

The European Union between the US and China: Towards a tripolar world system or a Sino-centric world-system?

Organizer

Fabio Massimo Parenti, International Institute Lorenzo de' Medici (Italy)

Description

The Panel aims to discuss the EU's role in the ongoing transformation of the international World-System, focusing on the European policies and strategies within the North-Atlantic Space, specifically with the U.S., and towards China. Different forms of cooperative and competitive relations should be taken into consideration in order to both clarify the current role of the EU in the definition of a new World-System and foresee possible and auspiciously developments within the 'coopetition' between the 'West' and the 'East'. Combining Geographical and International Relations perspectives, the Panel will try to debate the above issue starting from the following questions:

- Is a tripolar world-system the most likely configuration of the next geography of power at the global scale?
- Should the EU accelerate its strategic alliance with the PRC, downsizing at the same time that with the US?
- Should the US and the EU redefine their foreign policies to adapt to a Sino-centric World System?

Chair and discussant: Marco Antonsich, Loughborough University (UK)

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Panelists:

Maurizio Saini, University of Trieste, Italy - The Geopolitics of China and International Relations

Abstract: China today is rediscovering its historical geographic limits. A part of Chinese economic growth over the last decade has in fact been determined by strong exports.

Nevertheless, while the coastal regions appear ever more integrated within the global capitalist

system, the inland regions still present a relatively low propensity to consume. The recent tendencies of the Chinese government to compensate exports with an increase in domestic consumption, to reduce progressively the economic dependence of China on the international economy, envisions the transfer of important resources and investments from one part of the country to another. This delicate transition phase involves variables that risk being not completely controllable by the Communist Party, and include the efficiency of the bureaucratic apparatus, the potential dissent of the emerging urban bourgeois classes and the role of the military.

Ann Lee, New York University, USA - Clash of the Titans: The Fight to Maintain Supremacy by the U.S. Against the Rest

Abstract: The U.S. is preparing to wage war against China to stop its economic and political ascent in power. The incessant anti-China bashing in the U.S. in particular is being propagated by the same “war party” who was behind the invasion of Iraq. They know that the U.S. cannot compete on anything on the global stage other than warfare and welfare, and thus is using China as an excuse to justify its runaway military spending. They will do whatever they can to preserve a Western-centric world despite the growing unhappiness of the developing world represented by the BRICS who would like an alternative to the current world order.

Fabio Massimo Parenti, International Institute “Lorenzo de’ Medici”, Italy - Why the European Union Should Abandon the US-Nato Block in Favor of a Stronger and Broader Cooperation with China

Abstract: China and the US are working hard to reach their respective energy security/power objectives. However, the means and methods used are partially different. The first country is expanding its international role mainly through diplomatic, political, cultural and economic channels, whilst the second is still increasing its military presence and intervention around the world. As a matter of facts, I argue that China’s peaceful expansion in the Middle East, Africa and Asia is gaining greater consensus – becoming a more reliable macro-regional actor – compared to the U.S. Consequently, it is reasonable to foresee that European Union will gradually strengthen its strategic and geopolitical relations with China, reducing at the same time its attachment to a US-driven NATO.

Igor Jelen et al., University of Trieste, Italy - Borders in Central Asia in post-soviet and post-modern times. The recovery of territorial negotiation as “usual” instrument of political geography – risks and perspectives

Abstract: In late modern times, the argument of the territorial borders assumed progressively an extremely sensitive relevance for states and populations, who suffered for centuries of conflicts, revolutions and invasions having the same target – the expansion and the conquest of new territory. Because of that, the geographical-political praxis elaborated a negative perception or even a true idiosyncrasy (the “geopolitical taboo”) towards any geographical change, namely

towards any initiative intending the territory as a negotiation matter. The post-modern geography - and then the globalization passage - seems to design a diverse scenario, inaugurating a new dynamic, originally in economic, technological and cultural spheres of the human existence, them impacting as well the political reality. This means the development of factors which induce a comprehensive dynamic, that the structural-fixed borders-apparatuses seem to be no more capable to face. This new situation is evident especially in some scenarios outside the European space, where such new attitude seems to spreading out rapidly, following accelerated diversification processes. It is the case of the Eurasian "heartland", among Central-Asian post-soviet states, between Russia and China, among whom it is arising a new scenario of international relation, characterized by an easier approach to the territorial borders question. Such approach means – among the others – the frequent assumption in the international practice of initiative in asking borders changes and adaptations, starting possibly domino effects. It means as well the attitude of involving and mobilizing social actors, administrative and economic institutions, eventually spreading out and also manipulating neo-nationalistic ideologies.

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