogue, the Stock Connect and the annual ministerial meeting to create a good framework for companies in the fintech and sustainable finance sectors so that they can seize their business opportunities in China (see Measure P1).
- In connection with compliance with international social and labor standards in projects along the Chinese Silk Road Initiative, SECO and SIF held a virtual working meeting with the NDRC in April 2022 (see measure Q1). In their view, the SDC has also made insufficient attempts to intensify knowledge transfer from Swiss international cooperation via “effective donor cooperation” and CIDCA (Dec 2022, Jan 2023) (see measure R1), while SIF and SECO have tried to integrate China into the international rules of the G20 and the Paris Club on transparent development financing (see measure R2).

The objectives (4) in the thematic focus area **Digitalization** were *partially* (1) or *fully* (3) *achieved*. The activity of the measures (8) is overall assessed as *little* (1), *sufficient* (5) or *much* (2).

- Switzerland has coordinated with like-minded countries within the framework of the UN-OEWG, the Global Digital Compact, the “Sino-European Cyber Dialogue” and the “Geneva Dialogue” (see Measure S1) and has advocated for international law and human rights in the digital space (see Measure S2).
- As part of the US-China talks in Geneva, for example, DIGI actively sought to involve China more in the development of innovative governance and cooperation models in the digital sector (see Measure

³⁴ In particular, the project “Sustainable and Competitive Enterprises” SCORE 2017-2021

T1). To this end, the “Geneva Dialogue on Responsible Behavior in Cyberspace” was continued (see Measure T2).

- The challenges in dealing with data (see measure U1) were only addressed within the framework of the Sino-European Cyber Dialogue. There was also an exchange with China on the issue of taxation of bilateral trade and investments in online trade and the digitalized economy (see measure U2).
- Ultimately, the strategy also aims to contribute to a diversified supplier market for key digital technologies (Objective V) in order to avoid one-sided dependencies. To this end, OFCOM has taken the necessary security precautions for next-generation mobile networks (see Measure V1), while the AIS has attempted to bring security issues to international bodies – such as the UN-OEWG or the European Cyber Dialogue – and thus minimize cyber risks for Switzerland (see Measure V2).

3.2 General observations on the use of the China Strategy

The evaluation interviews with twelve federal offices of the interdepartmental China working group show that the China Strategy is generally seen as a helpful instrument in the Federal Administration. In particular, it serves as a source of information and a reference document for clarifying positions and priorities relating to China.

Some also use it as a coordinated basis for action in their operational work. For others, the precise and clear choice of words is particularly important in order to avoid certain objectives – such as bilateral interests versus multilateral measures to strengthen human rights in China – being played off against each other. The principles, objectives and measures anchored in the strategy also increase its binding nature. The China Strategy is also seen by some as a courageous, and controversial, document that has helped the Federal Council's China policy to gain more internal and external attention. This has led, for example, to human rights aspects being seen and taken into account more widely beyond the FDFA.

At the same time, the China Strategy was and is part of the administrative practice of the federal agencies interviewed only relevant in specific cases. For example, some instead base their positioning on Switzerland either directly on the FPS or on strategic documents from their own department, which were often issued at Federal Council level. One agency complained that the China Strategy was an FDFA strategy with too strong a focus on security policy. In practice, the China Strategy was also not used as a management tool for setting topics and structuring the interdepartmental China working group meetings, so that various federal agencies were simply not aware of their leadership for certain measures or objectives – which, from the perspective of the original documentation of the FDFA-APD, was formally clearly assigned.³⁵ Finally, it was repeatedly emphasized that the objectives and measures set out in the strategy were often not explicitly developed for the China Strategy, but mostly already existed, which means that the added value of the China Strategy lies more in its consolidating perspective.

Meanwhile, several important external factors were mentioned that influenced the implementation of the China Strategy measures: The pandemic and China's rigorous "zero Covid" policy made face-to-face meetings impossible. The Russian war against Ukraine, which began in February 2022, led to important reprioritizations within the Federal Administration, but at the same time increased sensitivity to geostrategic issues. Similarly, the report by the then UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet has in the meantime generated a general increase in attention to issues surrounding the human rights situation of the Uighurs in Xinjiang. Switzerland's multilateral work benefited from Switzerland's seat on the UN Security Council in 2023 and 2024, while in the context of education, research and innovation issues, the new Chinese data protection legislation in particular from 2021 created awareness of the problem. Last but not least, the generally scarce resources were mentioned.

³⁵ The development of objectives and measures of the China Strategy was extensively consulted within the Federal Administration, but the lead responsibility for each measure or objective, which is partly divided between several departments, was not jointly agreed upon.



Main conclusions

The analysis shows that the implementation of the measures and the achievement of the objectives are generally assessed positively by the Federal Administration. The fact that the balance is not even more positive is also due to important external factors. However, the strategy was not used consistently as a management tool, which – regardless of the external factors – cannot in principle be conducive to effective implementation.

4 Evaluation dimension 3: Coordination instruments and resources of the Federal Administration

This chapter evaluates the activity, impact and practical observations after March 2021 of various internal and external **coordination instruments** mentioned in Chapter 5 of the China Strategy.

As **internal coordination instruments** to strengthen a coherent China policy, the Federal Council wants to expand “the administration’s China expertise and connections with centers of expertise at home and abroad”. In addition, the strategy established an interdepartmental China working group, which “will meet at least three times a year” and “facilitate the sharing of information and experience” as well as the search for “coordination of positions”. Finally, the Federal Council wanted to conduct a regular exchange of information and experience with Swiss actors outside the Federal Administration in the sense of a “whole of Switzerland” approach in order to strengthen China-specific expertise, enable synergies and facilitate the identification of opportunities and challenges for Switzerland in relation to China.

The China Strategy specifically mentions the channels of dialogue and exchange with China, the official representations in China and the resources in the multilateral context as **external coordination instruments**. Finally, regular exchanges with so-called “like-minded” countries on China should help Switzerland “strengthen its China knowledge base and allow it to develop more effective policies”.

Methodologically, FDFA-APD was used to identify twelve federal offices of the interdepartmental China working group that were considered particularly relevant for this evaluation due to their thematic priorities and were therefore interviewed. A further six were consulted in writing for feedback. Finally, all available interdepartmental China working group meeting minutes and other internal documents were analyzed.

The bilateral dialogues and exchange formats with China – an external coordination instrument that was particularly affected by the pandemic – were analyzed in order to provide an overview of their activity and relevance for cooperation between the authorities³⁶. Of the 28 formats identified – 12 of which are led by the EAER, 9 by the FDFA, 3 by the FDF, 2 by the FDHA, 1 by the DDPS and 1 by the DETEC – a total of 20 are still active today even after the pandemic. With the exception of the dialogue on watches, all active formats are assessed as being of *medium* to *high* relevance from the perspective of Swiss interests – in particular the 11 active economically oriented formats, all of which, with two exceptions, are rated as *highly* relevant. Finally, the dialogues and exchange formats affected by the implementation of the China Strategy measures are also briefly mentioned in Chapter 3.

4.1 Interdepartmental China working group

To evaluate the interdepartmental China working group as a coordination instrument, eight working group protocols³⁷ and the attendance record³⁸ were analyzed and – as mentioned in Chapter 3 – twelve evaluation interviews were conducted with selected working group participants. Overall, the majority of respondents rate the added value of the working group as *moderate* to *high*³⁹.

As specified in the strategy, three interdepartmental China working groups were held per year from March 2021 to the beginning of 2024. These were always attended by at least 24 participants from the 36 federal agencies invited. The agencies in the FDFA, EAER and fedpol took part in all interdepartmental China working group meetings with a further six federal agencies, while the remaining 27 internal agencies participated in some cases more or less patchily. Participation was certainly influenced by the respective topic.

³⁶For an overview, see Appendix A.

³⁷There are no meeting minutes available for the fifth of nine interdepartmental China working group meetings.

³⁸No attendance record is available for the first of nine interdepartmental China working group meetings.

³⁹Assessments of “activity”: 1 *too little*, 1 *little*, 13 *sufficient*, 2 *much*; assessments of added value: 0 *none*, 2 *little*, 8 *moderate*, 7 *great* (n=17), see also Appendix C.

Participant list working group (WG) 1 not available

Interdepartmental China working group participation: FDFA, SECO, SERI and fedpol constant, otherwise patchy

		WG 2	WG 3	WG 4	WG 5	WG 6	WG 7	WG 8	WG 9	Assessment
	Participants	28	30	33	30	35	36	24	35	
FDFA	Asia and Pacific (APD)	x								Complete
	Americas		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	Mostly
	Europe	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	Mostly
	DIGI	x	x	x	x	x				Mostly
	Embassy BJ	x					x			Partially
	Peace & HR	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	Complete
	Intl. Security	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	Complete
	UN (IJI)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	Complete
	Prosp. & Sust.	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	Complete
	SDC	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	Complete
	Intl. Law	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	Mostly
	Policy Planning	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	Mostly
	Protocol		x	x						Partially
	Presence CH				x	x	x		x	Partially
	CD			x						Rarely
	Eurasia						x			Rarely
EAER	SECO	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	Complete
	SERI	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	Complete
FDJP	fedpol	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	Complete
	IPI	x	x	x	x					Partially
	FOJ		x	x	x	x				Partially
	SEM		x	x	x	x				Partially
DDPS	FIS	x	x	x						Partially
	GS		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	Mostly
	FOSPO		x	x						Rarely
	SEPOS					x			x	Rarely
	FOCP						x		x	Rarely
FDHA	FOPH				x	x	x	x	x	Partially
	Food Safety & Vet				x					Rarely
FDF	SIF	x			x	x	x	x	x	Mostly
	FTA				x					Rarely
DETEC	FOEN	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	Mostly
	OFCOM	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		Mostly
	FOCA	x					x	x		Partially
	SFOE	x								Rarely
FCh	FCh	x	x	x		x				Partially
External	Swissuniversities		x							Rarely
	GCSP						x			Rarely
	DiploFoundation			x						Rarely

Note: In some cases, more than one person took part per position, so the total number of participants does not match the crosses

Illustration 4 – Interdepartmental China working group participation

The analysis of eight existing interdepartmental China working group protocols⁴⁰ shows that the objectives of the working group were partially achieved. An exchange of information and experience took place in all eight working groups examined. This exchange focused on specific topics such as "China in a multilateral context", "China's role in international standard setting in the cyber area" or "Security policy developments in and around China". In addition, current topics and relevant upcoming business were introduced by the various federal agencies as part of a "tour de table".

The objectives and measures defined in the strategy were also initially used to structure the agenda, but this was no longer continued after the 3rd interdepartmental China working group. It is not clear from the meeting minutes whether the exchange in the working group attempted to coordinate positions in line with the China Strategy. Statements from the evaluation interviews indicate that this coordination was abandoned early on because it was considered "unrealistic" due to the structure of the interdepartmental China working group.

However, the meeting minutes only provide a limited insight into the content of the work of the interdepartmental China working group. This is not least because the meeting minutes were presumably kept short in order to avoid having to disclose potentially sensitive information from the administration's point of view in the event of external requests for access based on the Federal Act on Freedom of Information in the Administration (FoIA). The last four meeting minutes cover just one page.⁴¹

The interdepartmental China working group participants interviewed said that the working group is an important continuation of the development process of the China Strategy, that it is well prepared and moderated and that it enables a comprehensive exchange of information and experience across departments that was unprecedented before the establishment of this interdepartmental China working group, which in itself is an important achievement of the China Strategy and also allows China to be better understood as a player across the board. The China working group meets more often than other interdepartmental working

⁴⁰The underlying analysis will be published upon request and in consultation with FDFA-APD.

⁴¹An investigation by the evaluators into the relevant department in the federal administration has shown that the interdepartmental China working group has not exploited the scope granted by the FoIA. In order to better take into account security policy aspects and the need for effective cooperation among a large number of participants, the current practice can be reconsidered.

groups in the Federal Administration, holds more intensive and concrete discussions and is particularly valuable when time is made available for strategic topics alongside day-to-day business.

Regardless of the future formalization of the Federal Council's China policy, in view of China's importance and complexity for Swiss foreign policy and diplomacy, consideration must be given to continuing a China-specific interdepartmental working group in a form to be defined.

In individual interviews, it was raised that the interdepartmental China working group was not making full use of its added value because it did not systematically use the objectives and measures defined in the China Strategy for the purposes of setting agendas and measuring impact. This was supplemented by the general comment that interdepartmental working groups in the Federal Administration were generally too dependent on themselves, so that unfortunately no “best practices” were exchanged with regard to the use of this important coordination instrument. However, good “interdepartmental working group templates” were reported to exist in the Federal Administration.

Another point of criticism concerned the large number of participants, particularly from the FDFA, which sometimes led to the meetings being too formal and detrimental to a discussion. However, opinions differ as to whether a kind of interdepartmental China working group committee – up to a group at the level of state secretaries, especially for China – should be formed in order to resolve differences in a smaller group. In one interview, it was suggested that the basic decision-making authority of the interdepartmental China working group should be discussed transparently and, if appropriate, sharpened.

Finally, the question was raised – also a governance aspect – whether the “project team” instrument provided for in the China Strategy had not been used too cautiously, thereby hindering necessary coordination and substantive deepening.⁴²

4.2 “Whole of Switzerland” approach

From the perspective of the interdepartmental China working group participants surveyed, *little to sufficient* has been done to intensify the objective of a regular exchange of information and experience with external actors in Switzerland. Accordingly, the added value is seen as *little or moderate*⁴³.

For many departments in the Federal Administration, the China Strategy has not changed the perceived needs or the available resources with regard to interactions with external stakeholders. Federal departments such as the SIF, SERI or SEPOS have established channels and China-related exchanges take place as needed and when appropriate. Certain federal departments such as the FOEN or the SDC do not see any real stakeholders in Switzerland with regard to their China responsibilities – apart from Parliament. The Peace and Human Rights Division, for its part, appears to be particularly active in comparison and maintains an active exchange with the private sector⁴⁴, civil society and the cantons. In any case, it is clear that the “whole of Switzerland” approach has very different stakeholder characteristics depending on the federal department.

Due to its coordinating role, the FDFA-APD in particular is faced with a large number of external requests for exchanges on China, although this has now decreased over the years⁴⁵. According to its own statements, the department can only respond to this demand in a very selective manner. However, the FDFA-APD was able to give priority to exchanges on China with interested cantons from the outset and has now established an annual exchange on China with the network of foreign relations managers. FDFA-APD invites other

⁴²Only one project team was set up for Taiwan and “Business and Human Rights” respectively. However, several respondents expressed the view that a project team should also have been set up to deal with the issue of China expertise and that an informal working group on the Chinese cyber and data laws passed in recent years should have been officially constituted as such.

⁴³Assessment of “activity”: 0 *too little*, 5 *little*, 9 *sufficient*, 2 *much*; assessment of “added value”: 0 *none*, 5 *little*, 7 *moderate*, 4 *great* (n=16), see also Appendix C.

⁴⁴Together with SECO, e.g. the Swiss Forum “Business and Human Rights” on 18 October 2023.

⁴⁵See also statements in the stakeholder survey (see Chapter 6).

interdepartmental China working group members, such as SECO or the Peace and Human Rights Division, to participate as required.⁴⁶

Overall, despite improvements, the objective does not seem to have been achieved. The most important, albeit obvious, reason seems to be simply a lack of resources. However, it should also be mentioned that the China Strategy for the “whole of Switzerland” approach does not formulate any concrete operational expectations other than sufficient regularity.

4.3 China expertise

The China Strategy mentions in several places⁴⁷ the objective of strengthening China expertise in the Federal Administration. Chapter 5.1 also states that in this context the Federal Council also wants to expand expertise and connections with centers of expertise at home and abroad.

From the perspective of the interdepartmental China working group participants, who have only rated the improvement of their own China expertise since March 2021 as *low* to *moderate*, not enough has been done to achieve this⁴⁸. The SDC, for example, sees its China expertise as far less developed than its Africa expertise.

In the evaluation interviews, it was positively assessed that since the China Strategy was introduced, the China-related networks in the Federal Administration have become much more active and dense, that it is now easier to pick up the phone to get information and exchange ideas, and that people are now more likely to work together on complex issues relating to China because the interdepartmental aspect of such issues is more clearly seen. Some people emphasized that the development of China expertise must be broadly understood anyway: for example, a paper on China drawn up within the administration could have an important expertise-building character.

The external network in China in particular is seen as accessible and, due to its relative distance from political processes in Bern, considered a valuable source of information. However, according to individual statements, the knowledge prepared there should not only inform Bern, but the entire Swiss external network in third countries, since China has become relevant as a globally important actor in practically every context of the Swiss external network – the idea of a China expertise center at the Embassy in Beijing was mentioned.

In contrast, it was stated on several occasions that the FDFA-APD should have been more active in its coordinating role and, for example, should have organized at least a few formal training sessions or contributed selected reports and analyses more actively to the interdepartmental China working group. For its part, the FDFA-APD proposed setting up a project team for the topic of China expertise at the first meeting of the working group, but this was never implemented for reasons that have not been clarified in detail (see also Chapter 4.1).

Overall, too little use has been made of formal training: There was a one-day China training course for diplomats-volées, i.e. newcomers to the diplomatic profession, in 2022 and 2023 as part of an interdepartmental training week dedicated to China, and the SDC also piloted a similar China training course. External guests were invited to the interdepartmental China working group three times, namely representatives from Swiss universities, DiploFoundation and GCSP (see Illustration 4). Apart from that, there were only individual initiatives from various federal agencies: In 2021, for example, the Peace and Human Rights Division conducted three human rights courses for the Federal Administration together with external

⁴⁶See also <https://www.parlament.ch/centers/eparl/curia/2021/20213592/Bericht%20BR%20D.pdf> and https://www.zh.ch/content/dam/zhweb/bilder-dokumente/organisation/staatskanzlei/aussenbeziehungen/Bericht_Aussenbeziehungen%202019-2022.pdf, which documents the

important role and initiative of the Canton of Zurich in this regard.

⁴⁷Chapter 3.3 (principles for cooperation) and Chapter 5.1/5.2 (internal and external coordination instruments).

⁴⁸Assessment of “activity”: 1 *too little*, 5 *little*, 10 *sufficient*, 1 *much*; assessment of “progress”: 1 *none*, 5 *little*, 11 *moderate*, 0 *great* (n=17), see also Appendix C.

experts, while SECO introduced an internal working group on China to compile relevant knowledge and also dedicated several retreats at management level to China issues.

Finally, the general lack of resources was repeatedly mentioned as the most important limitation of China expertise or its further development in the Federal Administration. Of the Federal Administration departments consulted through evaluation interviews, only FDFA-APD, SECO, the Divisions on International Security and the UN have more than one full-time position (in full-time equivalents) dealing with China. Accordingly, according to the FDFA-APD statement, the improvement is also rated as "very limited".

It should also be noted that, although the FDFA-APD and the Embassy in Beijing in particular are seen as China expertise centers for the Federal Administration, no investments have been made here either. Instead, the Embassy even saw slight job cuts as a result of the pandemic and austerity measures from Bern.

4.4 “Exchange with like-minded countries”

The China Strategy aims to deepen exchanges with like-minded countries on China. The Federal Council hopes that this will strengthen Switzerland's China expertise and increase the effectiveness of its China policy. The evaluation is based on meeting minutes of consultations⁴⁹ on Asia- or China-related matters conducted by the FDFA-APD. The most important finding is that this type of exchange has already taken place several times during the period of the strategy.

After March 2021, the FDFA-APD has held five consultations with various like-minded countries, including New Zealand, the EU, Germany, the UK, Sweden and the US. According to the FDFA-APD, China is addressed in virtually all consultations, including with "non-like-minded" countries. The consultations with the EU, the UK and Sweden were almost exclusively on China. In terms of thematic breadth and level of detail, the consultation with the EU was the most substantive.

Thematically, the following areas were covered in particular: positioning issues in dealing with China, the Taiwan question, the Asia-Pacific region, trade and investment policy, geopolitics, US-China relations, dependencies on China, bilateral relations with China, development and challenges of domestic companies in China, human rights and China's position in the Ukraine war.

More often, the discussion focused on China as an international actor and less on the domestic and internal political situation in China. With the exception of Germany, all discussions also focused on dealing with China on a plurilateral or multilateral level. The discussions with New Zealand and the EU highlighted cooperation in the Asia-Pacific, while the consultations with Sweden and the US focused more on geopolitical issues such as China's role in the Ukraine war or the deterioration of relations between Europe and China. A central pattern across all consultations is the focus on the effects of the geopolitical rivalry between the US and China and the geopolitical tensions in the Asia-Pacific on the respective China policies. In the discussion with the US, Switzerland's role as a mediator and the importance of like-minded countries speaking with a united voice towards China were also emphasized – although Switzerland's position towards China was only discussed in passing.

From an evaluation perspective, it can be stated that FDFA-APD carried out such exchanges with like-minded countries on behalf of the Federal Administration. It is not possible to make a meaningful assessment of the extent to which Switzerland's China expertise and the effectiveness of its China policy were strengthened.

4.5 External network in China

Apart from one objective regarding visa⁵⁰, the China Strategy does not define any explicit objectives or measures for the external network in China. In order to gain an impression of the relevance and usefulness

⁴⁹The underlying analysis will be published upon request and in consultation with FDFA-APD.

⁵⁰See Measure L2: 'Ensuring efficient visa processing'.

of the China Strategy as well as general observations on aspects of the effectiveness of the external network in China, short evaluation interviews were also conducted with representatives of the Embassy in Beijing and the three Consulates General in Guangzhou, Shanghai and Hong Kong⁵¹.

The main finding is that the China Strategy is seen primarily as an internal reference document and outline that provides a “loose outline” of the framework and direction for foreign policy and diplomatic work. It is therefore in principle more relevant for the Embassy than for the Consulate General, since the former primarily deals with the political aspects of relations with China, but the China Strategy is rarely or never explicitly discussed with Chinese interlocutors in political work. Even internally – for example, for training local staff – it plays a subordinate role. The strategy is designed more as a compass and not as an evaluable “yardstick”, for which the “MBOs”⁵² that were established as management instrument ultimately serve.

For Consulates General that deal with consular tasks such as providing on-site support to Swiss citizens, authenticating documents, issuing visas for Chinese travelers, promoting the location and exports, and cultural activities, the China Strategy is fundamentally relevant neither for their direct stakeholders nor for interaction with the Chinese authorities. However, the example of Hong Kong shows that political positions contained in the China Strategy have laid the foundation for more active official statements, particularly on human rights issues, in coordination with the Embassy in Beijing.

In addition to the concrete value-add of the China Strategy itself, most of the effectiveness aspects relevant to the external network for implementing the China Strategy – such as infrastructure, resources, information flow with the headquarters in Bern or the coordination of visiting diplomacy – are assessed positively. The exchange on site with like-minded countries in particular seems to work well, including with various forms of embedding in EU-27 platforms. In terms of infrastructure, the only thing that was assessed as inadequate with regard to stakeholder interests and own objectives was the location of the Consul General's residence in Hong Kong, which is too remote for representation purposes according to local understanding.

Access to Chinese interlocutors, data protection and China expertise were mentioned as challenging issues in the external network. In addition to an environment that has become more difficult for exchanges with experts and non-state actors in China, there are also restrictions for Consulates General in that all of their external contacts have to be coordinated via a central Chinese contact point, which is administratively complex. In the absence of guidelines from headquarters, the external network in China has introduced independently developed, China-specific guidelines that determine how to deal with data protection. Little activity has been noted in terms of China expertise in the external network; apart from the reports dealing with day-to-day business and the secondment interview for employees in the external network, there is no real support, for example in the form of training, briefings or reading lists, and this despite the fact that the China context is perceived as distinct. Here, the reading of the China Strategy among diplomatic staff is at least mentioned as an important step in preparing for the transfer to China. Finally, it was mentioned that content-related tensions or potential contradictions in interpretations of reports from the Swiss embassies in the US or China could be more consciously moderated in Bern.

Main conclusions

From the perspective of the evaluation, the interdepartmental China working group has created the greatest added value of the coordination instruments and achieved its objectives apart from the coordination of positions. The “whole of Switzerland” approach, on the other hand, has only occasionally led to more China-specific exchange among and with Swiss actors. The largest, widely identified gap in action is in China expertise. Although these can be strengthened without specialized training through more active exchange within the Federal Administration, it should not be overlooked that an exchange that is mostly focused on policymaking has limitations in terms of knowledge acquisition. How exactly China expertise could be built

⁵¹According to the website, the Consulate General in Chengdu is temporarily closed (last visited on October 20, 2024).

⁵²“Management by Objectives”



up in a pragmatic but value-creating way for the Federal Administration does not seem clear from the feedback. It is therefore all the more advisable to simply subsume this task under the coordination tasks of the FDFA-APD, because its resources are perceived to be very limited anyway.

5 Evaluation dimension 4: Content-conceptual adoption, communication, referencing

This chapter combines various considerations relating to the content-related and conceptual adoption, communicative utilization and formal referencing of the China Strategy. Specifically, it evaluates, firstly, the extent to which analyses of the China Strategy on key issues of international politics are adopted through selected, subsequent reports/strategies, secondly, how the Federal Council, the Federal Administration and the foreign network in China publicly communicate these key points of the China Strategy and thirdly, how the Federal Council has referenced the China Strategy in China-related parliamentary business.

5.1 Content-conceptual adoption

The adoption is examined through five documents issued at Federal Council level, which are arranged chronologically below: Security Policy Report 2021 (SIPO Report, November 2021), Foreign Economic Policy Strategy (FEPS, November 2021), Americas Strategy 2022-2025 (AS, February 2022), South East Asia Strategy 2023-2026 (SEAS, February 2023) and Foreign Policy Strategy 2024-2027 (FPS 24-27, January 2024). In terms of content, analyses of the China Strategy on three core questions of international politics are examined, namely how (1) China's claim to international power, (2) relations between the United States and China and (3) the state of the *international order* are characterized.

Regarding (1) *China's claim to international power*, the China Strategy states that "China is also using this growing influence to reshape the multilateral system to its own benefit. For example, Beijing is reinterpreting the norms of the current international order in line with its own social and development model." Moreover, the "Belt and Road Initiative" (BRI) is a "development model with a global outlook, through which China is looking to brand its growing economic and geopolitical presence in the international arena, while strategically expanding and emphasizing its leadership ambitions."

Of the five documents examined, only two⁵³ comment on this first key question: The SIPO report states that it is "still unclear to what extent China is really seeking a global leadership role and whether such a role would be accepted internationally." The FPS 24-27, on the other hand, attests that China "endeavors to create a Sinocentric world." The direct contradiction between the interpretations of the SIPO report and FPS 24-27 on what China's international power claim is striking.⁵⁴ In summary, it can be stated that the content-related and conceptual adoption of the China Strategy on this first key question of international politics is low. The Federal Council's understanding of this question has changed significantly in less than three years from an interest-driven "redesign" of norms of the international order to working towards a "Sinocentric world."

Regarding the (2) *relationship between the United States and China*, the China Strategy speaks of "strategic competition", "geopolitical rivalry" or simply "rivalry". The SIPO report speaks of "great power competition" with a "systemic competition" especially in the field of technology, the FEPS of "(strategic) rivalry", the AS of "system competition", the SEAS of "strategic competition", "geopolitical competition (between major powers)" and an "emerging systemic conflict between China and the US", and the FPS 24-27 of "strategic competition (between the major powers)" and "systemic competition".⁵⁵

⁵³The AVIS28 attested to the global ambitions of the Belt and Road Initiative: "Many observers believe that Beijing also aims to use the BRI to realign world trade and policymaking, with China at the center." The FPS 20-23, for its part, states: "China is increasingly seeking to restructure the world order based on its own needs."

⁵⁴This assessment, made by the Federal Council at the beginning of 2024, could be related to the internationally acclaimed speech by EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen in March 2023, where she said: "[...] the Chinese Communist Party's clear goal is a systemic change of the international order with China at its center".⁵⁴

⁵⁵The AVIS28 does not contain a specific conceptualization of the US-China relationship.

Apart from the noticeable conceptual heterogeneity, it is striking that the Americas Strategy⁵⁶ is the first strategy to use the term "system competition" in a comprehensive sense⁵⁷. In this context, it attributes to China the fact that it "puts its own centralist, authoritarian system forward as an alternative to Western liberal democracy."⁵⁸ While the SEAS speaks of "system conflict", the FPS 24-27, as a hierarchically superior strategy, does not completely resolve the question of "system competition", but remains vague: on the one hand, it uses the term "systemic competition", but at the same time says that "the divide between democracies and autocracies on its own is insufficient to explain the current situation."

For the second key question, too, only a limited content-related and conceptual adoption of the China Strategy can be identified, since the Federal Council's later adoption of the idea of system competition has led to a clearly more stringent interpretation of international politics, under which Switzerland, as a democracy, nominally becomes an active "party" to this competition. Although this circumstance is partly offset by Switzerland's role as a "bridge builder", which is emphasized more strongly than before in FPS 24-27, the FPS nevertheless sends a clear signal, presumably shaped by the idea of "system competition", with its thematic focus on "democracy and governance" and active democracy promotion.

Regarding the (3) *state of the international order*, the China Strategy states that "it is too early to say how far global governance will fragment further, and whether the existing standards areas – each with their own value system, industrial standards and payment systems – will move further apart." Furthermore, "The expansion of China's power and the country's robust defense of its own interests is fueling the trend towards further fragmentation in the international order."⁵⁹

The SIPO report states: "The end of the Cold War marked the end of bipolarity in international security policy. The subsequent phase of US dominance now also seems to be coming to an end. It is questionable whether a stable structure – for example a new bipolar order between the US and China or a multipolar order – will emerge in the foreseeable future." In addition: "The fact that no single major power dominates globally promotes a regionalization of systems of order." The FEPS also sees a regionalization: "There is a trend towards the formation of regional blocs with differing governance, economic and value systems."

The FPS 24-27 for its part analyses: "Bloc-building trends can be discerned today. Yet to speak of a world split in two between China and the United States would be to belie the facts of the current situation. Indeed, it is striking that numerous states do not wish to be aligned with one specific center of power and are trying instead to optimize their room for maneuver between the major powers by pursuing variable foreign policies."⁶⁰ The geographical strategies AS and SEAS do not comment on the international order. It is also worth mentioning that the BRICS are considered for the first time in the FPS 24-27 against the background of international governance issues.⁶¹

⁵⁶The FPS 20-23 does not describe the Sino-American relationship as a system competition.

⁵⁷The AWS does use the term system competition, but only in relation to the economic system: "The West is increasingly competing with the systems of alternative economic orders. While western economies tend to be more heavily geared towards the model of a liberal, open and social market economy, in keeping with western values, they are increasingly facing more state-controlled economic systems, sometimes coupled with authoritarian tendencies."

⁵⁸This formulation may be influenced by the American National Security Strategy (National Security Strategy, October 2022) under President Joe Biden, which speaks of "democracies against autocracies," which has been made the leitmotif of the policy.

⁵⁹AVIS28 was more explicit in its statement on this: "The growing prominence of non-Western values has led to an erosion of the liberal international order." FPS 20-23, for its part, states: "The world order that has endured since the end of the Cold War is undergoing radical change. It is now in danger of being eclipsed by a more unstable architecture of competing regional norms and regulatory systems."

⁶⁰FPS 24-27 adds that if international governance reforms are not implemented, "governance and international norms threaten to fragment further." And: "We are living in a transitional phase with no sign of a stable new international order emerging. The existing order is on the brink of ceding to global disorder, with power politics pushing international law and collective security further aside, conflicts breaking out into the open, and actors of all kinds testing the limits on what they can do. There is much to suggest that we are merely at the start of a historical turning point."

⁶¹FPS24-27 comments: "Informal discussion formats such as the enlarged BRICS are becoming more attractive and may contribute to further fragmentation in international governance. Here, the enlargement of the BRICS format illustrates the courting of the Global South in geopolitical competition."

With regard to this third core question, the China Strategy fits into an ongoing and overall consistent characterization by the Federal Council – including AVIS28 and FPS 20-23 – of the state of the international order. In particular, to date no actual bipolarity or Sino-American bloc formation has been seen. On the other hand, the prominent but unclear use of the term “liberal international order” in the China Strategy – as well as in AVIS28 and FPS 20-23 – is worth highlighting; this term is not used in government documents by the United States⁶², the EU, the G7, or, for example, the German Federal Government. The term appears to have been abandoned after the China Strategy, however. FPS 24-27 therefore consistently speaks only of the “(rules-based) international order”.

In summary, there was no relevant conceptual or substantive adoption of the China Strategy in the context of the international order. In addition, it can be seen that other key questions of international politics, such as the behavior of states that cannot be assigned to a center of power, are not specifically addressed in the China Strategy or in the other selected documents. As already mentioned in Chapter 2.2, Chapter 3.2 of the China Strategy as such has achieved the greatest adoption in that it presumably inspired Chapter 3.2 of FPS 24-27 (“What does Switzerland stand for in the world?”) and significantly influenced its content.

5.2 Public Communication

This chapter examines the extent to which key points of the China Strategy are explicitly addressed in the public communication of the Federal Council, the Federal Administration and the external network in China (“policy articulation”)⁶³. Two types of China-related communication content were examined: on the one hand, the communication surrounding eight meetings with Chinese ministers at Federal Council level⁶⁴ after March 2021 and, on the other hand, the China-related communication of selected accounts of the Federal Administration on X (formerly Twitter)⁶⁵.

In total, more than 250 such content items were considered, of which 48 were analyzed in depth because they explicitly refer to the China Strategy or mention at least one of its key points. Of these 48 pieces of content, 17 refer to Federal Council or ministerial meetings, ten of which were communicated via social media and seven via press releases either before or after the meetings.

Communication content on meetings with China at Federal Council or ministerial level: Switzerland's public communication on the eight Federal Council or ministerial meetings with China mentioned above generally shows a communicative restraint. The focus of the communications is often on procedural aspects with an almost exclusively positive tone. The key points defined in the China Strategy, on the other hand, are hardly ever communicated proactively. Apart from that, an official press release was only written in four of the eight meetings, and in two others there were only short posts for social media.⁶⁶ Accordingly, it can be seen that the key points of the China Strategy are only minimally integrated into public communication.

An exception to this was the communication surrounding the official visit of Chinese Premier Li Qiang to Bern in January 2024. The subsequent press release addressed several key points of the China Strategy.⁶⁷ For

⁶²An exception here is former US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who gave a speech on the topic of “liberal international order”, see <https://2017-2021.state.gov/restoring-the-role-of-the-nation-state-in-the-liberal-international-order-2/>.

⁶³This evaluation itself has defined 24 core points in order to also take into account the important content of the China Strategy that is not formally defined as a principle or goal, see the overview in the appendix.

⁶⁴03/2021 Telephone conversation between FC Cassis and FM WANG Yi; 11/2021 Telephone conversation between FC Cassis and FM WANG Yi; 12/2021 Telephone conversation between FC Maurer and Vice-PM LIU He; 03/2022 Telephone conversation between FC Cassis and FM WANG Yi; 01/2023 Meeting between FC Keller-Sutter and Vice-PM LIU He in Zurich; 01/2024 Official visit by PM Li Qiang to FP Amherd, with FC Parmelin and FC Cassis, in Bern; 02/2024 Meeting between FC Cassis and FM WANG Yi in Bern; 07/2024 Trip by FC Parmelin to China.

⁶⁵Includes tweets and re-tweets published by the accounts of the Federal Council, the departments, the FDFA-APD (@SwissMFAasia), the FDFA AFM (@SwissPeaceHR), the FDFA StatSec (@SwissMFAstatSec) and the Embassy in Beijing (@SwissEmbChina).

⁶⁶The lack of a detailed press release may be due to the circumstances of the 2021 and 2022 meetings, as they were held by telephone or video conference. However, the Chinese side issued detailed press releases in all four cases, which included numerous policy priorities of its own.

⁶⁷<https://www.admin.ch/gov/de/start/documentation/medienmitteilungen.msg-id-99693.html>

example, the "importance of multilateral cooperation with China [...]", "respect for fundamental freedoms" and "the need for an international order based on the law and principles of the Charter of the United Nations" were emphasized in the press release.

A quick look at the public communication of like-minded countries⁶⁸ on ministerial meetings with China shows that the Federal Council presumably communicates discreetly even by international standards. For example, in a press release on the Foreign Ministers' meeting on February 5, 2024 in Beijing between Espen Barth Eide and WANG Yi, the Norwegian Foreign Ministry commented on the human rights situation in China as follows: "Human rights are an important part of Norway's relationship with China. I encouraged Chinese authorities to adhere to their international obligations, and I raised the human rights situation in China, including in Xinjiang, Tibet, and Hong Kong"⁶⁹. A second Example shows how a Press release from the New Zealand Foreign Ministry in the same subject area explicitly emphasized differences with China: "Alongside areas of cooperation, it was important to recognize areas of difference such as human rights, including the situation in Xinjiang, Hong Kong and Tibet."⁷⁰

It is also noticeable that differences of opinion or differing positions evident from the above-mentioned meeting minutes of the discussions are generally not mentioned in external communications or are not proactively balanced with the corresponding Swiss positions. This fits in with the generally discreet public communication in Switzerland mentioned above, which means that externally only a rough picture of the content discussed is conveyed.

Communication content on selected channels of "X": "X" is rarely used overall to communicate assessments of China or Switzerland's positioning. While "neutrality" or "Switzerland as a bridge builder" were only mentioned once each, "external exchange on China with all stakeholders in Switzerland" twice and "coordination with like-minded partners" four times, "promoting respect for human rights in China" was mentioned in 22 of 48 or a total of 250 posts and was thus mentioned significantly more often.

Overall, the core points of the China Strategy are rarely and often superficially referenced. Instead, the contributions mostly remain descriptive. A typical example of this is the post by the FDFA State Secretary on "X" about a meeting with LIU Xiaoming, the Chinese government's special representative for Korean Peninsula affairs, in March 2024: "Insightful exchange with Special Rep. @AmbLiuXiaoMing addressing complexities of the #KoreanPeninsula. Delving into current geopolitical challenges while fostering stronger ties between Switzerland and China. Switzerland remains committed to peace and security in Northeast Asia". Although a commitment to "peace and security" is mentioned, concrete positions from the China Strategy are not referenced.

Moreover, public communication via social media that specifically addresses key points of the China Strategy has declined since 2023. In 2021 and 2022, 23 posts with such content were identified, but in 2023 and 2024, only eight were identified.

5.3 Referencing to Parliament

This chapter examines the extent to which explicit reference was made to the China Strategy in response to parliamentary business on China. These references were also examined for their substantive consistency with the core political points of the China Strategy. For this purpose, 68 statements by the Federal Council on parliamentary interpellations, motions, postulates and questions from Parliament were examined.⁷¹

⁶⁸For this purpose, comparable public communication content from Germany, the Netherlands, Norway and New Zealand was analyzed.

⁶⁹<https://www.regjeringen.no/en/aktuelt/important-dialogue-with-china/id3024481/>

⁷⁰<https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/nz-and-chinese-foreign-ministers-hold-official-talks>

⁷¹The 68 transactions were identified using the following Curia-vista search: search for transactions containing "China" in full text with a filing date after March 2021, then individually filtered qualitatively according to relevance with regard to the China Strategy.

Overall, the strategy is not frequently referenced. Since the adoption of the China Strategy in March 2021, 28% (18 of 68) of the Federal Council's statements on China business have explicitly referred to the strategy. In 2021 and 2022, this proportion was higher at 37% and 30% respectively, while since 2023 no statement has referred to the China Strategy. At the same time, the absolute number of parliamentary business on China fell significantly, from 30 and 23 respectively in 2021 and 2022 to 8 and 7 respectively in 2023 and 2024 – an indication of an overall decline in parliamentary interest in China.

The China Strategy was most frequently referenced in articles on “human rights in China” (8 out of 32) and “education, research and innovation policy” (3 out of 3)⁷². On the other hand, it was mentioned less often than average in articles on “China's influence in Switzerland” (1 out of 7), “foreign economic policy” (0 out of 5) and “relations with Taiwan” (1 out of 5).

In almost all cases (16 out of 18) of the statements with direct reference to the China Strategy, reference was made to the China Strategy either by means of a direct quotation or a paraphrase that was correctly reproduced in terms of content. In two cases⁷³, however, an incoherence in content was identified, both of which referred to the same thematic concern and the same statement: It was stated that “the observance of human rights and the protection of those who defend them” is a priority of Swiss human rights diplomacy according to the China Strategy. However, the statement that Swiss human rights diplomacy also includes the protection of those who defend human rights is not found in the China Strategy.

Main conclusions

The analyses of key issues of international politics contained in the China Strategy are only adopted to a limited extent because the Federal Council later makes significant changes in that it now views the Sino-American rivalry as a *systemic competition* and attests that China is working towards a Sinocentric world. The most important adoption of the China Strategy was the extensive adoption of Chapter 3.2 (“Switzerland's global positioning”) in the FPS 24-27. Despite the existence of the China Strategy, its key points relating to meetings at Federal Council level or via channel “X” are rarely communicated explicitly. Switzerland communicates cautiously compared to other countries, with human rights positions being communicated comparatively most frequently. Finally, the China Strategy is only referenced or used to a limited extent for parliamentary business.

⁷² The 32 China deals on human rights alone account for almost half (47%) of all China deals analyzed here.

⁷³ <https://www.parlament.ch/de/ratsbetrieb/suche-curia-vista/geschaefte?AffairId=20227887> ;
<https://www.parlament.ch/de/ratsbetrieb/suche-curia-vista/geschaefte?AffairId=20227890>

6 Evaluation dimension 5: Value-add for stakeholders in Switzerland

This chapter analyses the value-add that the Federal Council's China Strategy has created for stakeholders in Switzerland. The strategy itself sees added value in particular in the provision of a framework of orientation, in the expansion of China expertise within and outside the Federal Administration, in the creation of the interdepartmental China working group to strengthen coherence in China policy and in the exchange of information with actors outside the administration.

A survey was sent to 94 organizations⁷⁴ from different stakeholder groups such as cantons/cities, teaching and research institutions, location/export promotion agencies and chambers of commerce, think tanks, business/industry associations, civil society/NGOs and selected companies⁷⁵. All organizations contacted were asked to provide an institutional perspective. A group of twelve large companies were contacted with the assumption that they would have the capacity to process a China Strategy and use it for their own purposes. Political parties and individuals (e.g. China or geopolitics experts) were not taken into account.

6.1 General findings

A total of 62 organizations – 12 cantonal/city governments, 9 teaching and research institutions, 12 location/export promotion agencies or chambers of commerce, 4 think tanks, 7 companies, 10 business/industry associations and 8 civil society organizations including NGOs – took part in the survey and are referred to as the organizations surveyed⁷⁶.

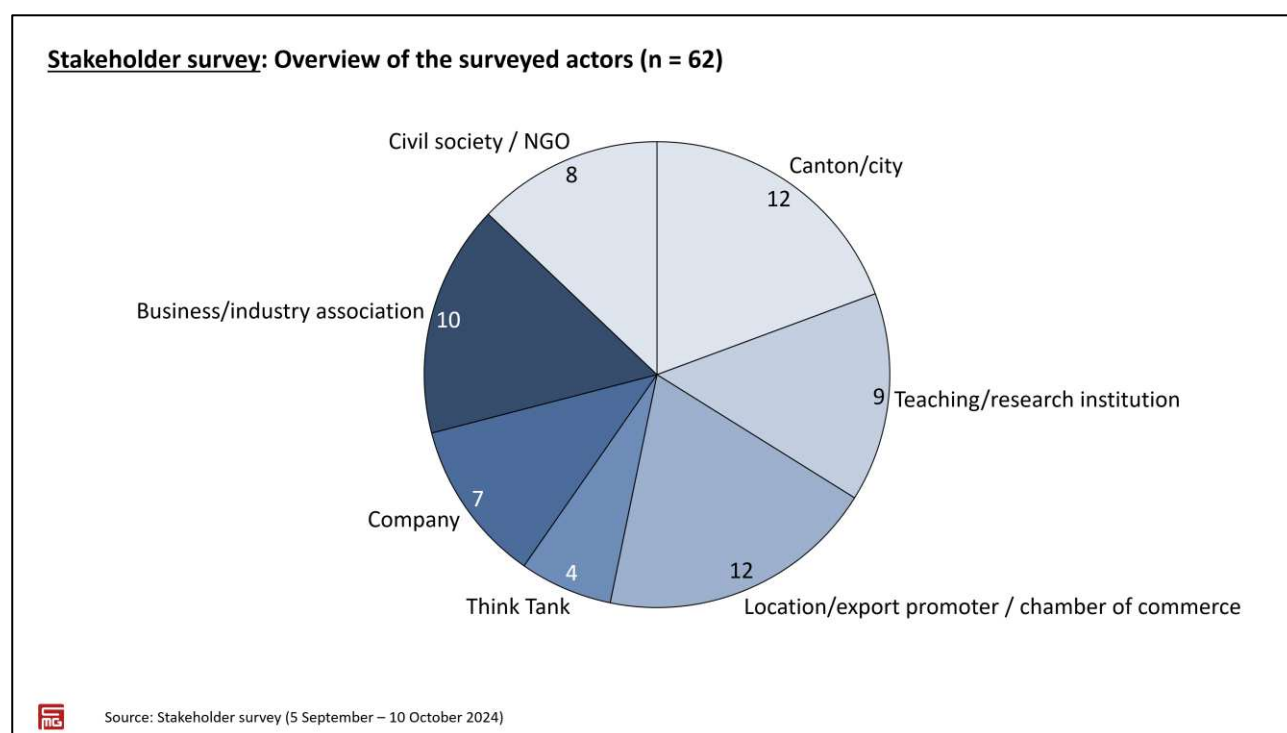


Illustration 5 – Stakeholder survey: Overview of the surveyed actors

The survey shows that the **strategy** is known to the vast majority of organizations surveyed (89%), with companies being comparatively least aware (43%). More than two thirds (70%) have also attended an **event** once (21%) or several times (49%) where the China Strategy was discussed. Think tanks (50%) and companies (57%) were the least active here.

⁷⁴An overview of all stakeholders in Switzerland contacted in accordance with the “whole of Switzerland” approach can be found in Appendix E. The China Strategy itself does not define these organizations; the evaluators have defined such a list to the best of their knowledge and belief.

⁷⁵The stakeholder survey was conducted between September 5 and October 10, 2024. The complete survey is in Appendix F.

⁷⁶An in-depth analysis of the survey results broken down by individual stakeholder groups can be found in Appendix G.

A large majority of the organizations surveyed (90%) have active **China-related activities**. However, these activities have developed heterogeneously during the period of the China Strategy. A total of 75% stated that their China activities had *remained the same* (34%) or had *reduced* (41%). Only 19% had *intensified* their China activities after March 2021 – including two out of three think tanks and three out of seven companies. Meanwhile, cantons/cities have most frequently⁷⁷ *reduced* their China-related activities (73%).

Almost two thirds of respondents believe that the China Strategy is of *partial* (54%) or *great* (8%) **value-add**, while only 7% see no value-add at all. The strategy is particularly useful for think tanks (75%) and civil society organizations/NGOs (88%). The organizations surveyed use the strategy in particular for *raising awareness/risk management* (33%), *making decisions/planning* (28%), *political work/lobbying* (26%) and *communicating* (25%). Interestingly, in contrast to other organizations, *political work/lobbying* is clearly the main focus for business associations (36%) and civil society organizations/NGOs (36%).

In terms of a **framework of orientation**, the *clarification of Switzerland's position towards China and in the international context* is considered particularly useful (58%), followed by the *definition of Switzerland's bilateral and multilateral goals towards China* (37%). Apart from think tanks and civil society organizations/NGOs, all organizations surveyed see the greatest value-add in the positioning performance of the strategy.

There is no significant change in the strategy's objective of increasing **the exchange of information and experience** with the Federal Government and among relevant actors in Switzerland on China. Only a little more than a third (38%) see a *slight* (32%) or *strong* (6%) improvement in exchange between actors in Switzerland compared to before the China Strategy. Cantons/cities (58%) and civil society organizations/NGOs (63%) in particular perceive a positive change, while companies (14%) and business associations (10%) only see this to a limited extent. A total of two organizations (3%) have observed a decrease – a location development agency and an NGO.

The organizations surveyed were only able to improve their own **China expertise** *slightly* (39%) or *moderately* (26%). No one reported a *significant* improvement. More than half (55%) of those surveyed were unable to assess any change in the Federal Administration's China expertise. 33%, however, noted a *partial* (31%) or *significant* (2%) improvement.

Half (50%) see the **coherence in China policy** as *partially* (48%) or *significantly* (2%) strengthened since the publication of the China Strategy. Cantons/cities (58%) and think tanks (100%) see this development as particularly positive. In the case of teaching and research institutions, however, only 22% feel there has been an improvement, while 56% clearly deny this.

A total of ten of the organizations surveyed stated that they had **changed their behavior because of the strategy**. Individual cantons/cities reported that the strategy had helped them to present themselves more clearly in external communications. At the same time, individual cantons/cities and civil society organizations/NGOs have been more cautious and reserved in their dealings with China since the publication of the China Strategy, with the strategy being only one of several factors contributing to that.

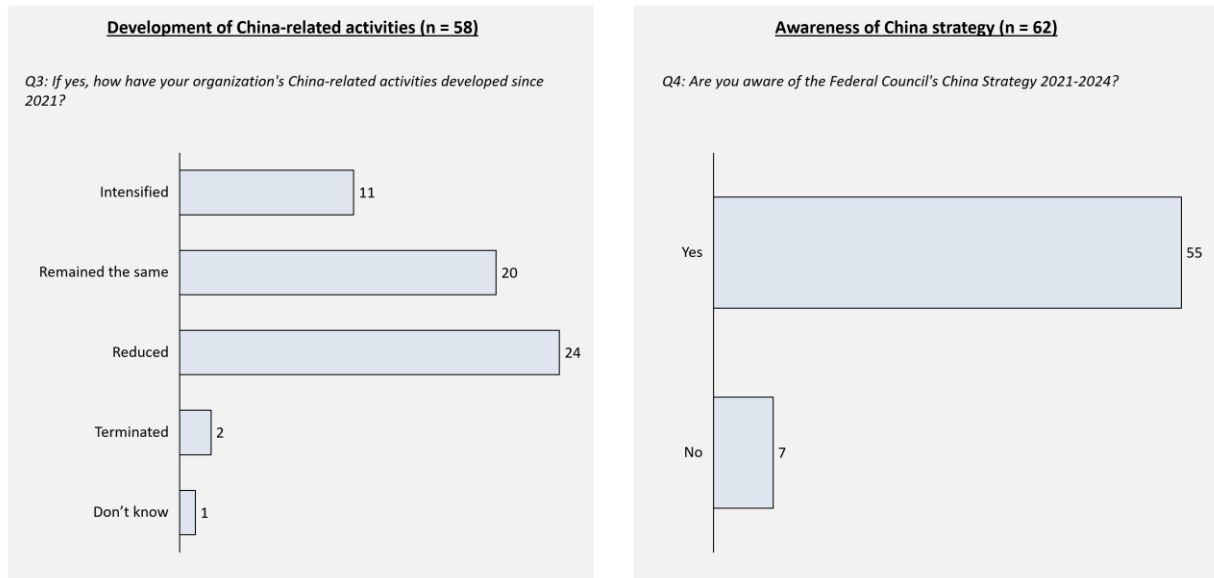
Overall, 73% of the organizations surveyed assess the fact that Switzerland has an official **country-specific China Strategy** as *partially* (39%) or *clearly* (34%) positive. Cantons/cities see this as positive with a total of 50% – 17% partially and 33% clearly – and are the most critical in this regard.

The organizations surveyed also see **room for improvement**. The *implementation aspects* defined in Chapter 5 of the China Strategy in particular are rated as *unsatisfactory* by 45%, followed by Chapter 3 – *Switzerland's*

⁷⁷A think tank left this question unanswered.

positioning and principles for cooperation with China (22%). For 20%, there is nothing to complain about. Business associations stand out here with 63% satisfaction.

Stakeholder survey: 26 (44%) have reduced China activities, 55 (89%) are aware of the strategy



Source: Stakeholder survey (5 September – 10 October 2024)

Illustration 6 – Stakeholder survey: Development of China activities and awareness of the strategy

Stakeholder survey: 38 (62%) see value-add – raising awareness as the most important use of the strategy



Source: Stakeholder survey (5 September – 10 October 2024)

Illustration 7 – Stakeholder survey: Value-add of the strategy

Stakeholder survey: Positioning the greatest value-add – implementation the most unsatisfactory

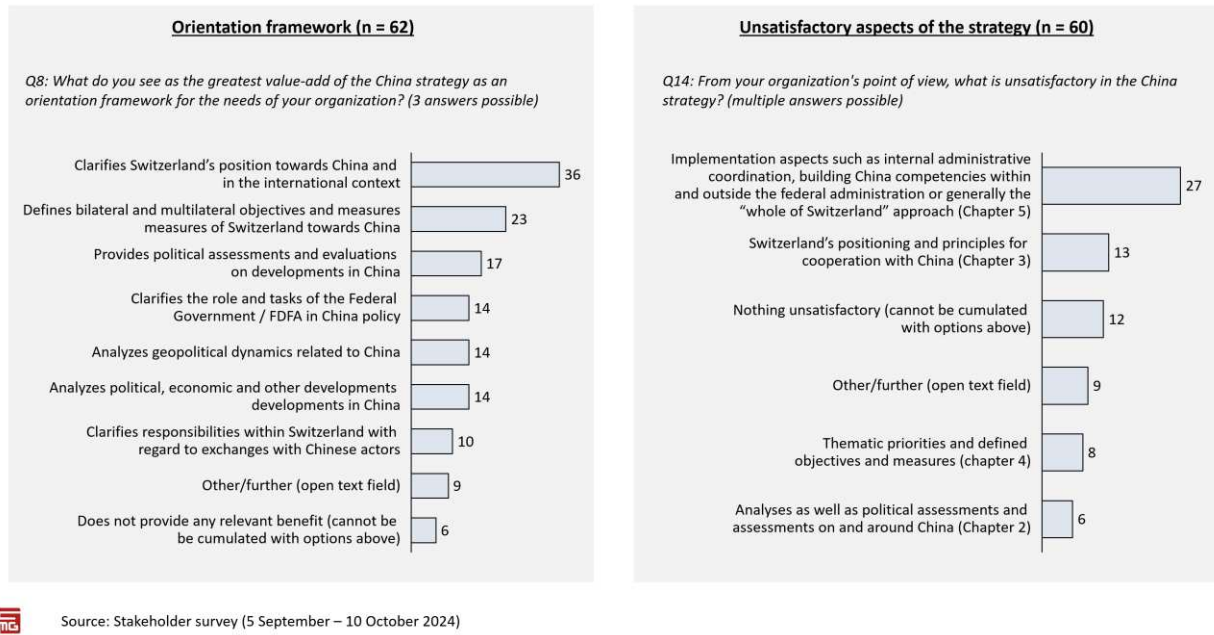


Illustration 8 – Stakeholder survey: Value-add of the orientation framework and unsatisfactory aspects

Stakeholder survey: Exchange with the federal government and own China expertise only slightly improved

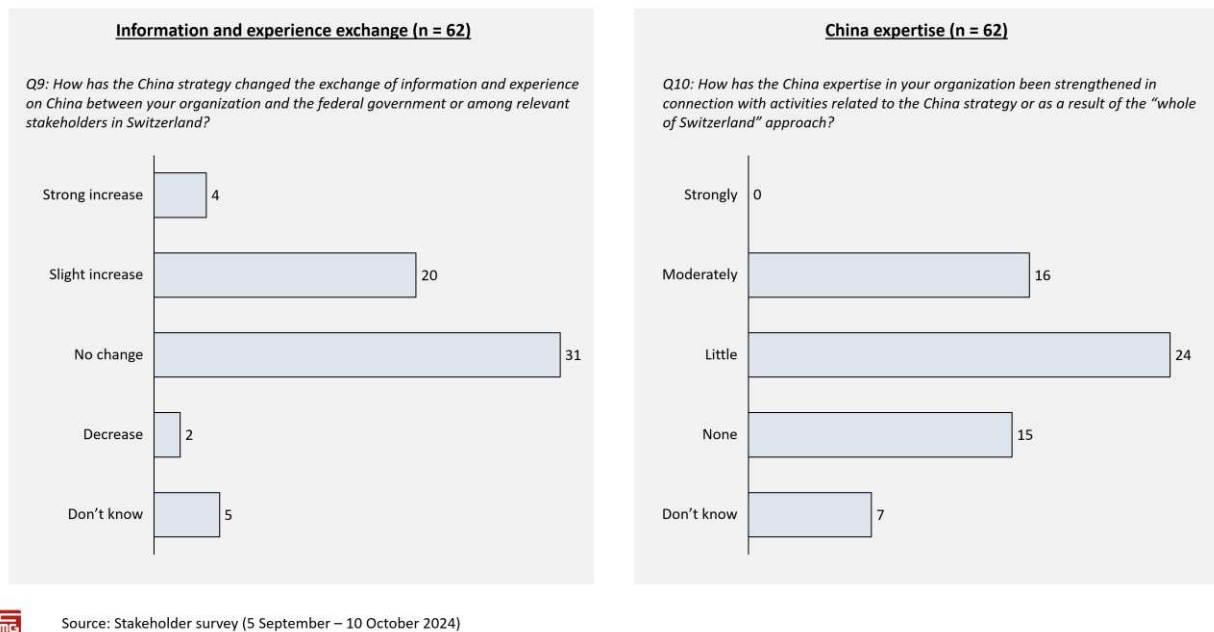


Illustration 9 – Stakeholder survey: Information/experience exchange and China expertise

6.2 Canton of Zurich case study

For the stakeholders addressed by the "whole of Switzerland" approach, it is of interest to understand whether the China Strategy is useful in terms of political and communication challenges in a concrete cooperation with Chinese partners. The strategy itself speaks of being "guided by interests" and "self-assuredly defend[ing] Switzerland's fundamental values" in cooperating with China. The canton of Zurich is treated here as a case study because the survey showed that China activities have been reduced the most

among cantons/cities since March 2021 and because relatively more publicly accessible sources are available for the Canton of Zurich.

As per the “Report on Foreign Relations 2019-2022”⁷⁸, the Canton of Zurich maintains partnerships with Guangdong and Chongqing, two Chinese subnational entities. The economically strong province of Guangdong has been a partner region of the Canton of Zurich since 2014, with which an action plan⁷⁹ for the period 2020-2022 and cooperation in the areas of energy, mobility, the environment and innovative technologies such as blockchain and artificial intelligence was concluded at the end of 2020. The most prominent instrument in this is the “Financial Roundtable”, which brings together the most important financial players on both sides. The topics jointly identified for the Financial Roundtable include insurance innovation, the capital market and “green finance”.

For the period after March 2021, three examples can be found that illustrate a communicative or political restraint on the part of the Canton of Zurich, which was apparently not dispelled despite the existence of a China Strategy by the Federal Council: Firstly, at the beginning of September 2023, a high-level Chinese delegation visit took place led by WANG Weizhong, Governor of Guangdong Province, who was received by Government Councilor Carmen Walker-Späh⁸⁰, but is not publicly documented on the Zurich side. Secondly, on November 4, 2022, Ernst Stocker, as President of the Government and Head of the Department of Finance of the Canton of Zurich, met the Chinese Consul General ZHAO Qinghua, which is also only documented on the Chinese side.⁸¹ Finally, the previous practice of an official greeting by a government representative of the Canton of Zurich on the occasion of the inauguration of a new Chinese Consul General – for example, for Consul General GAO Yanping by the then President of the Government Ernst Stocker on February 5, 2016⁸² – will no longer be practiced for the current Consul General CHEN Yun when she takes office in March 2023.

For the purposes of this evaluation, these examples can be interpreted to mean that the “Switzerland’s global positioning” (Chapter 3.2) and the “principles for cooperation” (Chapter 3.3) defined in the China Strategy⁸³ are not able to create a politically and communicatively viable basis for cantonal government action in federal Switzerland in such a way that the interested public would be informed in a sufficiently transparent manner about the active cultivation of a China partnership.

This may also be due to the fact that the China Strategy – unlike EU policy⁸⁴ in general and the Foreign Policy Strategy 2024-2027⁸⁵ in particular – was not consulted or discussed with the cantons via the Conference of Cantonal Governments (KdK). Moreover, there is no cantonal directors' conference that would deal comprehensively with Switzerland's foreign relations and foreign trade, which could have taken up the China Strategy. Due to the lack of such a process of understanding, it can be stated for the case example of the Canton of Zurich that the existence of the China Strategy was in any case unable to achieve a sufficient legitimizing effect on the cantonal government's actions to maintain this China partnership.⁸⁶

⁷⁸https://www.zh.ch/content/dam/zhweb/bilder-fotografie/organisation/staatskanzlei/aussen_Relations/bericht_Aussen_Relations%202019-2022.pdf

⁷⁹<https://www.zh.ch/de/news-uebersicht/medienmitrichten/2020/12/vertiefung-der-kooperation-zwischen-dem--kanton-zuerich-und-der-.html>

⁸⁰https://www.cnbayarea.org.cn/english/News/content/post_1127731.html

⁸¹ http://zurich.china-consulate.gov.cn/zlghd/202211/t20221108_10837443.htm ; <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/K5e5ntf5dwsIxqoFyz607A>

⁸² https://www.zh.ch/content/dam/zhweb/bilder-dokumente/organisation/finanzdirektion/finanzdirektion/regierungsrat-ernst-stocker/2015-16/rr_stocker_generalkonsulin_vr_china.pdf ; Also for the former Consul General Zhao Qinghua, who took office in As of May 2018, no public evidence can be found.

⁸³It also defines China as a priority country of Swiss foreign policy.

⁸⁴<https://kdk.ch/aktuell/medienmitteilungen/details/die-kantone-unterstuetzen-neue-handlungen-mit-der-eu>

⁸⁵ <https://kdk.ch/aktuell/stellungnahme/details/die-kantone-unterstuetzen-die-aussenpolitik-strategie-des-bundesrats>

⁸⁶According to the Canton of Zurich's Foreign Relations Report 2019-2022, the canton participated in the exchange with the federal government on China.



Main conclusions

The vast majority of stakeholders see a principal added value for their organization in having a country-specific China Strategy. Value-add and impact are perceived very heterogeneously. Most people find the positioning to be the most useful, while the implementation of the strategy is seen as the biggest shortcoming. Many would particularly like the Federal Government to play a more active role and more exchange. The case example of the Canton of Zurich supports the assumption that the strategy does not help cantons/cities to meet political and communication challenges related to cooperation with China.

7 Key findings and recommendations

The aim of the evaluation is to gain insights into the implementation and the value-add of the China Strategy since March 2021 plus to make recommendations for the future implementation and formalization of the Federal Council's China policy as part of the Federal Council's broader framework for foreign policy strategies.

7.1 Main findings

Comparison of the Swiss China Strategy with selected countries

- In terms of form (clarity, detail, period of validity), the China Strategy is exceptional in international comparison but is similar to most other China strategies in terms of its content concept (scope).
- As in Switzerland, the Parliaments in the analyzed countries have played a decisive role in developing China strategies and formalizing China policies. Overall, however, only a few countries resort to such country-specific formalization.
- The Swiss China Strategy is, however, comparatively the most substantial and explicit with regard to the country's 'global positioning' against the geopolitical context.

Implementation of measures along the thematic focus areas by the Federal Administration

- The implementation of the 45 defined measures and to what extent objectives have been met based on the China Strategy is generally positively assessed by the Federal Administration. However, it is unclear which objectives and measures were defined and implemented causally because of this China Strategy.
- The fact that fulfillment of objectives was not assessed to be more positively is also due to important external factors such as the pandemic. Moreover, resources for China-related work in the Federal Administration generally seem to be scarce.⁸⁷
- The China Strategy was not consistently used as a management tool for shaping the interdepartmental China working group and for internal departmental implementation management, which can have a negative impact on efficiency and coherence.
- In addition, the federal offices interviewed saw the strategy document only as relevant in certain areas of day-to-day work in the government.

Coordination instruments and resources of the Federal Administration

- The interdepartmental China working group has had the greatest value-add among the coordination instruments defined by the China Strategy, even if it did not achieve its objectives of coordinating policy positions.
- The "whole of Switzerland" approach has only occasionally led to more exchange among and with external stakeholders in Switzerland.
- The largest, widely identified gap in action is in China expertise.
- FDFA-APD faces particularly high external demands for exchange and coordination but must prioritize strongly due to limited human resources.

Substantive-conceptual adoption, communication and referencing

- The substantive-conceptual adoption of the China Strategy through key strategy documents at the Federal Council level on core issues of international policy is limited because the Federal Council's view on two such core issues – namely how to qualify the competition between the US and China and what China's fundamental aspirations are in the international order – changed significantly between 2021 and 2024, which is implausibly rapid for such structural issues.
- In addition, conceptual vagueness or otherwise diplomatically unsuitable formulations – e.g. the use of the term "liberal international order" in the China Strategy or the description of Switzerland as "bloc-free" – were dropped again in key strategies of the Federal Council after the China Strategy.
- The most important adoption was the extensive adoption of Chapter 3.2 ("Switzerland's global positioning") in the overarching Foreign Policy Strategy 24-27.

⁸⁷The 18 federal agencies represented in the interdepartmental China working group estimate that they will cumulatively employ between 8.9 and a maximum of 16.1 full-time positions related to China; see Appendix C.

- Despite the existence of the China strategy, its core content is rarely communicated explicitly in meetings at Federal Council level with Chinese representatives or via channel “X”.
- Switzerland also appears to communicate cautiously in international comparison, with human rights positions being communicated comparatively most frequently.
- The China Strategy is referenced or used only to a limited extent for the government’s interactions with the Parliament. This was most frequently the case for topics relating to “human rights in China”.

Value-add of the China Strategy for stakeholders in Switzerland

- The vast majority of stakeholders see a principal value-add for their organization in having a country-specific China Strategy.
- Value-add and impact are perceived very heterogeneously. Most people find the strategy’s substance on Switzerland’s ‘global positioning’ to be the most useful, while the implementation of the strategy is perceived as the biggest shortcoming.
- In particular, many would like the Federal Government to play a more active role with more exchange, contributions to strengthening China expertise and especially more communication on the China Strategy.
- The case study of the Canton of Zurich supports the assumption that the China Strategy does not help Swiss cantons and cities operationally to effectively meet the political and communicative challenges in their respective local context around existing or new cooperation with Chinese partners.

7.2 Recommendations

Future implementation and formalization of China policy

- (1) Against the backdrop of the ongoing discussions with Parliament and in view of the fact that Switzerland's China policy is exceptionally specific and explicit by international standards and that, as a country-specific strategy, it deviates from the Federal Council’s broader framework for foreign policy strategies, it may well be appropriate to formalize Switzerland’s China policy as part of the Asia-Pacific in future. The main advantages would be to view the region congruently with China's geostrategic focus and the core geography of Sino-US strategic competition, to map interactions between regional actors better and more strategically, and to identify relevant effects on regional and global governance more precisely.
- (2) However, in order to maintain a sufficient focus on China even under a possible new Asia-Pacific G20 strategy, consideration should be given to creating a “interdepartmental China (sub-)working group” in order to continue to provide institutional incentives for the China-specific exchange of information, which is considered valuable by all sides.
- (3) In addition, credible minimum efforts should be undertaken to strengthen China expertise in the Federal Administration. As a first step, the question of resources and the specific needs, which are perceived as heterogeneous, must be clarified.
- (4) As the Federal Council's public communication on China policy is perceived as comparatively limited, consideration should be given to communicating foreign policy positions, principles and objectives that have already been formally defined in the form of the China Strategy more actively, primarily as “policy articulation”, in order to achieve more balanced communication.
- (5) The expectation of Swiss stakeholders – in particular cantons and cities as well as teaching and research institutions – for more exchange with the Federal Government should be met with priority or other additional efforts as important contributions to the “whole of Switzerland” approach.
- (6) In view of the internally broad interdepartmental and diverse external points of contact, consideration should be given to creating an additional diplomatic position in the FDFA within the entity responsible for implementing the China Strategy.

General aspects for the Federal Council’s broader framework for foreign policy strategies

- (7) Efforts should be made, for example via the cross-administrative collection of “good practices” as guidelines and corresponding training, to make the interdepartmental China working group more effective as a management tool. Documentation and handover processes between rotating diplomats can also be optimized with comparable measures.



- (8) Across departments, colleagues in the Federal Administration who are involved in international issues, foreign policy and diplomacy should be made more aware of and trained in geopolitically relevant positioning issues for Switzerland in the international arena.
- (9) For objectives and measures defined in foreign policy strategies, corresponding concrete responsibilities should be jointly agreed and then actively and consistently used in implementation – e.g. as monitoring or to structure the agenda. For the overarching principles defined in a strategy (see Chapter 3.3 of the China Strategy), it should be clarified whether and, if so, how compliance with them can be ensured or evaluated in administrative practice.
- (10) Implementation-oriented content of a strategy – such as Chapter 5 of the China Strategy – should be formulated in such a way that the objectives and measures contained therein are explicitly recognizable as such.
- (11) For the expected increase in geopolitically relevant positioning issues for Switzerland in the international arena, a dedicated interdepartmental and high-level body with sufficient decision-making authority should be introduced, which, moderated by Policy Planning, will dynamically and conceptually steer Swiss foreign policy in this regard. Synergies with the thematic follow-up strategy “Strategic national communication” should be realized at least through an active, ongoing mutual flow of information.
- (12) Taking this evaluation of the China Strategy into account, Policy Planning should define general guidelines on how to design future evaluations in the most value-creating way.



Appendix

- Appendix A: Dialogues and exchange formats between Switzerland and the People's Republic of China
- Appendix B: Overview of the evaluation interviews conducted with federal entities of the interdepartmental China working group
- Appendix C: Answers from the interdepartmental China working group evaluation interviews on the internal coordination instruments
- Appendix D: 24 key points of the China Strategy for positioning Switzerland
- Appendix E: Overview of stakeholders contacted for the survey on the “whole of Switzerland” approach
- Appendix F: Stakeholder survey
- Appendix G: In-depth analysis from the perspective of individual stakeholder groups



Appendix A: Dialogues and exchange formats between Switzerland and the People's Republic of China⁸⁸

Dialogues and exchange formats between Switzerland and the People's Republic of China									
No.	Content of dialogue/exchange	Leadership	Category	Activity			Relevance		
				yes	no	discontinued	low	mid	high
1	Dialogue stratégique (2017)	EDA-AAP	Political	x					x
2	Dialogue politique (2010)	EDA-AAP	Political	x					x
3	Dialogue sur le travail et l'emploi (2011)	SECO	Economic	x					x
4	Dialogue sur les affaires multilatérales liées à l'UNO (2016)	EDA-UNA	Political	x				x	
5	Dialogue sur les Droits de l'Homme (1991)	EDA-AFM	Political	x					x
6	Expert Exchange on Prison-Management	EDA-AFM	Political	x					x
7	Dialogue sur la Santé	BAG	Security/health	x				x	
8	Dialogue financier (2013)	SIF	Economic	x				x	
9	Commission économique mixte (1974)	SECO-BWAO	Economic	x					x
10	FTA Sub-Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade	SECO	Economic	x					x
11	FTA Sub-Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures	SECO	Economic	x					x
12	Intellectual Property Working Group (2007)	IGE	Economic	x					x
13	Echanges sur la Coopération Internationale au Développement	DEZA	Political	x				x	
14	Dialog zur Rüstungskontrolle	EDA - AIS	Security/health	x					x
15	Dialogue sur la sécurité (DDPS) (SIPOL-Dialogue) (2007)	Sipol - GS VBS	Security/health	x					x
16	Sino-Swiss Bilateral Joint Working Group on Science & Technology	SBFI	Economic	x				x	
17	Sino-Swiss Education Policy Dialogue	SBFI	Economic	x					x
18	FTA Joint China-Switzerland Committee (the "Joint Committee", 2014)	SECO	Economic	x					x
19	Sub-Committee on Customs Procedures and Trade Facilitation	BAZG	Economic		x				x
20	Sub-Committee on the Implementation of Origin Matters	BAZG	Economic		x				x
21	Energy Working Group	BFE	Economic		x				x
22	Dialogue migratoire	BJ SEM	Political		x		x		
23	Dialogue sur les questions de droit international (2012)	DV	Political		x		x		
24	Consultations sur la politique de sécurité (2017)	EDA - AIS	Security/health		x				x
25	AG Investition	SECO	Economic		x		x		
26	Umwelt/Nachhaltigkeit	SECO	Economic		x		x		
27	Uhren-Dialog	SECO	Economic	x			x		
28	Arbeit (mit SAA)	SECO	Economic	x					x

⁸⁸Based on the overview provided by FDFA-APD (as of August 2024), with additions made from the evaluation interviews. The categorization was carried out by the evaluators.



Appendix B: Overview of the evaluation interviews conducted with federal entities of the interdepartmental China working group

Federal entity	Person(s)	Date	Format
1 EDA-DIGI	Benedikt Wechsler	6. September 2024	verbal
2 EDA Policy Planning	Daniel Cavegn	6. September 2024	verbal
3 VBS-SEPOS	Benno Zogg	11. September 2024	verbal
4 WBF-SECO	Natalie Rast / Felix Rosenberger	11. September 2024	verbal
5 EFD-SIF	Christoph Küng / Thomas Koch	12. September 2024	verbal
6 EDA-AFM	Pascal Hubatka	12. September 2024	verbal
7 UVEK-BAFU	Martine Rohn	12. September 2024	verbal
8 EDA-DEZA	Thierry Umbehr / Christian Engler	12. September 2024	verbal
9 EDA-AIS	Hans-Christian Baumann	13. September 2024	verbal
10 EDA-AWN	Yves Morath	13. September 2024	verbal
11 EDA-UNA	Manuel Eugster	13. September 2024	verbal
12 WBF-SBFI	Régis Nyffeler	13. September 2024	verbal
1 WBF-IGE	Ursula Siegfried	11. Oktober 2024	in written
2 EDA-AE	Nino Seiler	9. Oktober 2024	in written
3 UVEK-BAZL	Christian Andres	18. Oktober 2024	in written
4 EDI-BAG	Sarah Waldemer	23. Oktober 2024	in written
5 EDA-DV	Katharina Lautschke	17. Oktober 2024	in written
6 UVEK-BAKOM	Thomas Schneider / René Dönni	15. Oktober 2024	in written



Appendix C: Answers from the interdepartmental China working group evaluation interviews on the internal coordination instruments

	Interdepartmental China working group				"Whole of Switzerland" approach				China competencies				China ressources				
	Activity		Value add		Activity		Value add		Activity		Value add		(in FTE)				
	too little	little	sufficient	much	none	little	moderate	great	too little	little	sufficient	much	none	little	moderate	great	
DIGI			x				x							x			0.1
Policy Planning		x					x			x				x			0.1
SEPOS			x				x				x				x		0.5
SECO			x					x			x				x		2-3
SIF	x						x			x					x		0.2-0.3
AFM				x				x				x			x		0.6-0.7
BAFU		x						x		x					x		n/a
DEZA			x					x			x				x		1
AIS		x					x				x				x		1-5
AWN		x				x				x				x			0.2
UNA			x				x			x				x			2-4
SBFI			x				x					x			x		0.2
IGE			x					x			x				x		0.25
AE			x				x				x				x		0.05
BAKOM			x					x			x			x			keine
DV			x				x				x				x		n/a
BAZL				x				x			x				x		0.5
BAG			x				x			x				x			0.2



Appendix D: 24 key points of the China Strategy for positioning Switzerland

Explicit reference to the China strategy

A) China's most important qualifications

International

- A1 Great power with far-reaching geopolitical ambitions
- A2 China's development model of prosperity without political pluralism as an alternative to liberal democracy
- A3 Demands a greater say in IOs and attempts to help shape IC rules in line with its own interests

Domestic

- A4 Increasing authoritarian tendencies and repression
- A5 "Change through trade" did not materialize
- A6 State with a dominant role in the Chinese economy

B) Positioning of CH in international relations

Basic principles / role

- B1 Independent and universal foreign policy
- B2 Neutral, bloc-free
- B3 Bridge builder / Good deeds
- B4 Mediation between Chinese and Western ideas for the benefit of all
- B4 Coordination with like-minded partners

Central interests in international relations

- B5 Direct interest in a liberal international order and effective multilateral organizations
- B6 Against geopolitical polarization and a Sino-American bloc formation
- B7 Support for the reforms of international organizations

D. Policy objectives of CH

Bilateral

- C1 Independent China policy
- C2 China still formally a priority country
- C3 Strengthening China competencies
- C4 Seeks targeted cooperation with China, strives for cooperation in all areas in which Swiss interests exist
- C5 Constructive-critical dialog, confidently represents Switzerland's fundamental values as set out in the constitution
- C6 Switzerland's one-China policy

Multilateral

- C7 Integration of China into the liberal international order
- C8 China's involvement in overcoming global challenges
- C9 Coordination of China policy with like-minded partners where added value results

Whole of Switzerland

- C10 Internal coordination of China policy
- C11 External exchange on China with all stakeholders in Switzerland



Appendix E: Overview of stakeholders contacted for the survey on the “whole of Switzerland” approach

Organization	Category
1 Kanton Zürich	Canton/city
2 Kanton Basel-Stadt	Canton/city
3 Kanton St. Gallen	Canton/city
4 Stadt Zürich	Canton/city
5 Kanton Fribourg	Canton/city
6 Gemeinde Interlaken	Canton/city
7 Kanton Luzern	Canton/city
8 Gemeinde Arosa	Canton/city
9 Kanton Aargau	Canton/city
10 Gemeinde Crans-Montana	Canton/city
11 Kanton Obwalden	Canton/city
12 Kanton Waadt	Canton/city
13 Gemeinde Zermatt	Canton/city
14 Stadt Lugano	Canton/city
15 Universität Zürich	Teaching/research
16 ETH Zürich	Teaching/research
17 Université de Genève	Teaching/research
18 EPFL	Teaching/research
19 Hochschule St. Gallen	Teaching/research
20 ZHAW School of Management and Law	Teaching/research
21 Berner Fachhochschule	Teaching/research
22 Universität Basel	Teaching/research
23 Zürcher Hochschule der Künste	Teaching/research
24 Universität Bern	Teaching/research
25 Universität Fribourg	Teaching/research
26 Universität Luzern	Teaching/research
27 Università della Svizzera italiana	Teaching/research
28 Innosuisse	Teaching/research
29 Schweizerischer Nationalfonds	Teaching/research
30 Zürcher Handelskammer	Location/export promotion / chamber
31 Switzerland Global Enterprise (Export Promotion)	Location/export promotion / chamber
32 Switzerland Global Enterprise (Investment Promotion)	Location/export promotion / chamber
33 Greater Zurich Area	Location/export promotion / chamber
34 Handelskammer Beider Basel	Location/export promotion / chamber
35 Industrie- und Handelskammer St. Gallen	Location/export promotion / chamber
36 Industrie- und Handelskammer Zentralschweiz Chambre de commerce, d'industrie et des services de	Location/export promotion / chamber
37 Genève	Location/export promotion / chamber
38 Greater Geneva Bern area	Location/export promotion / chamber
39 Standortförderung Kanton Bern	Location/export promotion / chamber
40 Aargauische Industrie- und Handelskammer	Location/export promotion / chamber
41 Handelskammer Graubünden	Location/export promotion / chamber
42 Industrie- und Handelskammer Thurgau	Location/export promotion / chamber
43 Chambre vaudoise du commerce et de l'industrie	Location/export promotion / chamber
44 Standortförderung Solothurn	Location/export promotion / chamber
45 Wirtschaftsförderung Kanton Schaffhausen	Location/export promotion / chamber
46 International Chamber of Commerce	Location/export promotion / chamber
47 Swiss Chinese Chamber of Commerce	Location/export promotion / chamber



48	Amt für Wirtschaft und Arbeit Kanton Zürich	Location/export promotion / chamber
49	Swiss Chinese Chamber of Commerce Romandie Chapter	Location/export promotion / chamber
50	Swiss Chinese Chamber of Commerce Ticino Chapter	Location/export promotion / chamber
51	Konjunkturforschungsstelle (KOF) der ETH	Think Tank
52	Center for Security Studies (CSS) der ETH	Think Tank
53	Geneva Centre for Security Policy	Think Tank
54	Avenir Suisse	Think Tank
55	Institut für Schweizer Wirtschaftspolitik	Think Tank
56	Foraus	Think Tank
57	Swiss Institute for Global Affairs (SIGA)	Think Tank
58	The Adecco Group	Company
59	UBS	Company
60	Roche	Company
61	ABB	Company
62	SwissRe	Company
63	Novartis	Company
64	Sika	Company
65	Schindler	Company
66	Richemont	Company
67	Schweizerische Nationalbank	Company
68	MSC	Company
69	SGS	Company
70	Nestlé	Company
71	Swissmem	Business/industry association
72	ScienceIndustries	Business/industry association
73	Schweizerische Bankiervereinigung	Business/industry association
74	Economiesuisse	Business/industry association
75	Verband Schweizer Uhrenindustrie	Business/industry association
76	Swiss Textiles	Business/industry association
77	Interpharma	Business/industry association
78	Spedlogswiss	Business/industry association
79	Swissholdings	Business/industry association
80	Schweizerischer Versicherungsverband	Business/industry association
81	Schweiz Tourismus	Business/industry association
82	Nuklearforum	Business/industry association
83	Asset Management Association Switzerland	Business/industry association
84	Gesellschaft für bedrohte Völker	Civil society organization / NGO
85	Verein Tibeter Jugend in Europa	Civil society organization / NGO
86	Public Eye	Civil society organization / NGO
87	Amnesty International	Civil society organization / NGO
88	Uyghur Congress	Civil society organization / NGO
89	Uigurischer Verein	Civil society organization / NGO
90	Gesellschaft Schweizerisch-Tibetische Freundschaft	Civil society organization / NGO
91	Section romande de la Société Suisse-Chine	Civil society organization / NGO
92	Asia Society Switzerland	Civil society organization / NGO
93	Sinoptic	Civil society organization / NGO
94	Gesellschaft Schweiz China	Civil society organization / NGO



Appendix F : Stakeholder survey

The following survey was sent to 94 actors in Switzerland (see Appendix D):

Stakeholder survey as part of the external evaluation of the Federal Council's China Strategy 2021-2024

The Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) has decided to initiate a comprehensive external evaluation of the Federal Council's China Strategy 2021-2024 in order to analyze and assess in detail its effectiveness and relevance over the past four years. The China Macro Group (CMG) has been mandated by the FDFA with this task.

This stakeholder survey will be sent to a selection of involved actors in Switzerland - including cantons/cities, think tanks, NGOs, teaching/research, location/export promotion and chambers of commerce, business/industry associations.

It contains a total of 16 questions and takes about 10 minutes to complete. The survey questions are formally based on the content and structure of the China Strategy. The stakeholder survey is only programmed in a German version - let us know if the survey language prevents your organization from contributing effectively to this evaluation.

Please enter your name and organization so that we can answer any questions you may have and so that we can check that the survey link is not being used twice.

The data collected in this stakeholder survey will be treated confidentially and only used in an anonymized form. The survey is open from October 5 to 10, 2024.

Your perspective and experience are of utmost importance in order to make a well-founded assessment of the impact and track record of the Federal Council's China Strategy 2021-2024. We would therefore like to strongly invite you to take part in this survey and make your important contribution. Your participation will make a significant contribution to deepening the understanding of the results to date and shaping future strategic directions.

If you have any questions, please contact mherrmann@chinamacro.ch or msettelen@chinamacro.ch directly.

Thank you in advance for your valued time!

(1/16) Name and organization

- Your name/first name
- your organization

(2/16) Does your organization maintain *active China-related activities* (e.g. research, publications, dialogue, events, business, visits)?

- Answers: yes, no, don't know

(3/16) If so, how have your organization's *China-related activities* evolved since 2021?

- Answers: intensified, remained the same, reduced, terminated, don't know

(4/16) Are you aware of the *Federal Council's China Strategy 2021-2024*?

- Answers: yes, no

(5/16) Have you taken part in any *events* in recent years where the China Strategy was discussed?

- *Answers: several times, once, no, don't know*

(6/16) For which **activities** of your organization is the China Strategy used? (multiple answers possible)

- *Decisions / planning*
- *Political work / lobbying*
- *Communication*
- *Awareness and risk management*
- *Training*
- *Policy setting / legislation*
- *Not used (cannot be cumulated with options above)*
- *Other (open text field)*

(7/16) How **useful** is the China Strategy in general for the needs of your organization?

- *Answers: very, partially, minimally, not at all, don't know*

(8/16) What do you see as the greatest value-add of the China Strategy as an **orientation framework** for the needs of your organization? (3 answers possible)

- *Analyzes political, economic and other developments in China*
- *Provides political assessments and evaluations of developments in China*
- *Analyzes geopolitical dynamics related to China*
- *Defines bilateral and multilateral objectives and measures of Switzerland towards China*
- *Clarifies Switzerland's position towards China and in the international context*
- *Clarifies responsibilities within Switzerland with regard to exchanges with Chinese actors*
- *Clarifies the role and tasks of the Federal Government / FDFA in China policy*
- *Does not provide any relevant value-add (cannot be cumulated with options above)*
- *Other/further (open text field)*

(9/16) How has the China Strategy changed the **exchange of information and experience** between your organization and the Federal Government or among relevant actors in Switzerland regarding China?

- *Strong increase*
- *Light increase*
- *No change*
- *Decrease*
- *Don't know*

(10/16) How has the **China expertise** in your organization been strengthened in connection with activities surrounding the China Strategy or as a result of the "whole of Switzerland" approach?

- *Strongly*
- *Moderately*
- *Little*
- *None*
- *Don't know*

(11/16) From your organization's perspective, has the **China expertise in the Federal Administration** been strengthened since the adoption of the China Strategy in March 2021?

- *Yes, significantly*
- *Partially*
- *No*
- *Don't know*

(12/16) From your organization's perspective, has the China Strategy strengthened Switzerland's **political coherence** across issues and with regard to federalism in its dealings with China?

- Yes, significantly
- Partially
- No
- Don't know

(13/16) Has the China Strategy led to a **change in behavior** within your organization? If so, to what extent?

- (open text field)

Q14: From your organization's point of view, what is **unsatisfactory** in the China Strategy? (multiple answers possible)

- Analyses as well as political assessments and evaluations on and around China (Chapter 2)
- Switzerland's positioning and principles for cooperation with China (Chapter 3)
- Thematic priorities or defined objectives and measures (Chapter 4)
- Implementation aspects such as internal administrative coordination, building China expertise within and outside the Federal Administration or generally the "whole of Switzerland" approach (Chapter 5)
- Nothing unsatisfactory (cannot be cumulated with options above)
- Other/further (open text field)

(15/16) Finally: From your organization's point of view, does an official China Strategy of the Federal Council create **added value** compared to if this country-specific strategy did not exist?

- Yes definitely
- Partially
- Rather not
- No
- Don't know

(16/16) Further **observations, feedback, concerns** or **ideas**

- [Open text field]

Appendix G: In-depth analysis from the perspective of individual stakeholder groups

The assessments of the China Strategy of the various types of stakeholder groups are very heterogeneous.

Cantons/cities

Cantons and cities value the current China Strategy – especially the positioning of Switzerland in it. Nevertheless, some have become more cautious in their dealings with China and have reduced their China activities. It remains unclear whether this would change with a stronger exchange with the Federal Administration, as desired by the cantons/cities.

- 73% of the cantons/cities surveyed (n=12) have *reduced* their China activities in the period 2021-2024 – by far the highest rate of all organizations surveyed. The strategy has made the complexities of dealing with China even more apparent, but Covid and geopolitics also played a role. The strategy is known to the majority (75%) and 75% stated that they had attended an event on the China Strategy *once* or *several* times.
- Cantons and cities value the current China Strategy, but only half (50%) see either a *partial* (42%) or *great* (8%) value-add in it and support such a country strategy in principle (50%). Not surprisingly, however, *Switzerland's positioning towards China and in the international context* is particularly valuable as a framework for orientation for cantons/cities (58%). Cantons/cities use the strategy primarily for *decisions/planning* (25%), *raising awareness and risk management* (25%) and *communication* (25%). The strategy is a helpful working tool both internally and externally.
- Cantons/cities see potential for improvement particularly in *implementation* (42%). Some complain that the strategy is “not being implemented enough” and would like more communication, exchange with and support from the Federal Government, although 58% see an increase in the exchange of information/experience – albeit mainly only a *slight* one (50%). The question is whether these actors will become more proactive in their dealings with China as a result of more such exchange – both in projects and in external communication in general (see also Chapter 6.3). Regardless of this, 67% were able to improve their China skills and 58% see a stronger coherence in China policy.

Location/export promoters and chambers of commerce

The China Strategy is only of limited relevance for location and export promoters and chambers of commerce, especially since it is not a central reference document for companies. More important are concrete experiences from the ground that can offer companies practical support. Switzerland's positioning is valuable for them, but still needs improvement.

- More than half of these organizations (n=12) have *reduced* their China activities (42%) or *stopped them* altogether (17%). The strategy is known and 92% have attended an event on the topic *once* or *more*.
- 75% of these organizations rate the strategy as useful, 25% of whom even see it as *very useful*. As expected, *clarification of Switzerland's position* is seen as the most valuable here (67%). 67% are in favor of the existence of such a country-specific strategy, among other things because it enables a more uniform national stance. It is used in particular for *raising awareness and risk management* (50%), *decisions/planning* (50%) and *communication* (50%), with it being explicitly mentioned that the strategy has contributed to clarity in communication with both Swiss and Chinese stakeholders. One chamber of commerce, however, contradicted this, and stated that its member companies had spoken out against continuing the China Strategy during a meeting because of its low relevance.
- A third (33%) find the *implementation aspects* unsatisfactory, and here also many (50%) could not see *any change* in the exchange of information and experience between actors in Switzerland. One organization even sees a decrease. Interestingly, another 33% find *Switzerland's positioning and the principles for cooperation with China* unsatisfactory, although they recognize it as an added value. The strategy is “not put into practice enough”, some say. Nevertheless, 75% see their own China expertise as *little* (42%) to *moderately* (33%) improved, while half (50%) recognize a *partial* strengthening of political coherence in dealing with China.

Business/industry associations

Business and industry associations welcome the China Strategy and are satisfied with it, but assess its value-add somewhat more soberly. The assessments and positioning elements formulated in the strategy create concrete added value, especially for the association's work.

- The China activities of business/industry associations (n=10) have either *remained the same* (56%) or been *reduced* (33%) during the period of the China Strategy. Only one organization has *intensified* them. They are also aware of the strategy, with half (50%) having participated in a related event *once or more*.
- Half (50%) find the strategy useful, 9% of whom see a *great* value-add. The fact that Switzerland has such a country-specific strategy is also supported by the vast majority (80%). At the same time, one association suggested that this strategy was probably a politically motivated isolated case and had a distorting effect, while a geographically broader Asia strategy would make it more useful to look at the entire region. As expected, these associations consider the *clarification of Switzerland's position* (40%), the *analysis of developments in China* (40%), and the *analysis of geopolitical dynamics* (40%) to be the most valuable. In doing so, they primarily support their *political work/lobbying* (56%) and *communication* (22%).
- Surprisingly, more than half of these associations (63%) are without exception satisfied with the current strategy. Nevertheless, here too the majority (64%) see *no change* in the exchange of information and experience, although one association sees a slight increase. 60% said that they had strengthened their China expertise, while 50% perceived improved political coherence. The fact that the value-add of the strategy are viewed somewhat more soberly overall could also mean that these associations simply do not expect more from a China Strategy.

Teaching and research

Universities and other educational and research institutions appreciate the existence of a China country strategy. It has contributed to greater sensitivity in dealing with China and is therefore used extensively in risk management. At the same time, they would also like more concrete support from the Federal Government.

- Not surprising in the current geopolitical environment: teaching and research institutions (n=9) have not changed (63%) or reduced (38%) their China activities. The strategy is now *known* and 67% have attended an event on the China Strategy *several times*.
- Universities and other educational and research institutions view the existence of a China country strategy very positively (67% see a *partial* value-add). The strategy has made these actors more aware of how to deal with China and has selectively catalyzed cross-sectoral exchange on China. *Switzerland's positioning* (67%), the *analysis of geopolitical dynamics* (44%) and the *analysis of political, economic and other developments in China* (44%) are particularly valuable to these actors in an increasingly complex environment. Accordingly, 77% are in favor of such a country strategy. These assessments and positioning are used in particular for *raising awareness and risk management* (56%) as well as *decisions/planning* (44%).
- However, more than half (56%) are not entirely satisfied with the implementation of the strategy. 56% also see *no change* in the exchange of information and experience between actors in Switzerland. They see a need for more exchange ("a reflective dialogue") in Switzerland on how to deal with Chinese organizations and actors, more commitment and ownership on the part of the Federal Government in the area of "responsible internationalization", or generally more support in developing China expertise. 78% were able to improve this *slightly*, while 56% did not see any better coherence in Swiss China policy.

Civil society/NGOs

Civil society organizations and NGOs particularly value the clear and binding wording as well as the objectives and measures in the human rights strategy. However, they also have the impression that too little has been done in terms of implementation. They see the greatest need for improvement by all actors.

- Civil society organizations/NGOs (n=8) have kept their China activities the same (38%) or *reduced them* (50%) in the period 2021-2024 – only 13% have *intensified them*. However, the decrease in China activities is not due to the strategy, but to the situation in China (Hong Kong). The increase, meanwhile, has more

to do with the operational developments of the respective organization. Everyone is aware of the strategy, and the vast majority (86%) have already participated in events on the topic *several times*.

- 88% find the strategy to be *partially* useful for their organization, and all see *partial* (50%) or *major* (50%) added value in having such a country-specific strategy. One organization also specifically expressed the expectation that the clear wording on the human rights situation would also be adopted in a follow-up strategy, such as the “concerns being presented coherently and consistently at all levels, as well as in multilateral bodies” (Chapter 3.1 of the strategy). The *definition of bilateral and multilateral goals and measures* (75%) and *Switzerland's positioning* (63%) are particularly valuable for these organizations. Two organizations also highlighted the explicit wording on the subject of human rights. In addition, according to one organization, the strategy offers the opportunity to measure the Federal Government and Administration against their self-declared objectives and “to hold them accountable where necessary”. The strategy is used here primarily for *political work/lobbying* (63%), *communication* (38%) and *training* (38%).
- The general dissatisfaction with the strategy is greatest here – a full 88% feel that *implementation aspects* are inadequate. Nevertheless, two thirds (63%) perceive a *slight* (38%) or *strong* (25%) increase in the exchange of information and experience. 63% also state that they have strengthened their China expertise, and half see Switzerland's political coherence in dealing with China as strengthened. *Switzerland's positioning* (38%) and the *thematic focus or defined goals and measures* (38%) are also perceived as suboptimal. One organization is explicitly disappointed that “despite increasing human rights violations,” in their view, little has been done.

Companies

For companies, the China Strategy is less relevant and therefore less well known. They also use it relatively little. If they do, then Switzerland's positioning is particularly valuable in an increasingly complex geopolitical environment. But it is precisely on this issue that they would like to see more proactive communication from the Federal Government.

- The companies surveyed (n=7) have either *not changed* their China activities (43%) or *have intensified them* (43%). One company reports a reduction. At the same time, the China Strategy is less well known here (57%), although all of these companies have participated in an event on the topic *one or more times*.
- It is therefore not surprising that only a third of companies see a *partial* value-add in the current strategy. 72% welcome the existence of such a strategy in principle. In the increasingly complex geopolitical environment, the *positioning of Switzerland developed in the strategy* (71%) is particularly valuable for businesses. However, almost three quarters of the companies surveyed here do not use the strategy in their work. If they do, they do so primarily for *awareness-raising and risk management* (29%) and *political work/lobbying* (29%).
- Implementation is also seen as the biggest shortcoming here (43%). The strategy is generally not communicated enough. In addition, two companies would like to see the question of Switzerland's positioning addressed more strongly, especially since companies are particularly affected when dealing with the “worsening dilemma between American and Chinese attempts to exert pressure”. Another company would also have liked the interests of the financial center to be reflected more strongly, for example with regard to market access in China for Swiss banks and financial service providers. In relation to the greater exchange of information and experience among players in Switzerland that the strategy aims to achieve, 86% see no change. Almost three quarters (71%) were also unable to noticeably improve their China skills. A third (33%) see political coherence in Switzerland in dealing with China as strengthened.

Think tanks

Think tanks have tended to intensify their China activities and value the existence of a country-specific China Strategy. Unlike other actors, they particularly value the definition of objectives and measures as well as the clarification of the roles and tasks of the Federal Government and the FDFA. They use the strategy exclusively for awareness-raising activities.



- In contrast to other actors, three out of four think tanks (75%, n=4) have *intensified* their China activities during the period of the China Strategy. For the Geneva Center for Security Policy (GCSP), for example, China is an important partner for security and geopolitical reasons. All of them are aware of the strategy and half of them (50%) have already taken part in a corresponding event *once* or *several times*.
- The think tanks surveyed here view both the current strategy (75% *partly*) and, in principle, a country-specific China Strategy (75%) very positively. Think tanks that also deal with Sino-Swiss relations, among other things, particularly value the *definition of bilateral and multilateral goals and measures* (50%) and the *clarification of the role and tasks of the Federal Government/FDFA in China policy* (50%). If it is used (75%), then without exception it is for *raising awareness and risk management*.
- 50% consider the *implementation aspects* of the strategy to be unsatisfactory and a further 25% each consider *Switzerland's positioning and principles for cooperation with China* as well as the *analysis, political assessments and evaluations on and around China* to be unsatisfactory. At the same time, half (50%) noted a *slight* increase in the exchange of information and experience. Meanwhile, 75% were able to *partially* expand their China expertise, while all the think tanks surveyed noted a *partial* strengthening of Switzerland's political coherence in its dealings with China.