

China Observatory – discussion proposal

RECOMMENDATION

Endorsement is sought from the Eurodefense Presidents Council meeting in Vienna in November 2020 for the formation of an Observatory to report annually to about intentions, capabilities and events in China which are relevant to future of European security. If approved, ED chapters are invited to propose a member of the Council of Experts providing guidance, and suggest links to members of their own chapters who have written/are studying the topic.

INTRODUCTION

China is a topic mentioned from time to time by Eurodefense Presidents, but no Working Group has been established on the subject.

This proposal is for an Observatory about the intentions, capabilities and relevant events of what has been called both “a global power for the 21st century” and a “shadow power”

In 2017 at the 19th Party Congress President Xi had set out his aim for China to become “a global leader in terms of composite national strength and international influence.” The Chinese Communist Party’s consistent ambition over the course of its rule continues to be to “rejuvenate the Chinese nation.” China is “moving closer to the centre of the world stage.” He stated that socialism with Chinese characteristics is “blazing a new trail” for other developing countries

In 2020 China has tightened control over Hong Kong (formal control having been handed by the U K to the People’s Republic under the “one China two systems” rubric in 1997.) It is making increasingly strident statements about Taiwan since President Xi Jinping’s 2019 speech urging its people to accept it “must and will be” reunited with China, and continuing pressure on other countries to de-recognise the island.

China claims ‘indisputable sovereignty’ over the South China Sea, based on the “nine-dash line” (originally eleven-dash line which can be traced back to the official maps of 1947 made by the Nationalist Kuomintang.) It has been fortifying reefs and previously uninhabited islands under various pretexts, but the results look remarkably like military bases.

There are a number of claims made about the treatment of non-Han minorities such as those of Tibet, Inner Mongolia and Xinjiang. The Belt and Road initiative bears a number of interpretations from helping Third World development to the creation of dependant states and control of world trade “choke points”

In December 2017, the US National Security Strategy labelled China a revisionist power seeking to change the international order.

“There is a growing appreciation in Europe that the balance of challenges and opportunities presented by China has shifted. In the last decade, China's economic power and political influence have grown with unprecedented scale and speed, reflecting its ambitions to become a leading global power..... Its increasing presence in the world, including in Europe, should be accompanied by greater responsibilities for upholding the rules-based international order, as well as greater reciprocity, non-discrimination, and openness of its system. China’s publicly stated

reform ambitions should translate into policies or actions commensurate with its role and responsibility” – High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy communication to the European Parliament, the European Council and the Council March 2019

PROPOSAL AND MANDATE

It is therefore proposed by ED-XX and ED-UK that a China ICE Observatory be established by the Presidents’ Council. Its mandate would be to keep under review China’s external intentions and capabilities, and events reflecting upon them. It would report to the Presidents Council regularly; it would produce briefing papers on related topics, and seek to publish and permanently archive them. (See Tables A and B below)

Policy recommendations would not be published without the endorsement of the Presidents’ Council.

Strategic direction would be provided by a Council of Experts. XXXX is proposed as an “eminence gris” leading the Council, and ED chapters are invited to propose other experts if they wish. Anyone who has published or written on China affairs would be particularly welcome.

Tactical implementation would be led by a Rapporteur. Alexandru Georgescu , Secretary General of ED-RO, supported by Michael Zinkanell, Secretary General of ED-AU, is proposed for this role.

TABLE A – proposed papers

TABLE B – bibliography

- a. Acquired (to be found at www.academia.edu tagged “eurodefense-china”)

1. [Checkmate : China's containment of US containment strategy \(PRC1\)](#)

This 2017 paper describes how "the U.S. plays poker, while China plays chess". With an increased U.S. military presence to its east, China turns west. Beijing responded with the "Belt and Road" initiative.

By [Joseph Fallon](#) for www.defenceviewpoints.co.uk

2. ["Blowback" - interning Uyghers, destabilising China \(PRC2\)](#)

On August 10, 2018, Reuters reported "A United Nations human rights panel said on Friday that it had received many credible reports that 1 million ethnic Uighurs in China are held in what resembles a 'massive internment camp.'"

By [Joseph Fallon](#) for www.defenceviewpoints.co.uk

3. [Breaking the Island Chains - China's maritime route to becoming a world power \(PRC3\)](#)

The first island chain, the most important of the three, is 700 nautical miles off the coast of China and extends from the Kuriles to Japan to the Ryukyus to Okinawa to Taiwan to the Philippines to Malaysia and encloses the East China Sea.

By [Joseph Fallon](#) for www.defenceviewpoints.co.uk

4. [China's Global Ambitions: The Belt and Road Initiative \(PRC4\)](#)

The Belt and Road Initiative is an ambitious development strategy launched by China in 2013 and is the cornerstone of President Xi Jinping's foreign policy. The BRI aims to connect China to Europe, the Middle East, Africa and beyond.

By [Joseph Fallon](#) for www.defenceviewpoints.co.uk

5. [China - a new polar power \(ICE5 and PRC5\)](#)

In the last few years, China has become a polar power. Beijing's interest initially focused on Antarctica, but its presence in the Arctic has accelerated.

By (retired Vice Admiral) Patrick Hebrard (ED-FR and WisePens International).

6. [The geopolitical significance of rare earth elements \(PRC6\)](#)

Rare earth mining, processing and fabrication capabilities will even more strongly influence geopolitical dynamics in the coming years as the world undergoes its nascent energy transition and transportation evolution.

By [Robin Ashby](#) based with permission on article published by Stratfor

7. [Stay Calm About China \(PRC7\)](#)

Rivalry between the USA and China is not a battle to the death, and it is very important that the USA not see it as such.

By Professor Anatol Lieven (Foreign Policy magazine August 2020 and www.defenceviewpoints.co.uk)

b. Other relevant papers

8. (2017). Building the Belt and Road: Concept, Practice and China's Contribution. Office of the Leading Group for the Belt and Road Initiative, May 2017, Foreign Language Press, ISBN 978-7-119-10810-0, referenced as OLG (2017)

<https://www.tralac.org/images/docs/11613/building-the-belt-and-road-concept-practice-and-chinas-contribution-may-2017.pdf>

9. Rogers, J., Foxall, A., Henderson, M., Armstrong, S. (2020). Breaking the China Supply Chain: How the 'Five Eyes' can Decouple from Strategic Dependency, Henry Jackson Society, 14 May 2020, <https://henryjacksonsociety.org/publications/breaking-the-china-supply-chain-how-the-five-eyes-can-decouple-from-strategic-dependency/>

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11. Medin, M., Louie, G. (2019). The 5G Ecosystem: Risks & Opportunities for DoD. Report Defense Industrial Board, US Department of Defense, 3 April 2019,

https://media.defense.gov/2019/Apr/03/2002109302/-1/-1/0/DIB_5G_STUDY_04.03.19.PDF

12. Mureşan, L., Georgescu, A. (2019) A Critical Infrastructure Perspective on the Belt and Road Initiative and its Opportunities and Challenges. in Yang, J., Obradovic, Z. (eds.) (2019) The Belt and Road and Central and Eastern Europe. p. 205-228, Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, ISBN 978-7-5446-5465-4

13. Small, A. (2020) The meaning of systemic rivalry: Europe and China beyond the pandemic. ECFR Policy Brief, 13 May 2020,

https://www.ecfr.eu/publications/summary/the_meaning_of_systemic_rivalry_europe_and_china_beyond_the_pandemic

14. Kratz, A., Pavličević, D., Stanzel, A. (2016). China's investment in influence: the future of 16+1 cooperation. ECFR China Analysis, 14 December 2016,
https://ecfr.eu/publication/chinas_investment_in_influence_the_future_of_16_1_cooperation7204/