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## **Xi's China and European security**



With the historical resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, dated 11 November, China accelerates the trajectory towards its Maoist past. Xi's one leader, one country, one thought doctrine becomes a menace to the rest of the world. Europe, thus the EU is directly challenged. Strategic reliance on the US will no longer suffice, *write former Swiss Ambassadors **Daniel WOKER** and **Philippe WELTI**, Co-founders of [Share-an-Ambassador/Geopolitical Coaching](#).*

### **Xi's China today**

A sole strongman who nobody inside dares to oppose rather than a collective leadership as hitherto practiced since Mao's demise, increases the likelihood of Chinese political adventurism. Such as an attack from mainland China against Taiwan. Other than of course the Indo-Pacific itself, a global disaster of this magnitude would affect Europe, too. Not only with regard to the likely interruption of the global economy but also security policy related: As a conflict over Taiwan will most likely also militarily involve the US, Washington would probably invoke Nato's Art. 5 stipulating the obligation to support and will in any case count on European solidarity.

### **Shared European autonomy**

Faced with increased Chinese belligerency, the EU will have to react. Realistically, neither decoupling from the entire US security shield nor continued total reliance on US leadership will be possible or indeed desirable for Europe. The magic word is shared strategic autonomy. Meaning reinsurance through NATO where indispensable and more security autonomy where possible based on the combined military might of the main European powers.

### **Indispensable NATO**

Eastern and northern EU-countries will continue to regard NATO as the indispensable security wall against a revanchist Russia under Putin. But US involvement in European security is also necessary where Europe's near-abroad to the South is concerned. Take the example of the French, now decade-long military intervention in Mali. which would not have been possible without US participation in the form of logistical support - transport capacities, refuelling of fighter jets in mid-air and general intelligence.

So if and when NATO as a transatlantic security pact ever fades, such a process will start from the US side. Be it through ever increased pivoting to Asia or accelerated by the re-election of Trump or one of his acolytes considering NATO 'a terrible deal for America'.

### **Increased European self-reliance**

The chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan under US leadership, or rather the lack of it, has driven home the lesson to the implicated European NATO-members that more of their own military capacity in a crisis is indispensable. The money and material is basically there but as of now still far too uncoordinated to make a common, European-wide impact. Work on that front is underway at least with regard to future air defence.

### **FCAS and Tempest**

The most serious attempt yet to create a common European weapon system is FCAS. The Future Combat Air System intends to create a fifth generation of fighter jets, combat drones and the entire cyber background to effectively use them from a single command. The French and the German government, followed by Spain, have subscribed to it and instructed their main aerial weapons providers, Dassault and Airbus respectively to get to work. In competition to FCAS, the UK is developing the similar, but more NATO-compatible system 'Tempest' joined by the EU-members Italy and Sweden. Which already shows that the first European truly weapons system is not around the corner. Yet military, strategic and financial logic will dictate that somehow the two planned systems will have, if not to be merged then at least made compatible, Brexit notwithstanding. This might not be as impossible as it looks at first, since major European companies participating in either project are already crosslinked through industrial cooperation and minority holdings.

### **Beyond Air Defence**

If air defence as a truly European project appears complicated, the going gets really difficult with regard to truly integrated overall security for Europe which can only be achieved by common endeavour from the usual EU 'locomotive', e.g. France and Germany.

France will have to, first renounce the sole lead it claimed hitherto with regard to European defence and, second be ready to somewhat 'unionise' the crown jewels of its national security: The permanent seat in the UN Security Council and its nuclear technology. No mean feat even for the convinced European Emmanuel Macron who will have to hold his Gaullist temperament in check.

Germany in turn will have to jump over its historical shadow and put the full juggernaut of its industrial capacity also to the service of a future European defence industry. In this area the basic capacity is already here but it will need a leap of faith to admit that in defence, too 'Deutschland allein ist zu klein' (Germany alone is too small) as Angela Merkel has repeated many times with regard to the necessity of European cooperation.

## The 'Peace Dividend' vs. Russian and Chinese perceptions

'Peace dividend' was short for the economic benefits accruing to the West following the demise of the UdSSR from 1988-91. Those chickens have finally come home to roost for Europa, too. To stay credible within the Western Alliance, the EU will have to do more for its common defence and security. That holds even more true with regard to the perceptions of Europe held by the two big adversaries in the East, Russia and, in the future even more important, China.



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