

THE PROSPECTS OF DEFENCE COOPERATION BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION, THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION AND THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

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ABSTRACT

The most important EU member states may shift away from the US renewed containment strategy, oriented on Russia. NATO allies had in earlier periods picked up geopolitical theories and theses from Mackinder and Spykman. More recently, these were used by political lobbies in the US administrations inside the White House and Pentagon to create the US Grand Strategy that was devoted to building up the US hegemony into the world by following the New World Order in the 21st century. The Containment policy toward Russia was created by the US financial, economic and military lobbies, to continue with the old fashioned Geopolitics. The EU member states may find out common military identity and authority to form a European Defence Union (EDU). The EU could open a new page into the (white) book to implement multilateral world order that shares geopolitical and geoeconomic interest in defence cooperation with China and Russia, and therefore continue with the development of its defence identity, more independent of NATO.

Keywords: The European Union (the EU), PESCO, defence cooperation, NATO, the USA, Russia, the PR China.

1 INTRODUCTION

European politics made a major shift in the 21st century away from conflict theories to successfully avoid continental wars and especially twisted downturn to distance itself from the warmongering toward military confrontations. At the beginning, we have to mention geopolitical theorists whose theories were deeply involved into forging international policies in the 20th century. Geopolitical theories and theses of Mackinder and Spykman were used by political lobbies in the US administrations inside the White House and Pentagon to create the Grand Strategy devoted to building up the absolute hegemony into the world by following the New World Order in the 21st century. NATO is the most powerful means of implementing the US interests in Europe. The Containment policy was created by the US financial, economic and military lobbies. Is Europe still under the influence of confrontation theories? Is this the reason why it is not pushing deeper multilateral (defence) cooperation in Eurasia?

2 THE CURRENT EU DEFENCE COOPERATION AND THE ROLE OF NATO

The US officials at the 2018 Munich Security Conference expressed their fear that the EU defence cooperation may distract the EU from NATO (Karnitschnig, 2018). The Pentagon official criticized the EU's common security and defence policy for pulling forces away from NATO, and the U.S. ambassador to the Alliance warned against the provisions to protect European defence companies (Valašek, 2018). The EU states need to spend more money at defence budgets to prepare for war against Russian counterpart. That was a clear voice from US partners in NATO alliance to EU partners.

The US President Trump singled out that the USA stood by the clause, which states that an attack on one NATO member is considered an attack on all of them. But his remarks in Warsaw since 2017 were the first time he had done so on European soil (Crowley, 2017). Trump had labelled NATO as obsolete and openly questioned whether the USA would make good on the treaty's communal defence obligations for nations who have not spent enough on their own militaries. As President, he has railed against NATO members who do not meet the agreed-upon two percent of their gross domestic product (GDP) on defence and has claimed credit for increasing military spending among member states (Nelson, 2017). He had asserted and repeated again that NATO alliance being out of date to be pensioned soon. The US Secretary of Defence Mattis had wowed to European allies by telling them they must increase military spending or the USA will pull back from its commitment to the transatlantic bloc. No longer can the American taxpayer carry a disproportionate share of the defence of Western values (Herszenhorn, 2017). It is a warning to the European pillar of NATO states to buy more military product made in US to increase profit to US multinationals into the productive defence sector complex. The EU states spend €27 thousand per soldier on equipment and

research, compared to €108 thousand per soldier by the USA. And while Russia spends more than five percent of its annual GDP on defence, the EU member states spend an average of 1.3 percent of GDP (Herszenhorn, 2017). The EU stays behind the US military spending, it seen that the EU leaves from mercy like a big social problem, taking social allowance and some adoptions of NATO fund.

The systemic nature, dynamism, and sustainability of the Eurasian continent, depend on the degree to which Heartland is orderly and manageable. The main function of Heartland –the central part of Eurasia – can be described as ensuring sustainable land contacts along the parallels (West-East) and meridians (North-South). In other words, the central part Eurasia should contribute to consistent geopolitical and economic integration of large and relatively isolated areas of the Eurasian continent (Ismailov and Papava, 2010: 97). The neo-geopolitical approach in the early 21st century gave a new boost to studies of the regional structuralization principles for the geopolitical and geo-economic space of the entire Eurasian continent.

NATO policy has tried to fulfil its principles and expectations since the end of the Cold War, by pushing the NATO Alliance into eastern states and Balkans those was under Russian dominance before. After the Warsaw pact had collapsed and this vacuum had been fulfilled by expansion policy under NATO alliance that had set political control over the post-communist Central and Southeast European states.

The NATO alliance system hinges geographically on the Western portion of the landmass and constituted the western flank of the US Containment policy. In the south lay the Middle East and the southern portion of Central Asia (as for the Gulf, for some time Iran was a pro-US ally under the Shah until the Islamic Revolution in 1979), and to the East lays Japan as well as other countries in the US camp as well as naval bases, all positioned to prevent any power in Pivot from dominating the Eurasian landmass through the Rimland. The main goal of this strategy was to prevent Heartland (or Pivot) from being dominated by a single power or coalition of powers (Boon von Ochssée, 2007).

The USA is opposed to the EU's integration into super state and formed multinational European army under single command as single set of forces to carry out the European defence policy. The USA does not support European defence union that could endanger NATO existence in Europe and renounce defence relation with Russia. Both Mackinder and Spykman had been applauded on the conflict relations in history by confrontation sea power against Heartland. In Spykman, however, there are conflicted international relations between sea powers and Heartland, and that between an independent centre of power in the Rimland with both sea power and Heartland allied against it (the EU super state against the domination from the USA, Russia, and China). The US approach to containing Russia's strategy is being a part of the New World Energy Order which is based on geo-strategic thinking by Mackinder. The old fashioned political theory was transferred into modern international relations with some corrections those are coerced through alliances NATO, CENTO, and

SEATO did into the Containment policy, by tightening economic, military and political siege around Russia and China.

3 THE ENTENTE OF HEARTLAND ON ITS WAY TOWARDS DEEPENING DEFENCE COOPERATION?

Russia and Germany watch carefully Beijing's One Belt, One Road project (OBOR), that was announced in 2013. The possible tripartite world of Europe-China-Russia poses a huge challenge to US foreign and trade policy. The road ahead for the Trump Administration is full of possible jarring potholes, which would be familiar to all three geopolitical theorists – Mackinder, Mahan and Spykman (Norval Morgan, 2017). Germany, Russia and China had conversed common joint strategy to connect, cooperate and consolidate (3C approach) Heartland. The common project was aimed to build up intercontinental Economic Belt made up by those countries those are encompassing communications by traffic railroads through Central Asia, West Asia and Europe.

The USA might stop or disrupt this major continental traffic connection by flaring up interstate wars into those states served as getaway or pass way states inter positioned in the Caucasus (Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia etc.) and the Eastern part of Europe (Ukraine and Moldavia). It is looking for interconnection at land and air with Russia and China with Silk Road switches otherwise they are searching for designated path on the roadmap how to avoid physical territory of NATO centric states in Europe. NATO centric states into the Eastern Europe had emplaced barrier like indirectly frontier states to Russian neighbourhood states with Belorussia and Ukraine after NATO enlargement was pushed toward Eastern flank. Other EU smaller post-socialist states Slovenia, Croatia, Czech, Slovakia, Hungary and Bulgaria still balance in which political club they belong.

Heartland players had been boosting mutual defence cooperation into defence industry since 2018, while Russia is enlarging its defence industry collaboration with Germany and other European countries in Eastern Europe's Balkans region, despite the US threats to impose additional anti-Russian sanctions (Sputnik News, 2018). Neoliberal context by building up mutual EU – Russian cooperation and trusties may shake legs to NATO hostile policy if the EU states are going to lift sanction against Russia.

The US will continue with attempts to derail EU – Russian cooperation. Political fissures had been cracking totally between Old and New Europe states disagreement among lifting siege for Russia and renouncing back diplomatic, economic and military ties before Ukraine fiasco. If the EU states will not replace political attitude to transatlantic link while the EU common defence and security policy is not willing to replace or compete with NATO as the EU is not a military alliance and will not turn into a military alliance (Aries, 2017), then the EU Grand strategy issued since 2014 presented only a “paper tiger” for the EU defence cooperation.

Referring on the defence cooperation in a transatlantic context did not exist absolutely. Juncker said, if Europe does not take care of its own security, nobody else will do it for us (Barigazzi and Cooper, 2017). Increased support for partnership was expected from France, Germany, Italy, and Spain.

The EU is the world's second-biggest spender on defence, because many EU countries traditionally favour domestic munitions manufacturers, about 80 percent of defence procurement in the EU is carried out on a national basis, which has in turn created a highly fragmented defence market across Europe. European armies use 17 different systems of battle tanks, compared to just a single system in the US army. While the US army operates with just two different types of howitzers, European soldiers use 27 different systems. At sea, the European naval forces work with 29 different types of destroyers and frigates, compared to four in the US army. A total of 178 different weapons systems are in use in Europe, compared to 30 in the US army (Delcker, 2017). The duplication of defence trading is evident and EU states are focused to preserve national defence productions of facilities. The PESCO initiative under would reduce production costs by pruning armament national programmes to get avoid from flooding European defence market without hi-tech technology assortments.

The EU leaders agreed to increase spending on defence research from €25 million now to €500 million beginning in 2021, which would make the EU, as integration, the fourth largest investor in Europe in defence industry research after the UK, France and Germany. The investment program needs approval by both the European Parliament and national capitals (Copper, 2017). If national governments did not pay for procurement and development programmes because defence budgets get short of money, defence companies will produce nothing. International cooperation is possible to joint Russian and Chinese defence producers to invest more money into defence research and infrastructure to produce hic tech technology products and wreck trade barriers for selling arms inside Eurasian defence market. Here, absolutely economic deficit would be minimised to turn up the dynamic curve to expand it.

Some minds in Moscow understand that the eventual collapse of the EU (of which it is so fashionable now to speculate among the Russian 'pundits') would be something like 'the greatest geopolitical disaster of the 21st century' and could prompt greater unpredictability in the entire region (Mizin, 2017). After the US intervention from NATO alliance on the EU – NATO states those Heartland relations had been soured. Moscow and Brussels might be willing to formulate and promote a new pattern of interaction without NATO policy and bypass the US pressure without transatlantic sanction to those EU – NATO states by lifting sanction against Russia while they agreed to reconnect historically, economically and politically traditional relations bilaterally again. Officially, Moscow is pleading for reviving cooperation between the EU and Russia, because loose and loose strategy could benefit only to US side. But who is here the loser und who had benefit from collusion with Russia? The situation is still somewhat complicated in 2018, since these European producers that had cooperated with Russian companies into defence sector before sanctions were put into effect, sought to bypass economic sanctions as to hide the facts of traditional cooperation, now some

of them are openly violating it behind the back of economic regime. It was applied on the EU states: France, Italy, Austria and Hungary, Bulgaria, and Greece to further cooperate with Russian defence sector into automotive and aviation industry. The US side vowed with harder pressures with more sanctions against this military cooperation whose are continuing to grow but Russia and EU states are much more interested in cooperating together.

4 THE EUROPEAN UNION – RUSSIA DEFENCE COOPERATION

France and Germany reclaimed for more strategic autonomy of the EU into defence policy while German calls more for a European Defence Union (EDU) within European army, like finished integration process but France insisted more on stronger intergovernmental EU defence policy. France wants a symbolic integration process because it wants to preserve good transatlantic relationship whilst the US does not want a strong Europe. Poland follows NATO's policy while defending NATO territory in Eastern Europe and gets involved in possible military intervention in Ukraine against Russia. Poland's worries were about Ukraine and the military threat of Russia, and panicking among critical scenarios like annexation of Crimea, subsequent war fighting and military supply to Donbas Militia into the Eastern Ukraine. Worries have increased when Russia had deployed ballistic missiles to Kaliningrad military region and carried out joint Russia–Belarus military exercise in 2017, near the border with Poland and Lithuania. Italy was refocused toward the Euro – Mediterranean region to fight against migration gangsters from North Africa and Middle East those are smuggling refugees over the Mediterranean Sea into Europe by using Italy like transit state in Europe (Keohane, 2018). If we compared this reports of some states, we would find out that the EU states have deep problems as we thought to identify itself into national defence policy. The crisis into national defence policy braked down reintegration process on two different tracks; the first track contributed to disconnect defence integration like to be more interrelated toward European defence union while second track was absolutely disconnected to deeply converse Russian defence policy toward Eurasian defence zone. This policy had failed since 2014, whilst the EU – Russian bilateral relationship was disrupted from economic sanctions against Russian under the US coercive policy in Europe. Economic sanctions did not interrupt commercialization of goods into defence sector from the EU defence companies to bargain with Russian defence firms, only costs had been arisen. Foreign Minister Gabriel condemned national selfishness and declared: “The motto ‘our country first’ only leads to more national confrontations and less prosperity” (Kirchick, 2017). Germany strongly opposed to Trump withdrawal from Western-influenced multilateralism that forget the US sentiment to neglect common values under NATO alliance. Juncker asserted without hesitation in publicity that the EU could not continue to rely on the USA for its defence and cannot turn to US for its future protection (Scott, 2017).

Several countries have expressed doubts on the usefulness of sanctions, including Hungary, Italy, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, and Slovakia; one EU official described the EU consensus on

this issue as “not going without difficulty.” (Pezard et al., 2017: 59). At most the EU member states asserted a big doubt among effectiveness of economic sanctions and it is only a matter of time when those sanctions will be lifted in one voice of EU council. European states with BRICS economic block may resist against the US dollar diplomacy and keep going to move away from their traditional servility to Washington as been able to stop US blackmailing other states by violating interstate sovereignty. Europe’s capitals were confronted with Washington among imposing customs on steel and car industry from Europe, and economic struggle would deteriorate situation in the transatlantic relations. Geopolitical brake down from the EU towards the USA was no longer so remote to postpone misunderstandings. Here is opening new path, Moscow and Beijing are planning to incorporate Europe into their mega Eurasian project as the fourth major component after Asia, the Eurasian Union and the Middle East/Persian Gulf. If Moscow – Beijing economic tandem could re-join EU into geo economic block to rebuild Eurasian defence sector than US will be excluded from the game.

5 THE EUROPEAN UNION – PR CHINA DEFENCE COOPERATION

The PR China had opened wide door to European military technology to invade into PR China’s defence sector since the economic embargo was lifted to transfer advanced military technology. Financial dynamic invested into PR China’s defence sector had completely changed situation over the past five years into military modernization process of the PR China’s army. Chinese President Xi Jinping has put an end to the practice of making any progress on international security cooperation with Europe conditional on the lifting of the embargo. This is the result of the PR China’s arms industry’s progress (Duchatel, 2018). The PR China had access to critical technologies that had speed up modernization process for ten years, and beside it had created main conditions for advanced innovation and leadership for the next generations of arms toward C4I updated technology. The PR China had paid off for some advanced hi-tech licensed equipment – those are being incorporated into Chinese military helicopters, ships and submarines, and were needed to speed up modernization process of China army but it seems that the EU thoughts ongoing into direction to prevent all transfers of dual-use technology to the PR China as to protect Europe’s critical technology. China’s economic intensions became doubtful about financial influence to invest more money by spending into common hi tech military projects together with Europe champions into defence sector as the PR China tries to increase pressure by lifting economic barriers to arms transfers and export controls. The main barrier to deepening of the EU-PR China defence cooperation is the will of NATO allies and especially of the US to preserve sensitive hi-tech military technology, whilst the PR China is still accused for industrial espionage and stealing military patents. Arms control measures among transferring hi – tech military technology to third states could not be secured by NATO protocol of regime export mil technology or under the PESCO projects carried out by the EDA control. The PR China may use hi-tech military

projects to benefit itself to modernize own army into all military branches by following up European modernization process under Horizon 2020 projects. The defence companies from the EU shall take decision, if cooperate or not cooperate into the joint EU-PR China defence cooperation. The PR China had pleased the EU member states to fully participate into the Eurasian megaproject and invest more money to rebuild the Silk Road strategy toward the western part of Heartland. This invitation was referred on the defence cooperation too if EU states did not decide for protectionism. It was likely seen that the EU had been stuck between US and PR China's economic influence from foreign geoeconomic investments. The PR China, meanwhile, "is leveraging military modernization, influence operations, and predatory economics to coerce neighbouring countries to re-order the Indo-Pacific region to their advantage," the Strategy declares. And the Chinese military modernization program, it adds, is designed to achieve "regional hegemony in the near-term and displacement of the USA to achieve global pre-eminence in the future" (Morgan, 2018).

"The EU and China signed a 'strategic partnership' in 2003, and adopted 2020 strategic agenda for cooperation in 2013. These agreements resulted from a mutual commitment to cooperation and signal an interest to further advance ties" (Dorussen, 2017: 2). Prominent role from EU states those had invested more money into defence sector into foreign business had cemented economic benefit in the PR China defence sector for some EU defence firms, to expand the global market for selling military goods out of the EU market, that became more relevant on global market inside the EU-PR China defence relation. Solidarity and unity were cracked down into one voice while decision making process inside European NATO pillar had been divided into two political blocks. Atlantic hub encountered against European hub for more centrists reproach toward federalization process to form the EU super state. Political dwindling, dividing and disunity (3D) had brought NATO alliance to crack solidarity and unity apart between Europe and the USA, only media black coverage had been disseminating lies into publicity that was everything fine within the EU-US bilateral cooperation under the NATO alliance but this was false flags signal to sweep rubbish under the political carpet. Those political, economic and defence cooperation for 3D reasons had worsened fragility under the NATO alliance. Otherwise, an alternative was opened as China signalled to EU states as to re-join Silk Road strategy on continent. China is willing to invest more money into EU critical infrastructure to reconnect roads and rails guided from Peking to Europe by transiting Russian territory.

Why is the EU important for PR China's geoeconomic interests? Truly answer singles out: the PR China wants Europe to counterbalance American power while Europe is a softer partner than the US. The EU is weak, politically divided and militarily non-influential (Hanso, 2017: 125). China plays on the weakest point into the EU fragility while it knows well how to approach with multilateral diplomatic step as Beijing treats the relationship like a game of chess with 27 opponents crowding the other side of the chess board.

6 CONCLUSION

The new relationship between Russia and China is clearly a matter of that will last. If the EU fails to build up an entente inside international relationship to oust US deadly containment strategy against Russia-PR China alliance, than we may predict that Russia and the PR China could potentially form a new defence alliance, the equivalent of a Eurasian NATO that would be a threat to both the EU-US as productive counter balance against the US renewed containment policy in Europe.

The next potential regional superpower which was based on Mackinder's map was China that presented an important constituent part of the world power above the EU, India, and Russia. China's influence had been raised rapidly towards other parts of Heartland with rising economic trend while it had invested more money to interconnect entire Heartland continent via East – West axis. It needs to rebuild the largest economy inside the Asia – Europe vital economic zone to eventually surpass the USA and introduce the petro yuan world currency to emplace the global superpower status. If the EU security concept becomes inappropriate for Russian and Chinese ambitions than both may integrate their plans for a new Silk Road and the Eurasian Union not only grows up economically but gets to activate politically and military, to encounter toward NATO alliance in Europe. If the Eurasian Union is going to be expanded forward to make stronger Russia-China geopolitical axis in Central Asia and Caucasus, then it would be more difficult to restore EU-Russia bilateral ties, by implementing the EU Global strategy.

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