

THE ANDREW MARR SHOW

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LIU XIAOMING

CHINA'S AMBASSADOR to the UK

(Rough transcript, check against delivery)

AM: Now relations between Beijing and London have also taken a dramatic turn for the worse since the British government promised to strip out the Chinese company, Huawei, from our 5G network. Amid an increasing international row over the rights of Democrats in Hong Kong and the repression of the Moslem Uighur people in North China. Is China changing in a way that makes a close relationship between the West, and its Communist leadership, simply impossible? Liu Xiaoming is the Chinese Ambassador in London. Ambassador, welcome.

Can I first of all ask you about Hong Kong. Are rights of dissent and freedom of speech still valued in Hong Kong?

LX: Fully respected. I think people about this National Security Law. National Security Law is about to restore order, to protect the majority, the rights of the majority of people. It's targeted on a very small group of criminals who intend to endanger the national security.

AM: let me remind people what the National Security Law actually says. It's says that 'Beijing now decide what breaks the law, not Hong Kong itself. Protesters could be arrested just for using placards. Police can search buildings without warrants and trials can be held in secret without a jury.' Surely those laws break that one country, two systems promised China originally?

LX: That is wrong information. I don't know if you have read the National Security Law yet. First I would say you know the National Law begin with the statement. That China will continue to implement one country, two systems and Hong Kong people will administer their affairs with a high degree of autonomy. The

reason why this National Law was enacted is because in the past 23 years Hong Kong government, the Special Administer region is entitled to enact its own law according to basic law to protect the national security, that is called 23 Article. But because of opposition, because of these trouble makers scaremongering, the government failed to implement, but it is a central government responsibility to take care of national security.

AM: You say trouble makers, but Amnesty International of course, which is an organisation much respected by many people watching this programme says: "There was a rapid deterioration in the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly, expression and association as the Hong Kong authorities increasingly adopted main land China's vague and all encompassing definition of national security."

LX: This Amnesty International is not respected in China, because it's made –

AM: Really?

LX: - who made numerous false accusation about China. Never say a nice word. You know, never be objective about China. That's the problem of them. So you know we talk about Hong Kong situation last year. This turbulence, riots. Any responsible government has to take measures to address this situation.

AM: Why couldn't the existing laws be enough to do that because they were quite strong existing laws. If people were really causing trouble, really trying to cause disruption in Hong Kong they could have been dealt with by existing laws, not importing –

LX: That is exactly the reason why here should be a National Security Law, because this law failed to curtail, to contain this violence, you know looking, smashing, storming – just like to storm the British parliament. So because there's no law governing national security in Hong Kong for the past 23 years.

AM: Isn't the real problem that you don't want people in Hong Kong to talk about democracy in Hong Kong? President Trump no less has said this. He says: "Their freedom has been taken away, their rights have been taken away. No special privileges and with it goes Hong Kong," he said: "because it will no longer be able to compete with free markets. A lot of people will be leaving Hong Kong. Leaving Hong Kong for Australia, the United States and for the UK." Will they be free to leave?

LX: Certainly they are free to leave. You know Hong Kong people enjoy unprecedented freedom after hand over for the past hundred three years. Before the handover what kind of freedom do they have? Did they have a freedom to elect their Governor? The last Governor was appointed by the British government. But Part 23 there's five Chief Executives elected by the Hong Kong people.

AM: Surely the fundamental truth is that under your new President you have a more nationalistic, more assertive regime in Beijing and the real question is whether that regime can have a completely open relationship with free markets around the world, and Hong Kong is the epicentre for that?

LX: I think you have a very wrong impression about what is going on in China. Let me give update. You don't trust our statement. You always regard it as propaganda. But it seems to me you trust more Americans. You don't regard them as propaganda.

AM: I was reading it to you.

LX: Okay. The Harvard School, the Kennedy, Harvard University Kennedy School of Government just issued a report. They did this report covering last 13 years. They did a polling. The conclusion is the Chinese people's rating of satisfaction for Chinese companies, party, Chinese government is 93%. Much higher than any western government, western leadership. So that's the fact about what is going on in China.

AM: We are going to get a response from the British government this coming week over Hong Kong and there are reports that for instance the Magnitsky Act might be used to ban individual Chinese people from British territory and also that the Extradition Treaty is going to be torn up. What would be China's reaction if that's the case?

LX: That is totally wrong. We never believe the unilateral section. We believe that the UN has the authority to you know impose sanctions, and if the UK government goes that far, goes that far to impose sanctions on any individuals in China, China will certainly make resolute response to it. You have seen what happened between China and the United States. They sanctioned Chinese officials, we sanctioned their Senators, their officials. I do not want to see this tit for tat that has happened in China, UK relations. I think UK should have its own independent foreign policy rather than dance to the tune of Americans, like what happened to Huawei.

AM: You've talked about the possibility of tit for tat or reprisals. Let me ask about Huawei, because when the Huawei decision was announced the Chinese Foreign Ministry said: 'that it would severely undermine mutual trust and come at a cost.' Can I ask you what the cost is?

LX: We are still evaluating the consequences. This is a very bad decision. When this decision was announced I said, this is a dark say for Huawei, it's a dark day for China, UK relations. It's even a darker day for United Kingdom.' Because you missed the opportunity to be a leading country.

AM: So why, is the question.

LX: You know I happen to agree with Martin Jacques. He is a British scholar –

AM: Knows China well.

LX: He knows China well. He wrote a book, When the West Ruled the World and he has this good line. He said you know, 'in 1793 –

you know history has its cycle – 1793 Chinese Emperor Qianlong, told the English King that we have a slightest need of your country's manufacturing.' So that mark the start of a 150 year decline of China. So 223 years later, in 2020, UK told China we do not need, we do not the slightest need of your 5G technology. So I do not know what will happen for the next 150 years.

AM: Is China, looking at the Tik Tok decision as well, is China going to punish British companies like for instance Jaguar Land Rover operate in China as part of the response?

LX: You know, we do not want to politicise the economy. That is wrong, you know, so that's wrong for the United Kingdom you know to discriminate Chinese company because of pressure from the United States. People talk about this national security risk. There's no hard solid evidence to say Huawei is a risk to UK. They've been here for 20 years. They made a huge contribution to not only telecom industry of this country, they have you know implemented their corporate responsibility, they help the UK to develop and UK want to have a you know - Prime Minister Boris Johnson has an ambitious plan to have full coverage, 5G coverage by 2025. I think Huawei can deliver that. Huawei can be a big help. But now it seems to me UK just kicked them out. To use your media word, to purge them under the pressure of the United States. You know US leaders claim credit because of this.

AM: Okay. Let's turn to vaccine development. Now Britain has accused Russia of trying to steal vaccine secrets and when I had Rick Scott, an American Senator from Florida, very, very close to Donald Trump on this programme, he accused China of much the same thing. He said: "We have evidence – that's the United States – that China is trying to sabotage or slow down our ability to get this vaccine done. It came through our intelligence community." What's your response?

LX: Those China bashers make countless accusations. I don't think I should spend time with you, you know to repute their

accusations against China. China is very open and China is working also with the UK scientists on vaccine and President Xi made it very clear at the World Health Assembly that we'll make it a public good when it's ready and we want to make it accessible, you know especially in the poorest country, in Africa.

AM: Let's turn to the single biggest problem probably at the moment between China and the West which is the treatment of the Uighur people in North China. Let's look at some very disturbing drone footage that's been widely shared around the world. This is almost certainly over Northern China, over Xinjiang. Can you tell us what is happening here?

LX: I cannot see you know this view. This is not first time you've shown me. I do remember last year you showed me what is happening in Xinjiang. But let me tell you this. Xinjiang - have you been to Xinjiang yourself?

AM: No, I never have.

LX: You know Xinjiang is regarded as the most beautiful place in Xinjiang. There's a Chinese saying, 'you do not know how big China is -

AM: Ambassador, that is not beautiful coverage however, is it?

LX: You know Xinjiang - that is exactly what I'm going to tell you. Since 1990 Xinjiang has completely changed because there are thousands of terrorist attacks. People cannot -

AM: Well that was ten years ago. Can I ask you why people are kneeling blindfolded and shaven and being led to trains in modern China? What is going on there?

LX: I do not know where you get this video tape. You know sometimes you have a transfer of prisons and prisoners you know in any country.

AM: But what is happening here, Ambassador?

LX: I do not know. Where did you get these video clips on that?

AM: These have been going around the world, they've been authenticated by western intelligence agencies and by Australian

experts who say these are Uighur people, being pushed onto trains and taken off.

LX: Let me tell you this. The so called western intelligence keep make this a fake accusation against China. There's one million Uighur has been persecuted. You know how many population Xinjiang has? It's just about – 40 years ago it was 4, 5 million, now it's 11 million people and people say you know we impose, we have ethnic cleansing but the population has doubled in 40 years.

AM: I'm so sorry to interrupt but according to your own local government statistics, the population growth in Uighur jurisdictions in that area has fallen by 84% between 2015 and 2018. 84%.

LX: That's not right. I gave you the official figure. You asked me, I gave you figure as a Chinese Ambassador. This is a very authoritative figure. In the past 40 years the Uighur population increased, the population in Xinjiang increased to double, the population doubled so there's no so called restriction of the population, there's no so called forced abortion and so on.

AM: But there is a programme of forced sterilisation being imposed on Uighur women at the moment and it's gone on for a long time and people are finally coming out of China and talking about it and I've got the witness statement from a woman who was on NewsNight, a brave women who talked about it openly which we can now watch. Here is somebody who went through the forcible sterilisation programme in China.

(talking over film)

LX: You know I can easily refute this accusation. You know those people – these people you know, there's some small group of anti Chinese China element working against the interests of China, but the majority of Xinjiang people are happy with what is going on in Xinjiang. In the past three years there's no single terrorist attack in Xinjiang. People can enjoy harmonious life. Uighur people enjoy

harmonious life, peaceful, harmonious coexistence with other ethnic group of people. You know Uighur people is just one small portion of the Chinese population even among the Moslem. But they are living – the majority of them living happily and peacefully, harmoniously with other ethnic – The success of China, we have a very successful ethnic policy. We treat every ethnic group as equal.

AM: Well let's listen to an individual named Uighur woman, Zumrat Dawut who said this recently: (film clip)

We offered to write a letter

Promising not to have any more children.

But they refused, saying:

'She must have the procedure,

Or we will put her name on the study list.

You can always be sent back again.'

I looked around.

There were women crying in pain.

About half an hour later I started to feel a

Sharp pain in my stomach.

LX: Can I say something?

AM: Well let's just listen.

I started crying like the others.

The pain was so excruciating.

(end of clip)

LX: First of all there's no so called pervasive massive forced sterilisation among Uighur people in China. It's totally against the truth. Secondly –

AM: But you're not saying she's lying about it?

LX: The government is governing policy strongly opposed to this kind of practice. But I cannot rule out you know single cases for any country. These single cases, a single case.

AM: So you can't rule out the fact that it's happening at all. There is a general view –

LX: But the general policy is that is not the government policy, general views, we treat every ethnic group in China as equal.

AM: When we see interviews like that and we see people blindfolded and led off to trains to be taken to re-education camps, it reminds people in the West what was going on in Germany in the 1930 and 1940s.

LX: No, that's totally wrong. There's no such a concentration camp in Xinjiang as I think we discuss it. With regard to that videotape, I will get back to you. You know there's a lot of fake. Even we are in the modern – we are in an information age – you know media. They make all kinds of fake accusations against China.

AM: Let me remind you Ambassador. I hear that, but let me remind you of what the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide says, it says: "That genocide is killing people, of course, causing serious bodily or mental harm. Deliberately inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring about a group's physical destruction. Imposing measures intended to prevent births and forcibly transferring children to another group." All of those things it is alleged have been happening in China and China is going to face accusations at the United Nations about this.

LX: This is not true. This is not true. The facts just show the opposite. People in Xinjiang enjoy a happy life, you know. They enjoy – people call for good order to be restored in Xinjiang. China of course is strongly opposed to any torture, any persecution and discrimination of any ethnic group people. This is not the case in China. The policy of the Chinese government, as I said, every ethnic group in China is treated equal. That's the success story of the Chinese National Policy.

AM: You've said in the past, 'give us the names.' When we were talking about this last time about Uighur children, you said give us the names of these children that have been separated from their families and we will investigate. The BBC did provide the Chinese Embassy with names and we haven't heard back.

LX: I never receive any names since our last show. I hope that you can give me the names. We certainly will get back to you. You know as a matter of fact we have an office in Xinjiang handling this kind of – they respond to use very quickly each time we made inquiry you know they will get back to us. So that's good. I like this kind of conversation. If you have a solid base, solid evidence about any complaint you just give me the names, we'll get back to you.

AM: Is it any longer possible for the West to deal with a country which is so nationalistic and so much under the thumb of the Communist Party leadership?

LX: I do not agree with your description of China. It's not China become so aggressive. People say China becoming very aggressive. That's totally wrong. China has not changed. It's Western countries, headed by United States, they started this so called 'new Cold War on China.' They have the sanctions, they have these smearing, name calling, take what happened with the Coronavirus. They still keep calling China virus, Wuhan virus. Totally wrong. But we have to make a response. We do not provoke but once we were provoked we have to make response.

Ends