ANDREW MARR:
The scale of Chinese investment in Britain has become staggering: nuclear power stations, railways, housing, brands as well-known as Weetabix. This week, following George Osborne’s trade visit to China when he did not publicly raise human rights issues once, security experts have warned that Chinese intelligence is getting uncomfortably close to British state secrets. Ahead of the state visit by the president, I’m joined by the Chinese Ambassador to the UK, Liu Xiaoming. Welcome ambassador. Very nice to have you here.

LIU XIAOMING:
Thank you.

ANDREW MARR:
First of all about Britain’s sort of relationship with China. Are we in essence now a begging bowl economy as far as the Chinese state is concerned, which doesn’t have the right to raise issues like human rights?

LIU XIAOMING:
First of all, I think China and UK are partners. We call it comprehensive strategic
partners because our two countries are very important countries with a global influence. We have so many areas for cooperation, for win-win. When you talk about human rights, I think that is also an area we can talk about, but the important thing - how do you approach the human rights? When you talk about human rights, you don’t have to miss the big picture in China. I hope people should realise how much progress China has made in the area of human rights.

ANDREW MARR:
So this is a changing picture and the president won’t be offended if it’s brought up, for instance, at the banquet by the Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn who says he will bring it up?

LIU XIAOMING:
You think Labour Party will raise this issue at a state banquet? I don’t think so. I think you know president is here for cooperation, for partnership. He is not here for debate about human rights. We all know that China, UK differ very much because we have a different history, different culture. We are in different stage of development. It’s natural we have differences even with regard to human rights. In China we care more about the rights for better life, for better job, for better housing, for … You know I think the Chinese people enjoying their happy life. On the other side, I think Chinese people have never enjoyed …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) But there are a lot of dissidents who are in prison for expressing their views.

LIU XIAOMING:
(over) I … No I can’t say a lot of dissidents. You know all the criminals are trialed through a normal legal process.

ANDREW MARR:
But there are people who express criticism of the Chinese government and the state, who we would not regard as criminals, who end up in prison in China.
LIU XIAOMING:
No one will be put behind a bar simply because they are criticising the government. The criminals are put behind bar because they have a criminal record. Either they incite or engage in organisation to overthrow the legitimate government. Here in this country, I think you know once you’re involved in some activities, you know work against the interests of Britain …

ANDREW MARR:
Yes.

LIU XIAOMING:
… and endanger the safety of the people, will be put behind the bar. Maybe we have some different opinions, but we can talk to each other.

ANDREW MARR:
Well let me give you a specific, if I may ambassador. The most important and exciting art exhibition we’ve had in London for a very, very long time is the Ai Weiwei exhibition at the Royal Academy. Now here is somebody who is a global Chinese figure, I think a Chinese patriot – he’s very, very proud of his Chinese origins, his father was close to Chairman Mao and all the rest of it – and yet he ended up in prison for a while. Do you regard him as a dissident, as a dangerous figure, or as a patriotic important Chinese citizen?

LIU XIAOMING:
I don’t know how much you know about this so-called artist. I was interviewed on some of … one of your programme. I told your presenter he’s not my taste. There are so many talented Chinese artists, but yet …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) There are many, yes.

LIU XIAOMING:
There are many, many much better than him. Why he is so famous?
ANDREW MARR:
Well …

LIU XIAOMING:
Because he’s critical of Chinese government. The reason he was … He never been put behind bar. He was under investigation because his economic crime. He was suspicious of fraud accounting, destroyed accounting documents. What about the same artist? Do you investigate him if he has this criminal record in UK?

ANDREW MARR:
Well the only thing I can say is we’ll disagree about this. I think he’s a great artist, I have to say, and it was a great exhibition. So we can disagree about that and move on. Is the Chinese government offended by the Prince of Wales’ decision not to attend the banquet?

LIU XIAOMING:
He will be with the president on several occasions. He might have a good reason if he’s not available. But I know Prince of Wales make a lot of efforts. You know he has to … even have to change his original schedule in order to meet the president. I think he will meet the president at least for three occasions and he …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) Can I ask about … I’m so sorry to interrupt you. Can I ask about the stories that British security and intelligence experts have warned our government; that China is getting very, very close to the heart of state security through these nuclear contracts and that in a sense they are opening the door to things that most governments, including the Chinese government, wouldn’t allow?

LIU XIAOMING:
I don’t think where they get this information. I can only tell you that Chinese are here for win-win, cooperation. We think it’s in the best interests of Britain and also in the interest of partnership between China, UK. I think UK need Chinese investment here and UK people want to have a better life, want to have a clean age?? I know in the past you know dozen years, you have to you know get rid of old nuclear power
stations, but you have to find resources for the new supply.

**ANDREW MARR:**
We certainly need the money and we need the expertise, but China wouldn’t allow a foreign power to build her nuclear power station surely?

**LIU XIAOMING:**
I was put to me same question. I asked do you have the money first, do you have the technology, do you have expertise? If you have all this, we certainly would want to have cooperation with you like the French. You know French nuclear services, we have some cooperation with France because they have technology and I look for … But I think UK is strong in other areas. Why you always focus on building nuclear power in China?

**ANDREW MARR:**
Well we’re expecting a big contract to be signed next week. Do you think it will be?

**LIU XIAOMING:**
I hope so. I certainly hope because this is a very important project between our two countries.

**ANDREW MARR:**
And finally, you said earlier on that you didn’t think that Jeremy Corbyn would raise human rights at a state banquet. I mean his people have been briefing that he will. If he does, what happens?

**LIU XIAOMING:**
First of all I think the state banquet is for Her Majesty, it is her show. You know either Jeremy Corbyn or others are their guests. I think British people are very gentleman, very smart, they know you know how to behave on occasion like this. But we are not … we do not shy away from discussion about human rights. In fact I had a good meeting with Jeremy Corbyn last week and I do hope …

**ANDREW MARR:**
(over) So your advice would be not to do this in public, not to do it and embarrass you.

LIU XIAOMING:
(over) In a way I’m not interested in microphone diplomacy, just like we are not interested in camera diplomacy. We are more interested in candid discussion. If he has his concern, you know we can talk about it.

ANDREW MARR:
He can talk to us, yes. Ambassador, thank you very much indeed for joining us and good luck with the state visit.

LIU XIAOMING:
It’s my pleasure.

INTERVIEW ENDS