

A New Era of Imperialism

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BERLIN The leading German foreign policy magazine is predicting “a new era of imperialism”. The “struggle for energy, raw materials and water” is going to dominate global policy in the 21 century, declared a former prominent foreign policy maker of the ruling Christian Democratic Party (CDU) in the magazine “Internationale Politik”. “19th Century nationalism, colonialism and imperialism are returning”, he writes in his article. Twenty years after the collapse of socialism in Eastern Europe, the author is proclaiming the end of a “transition period” in world history and the beginning of a new epoch that will not exclude future “energy wars”.

The author, who has a profound knowledge of the transatlantic establishment, considers the USA and the People’s Republic of China to be the main rivals. The EU must therefore make great efforts, if it does not want to be pushed to the sidelines of global policy. This article is published at a time, when Berlin is using the Greek crisis to demand extensive intervention possibilities into the primary sovereign rights of EU member states. The demand for a more aggressive EU foreign policy is accompanied by dictates on member states to reinforce the EU.

Influential

The whole world is faced with “a new era of energy imperialism” [1] one reads in the current edition of the magazine “Internationale Politik”. The magazine is published by the German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP) and is considered to be the leading German foreign policy journal. The author of this noteworthy article, Friedbert Pflüger, is a prominent CDU politician, who has been in leading positions of the incumbent governing CDU: From 2002 to 2005 he served as foreign policy speaker of the CDU/CSU parties in the German Bundestag and 2005/2006 he was parliamentary state secretary in the German defense ministry. He is regarded as an authority on US foreign policy and a proponent of close transatlantic cooperation.

Struggle for Limited Resources

Pflüger’s analysis is based on research on the global energy demand. According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), the global energy consumption will grow drastically in the near future – 40% by 2030, Pflüger writes. Renewable energy sources could not meet these demands, even under steady growth. Fossil energy sources will have to satisfy about 80 percent of these rising demands. The “predominant conflict in global politics of the 21st Century” will therefore be “the struggle for energy, raw materials and water.” This engenders a return of “19th Century nationalism, colonialism and imperialism,” says Pflüger and predicts that “after the period of a ‘battle of ideologies’” ending in 1990, followed by “two decades of transition in search of a new world order”, now a new imperialist era will

begin. The “basic conflict” is “one for the limited resources of our planet, fought out with all means at hand.” “Inevitably” we are heading toward “energy crises and conflicts” possibly even “energy wars”.

USA vs. China

According to Pflüger, the main adversaries in these coming conflicts will be the United States of America and the People’s Republic of China. The Chinese requirements on energy and raw materials are growing enormously, making the rivalries for the limited resources with the United States – and even the EU – already clearly discernable. This is the case in Central Asia, where Beijing has been able to achieve a strong position,[2] but also for the African continent. China’s “massive engagements in Africa” are among “the most significant recent geopolitical transformations.” Even China’s activities in the Persian Gulf area and Latin America produced a fundamental shift in power relations. According to Pflüger “China is enhancing its position of power at extremely high speed” and he expects that “if this development continues at the current pace, sooner or later it could lead to serious conflicts.”

Military Expenditures

The fact that the transatlantic establishment is also considering military confrontations can be seen with Pflüger’s attentiveness for China’s military budget. Beijing’s military expenditures “have tripled” over the past decade “reaching \$63 billion”, whereby more up-to-date has replaced older war material and China has made efforts “to modernize its armed forces using information technology and electromagnetic warfare,” Pflüger warns. In addition, China has its soldiers engaged in UN missions in six African countries. But even Pflüger has to admit that at the “current status of weaponry sophistication” it would be an exaggeration to warn “of a new military super-power, China”. Alongside the fact that the EU member states spend more than three times as much as China for their military, the USA places three times more money at the disposal of its military than even the Europeans. The most disastrous wars currently being waged, in Afghanistan and Iraq, are being fought by western nations, who have their troops stationed on all of the continents.

Impose Interests

Pflüger concludes his article with recommendations for actions the EU can take. Among them “Europe” should clarify its long-term needs for energy supply and other raw materials, as soon as possible. A common energy foreign policy should be developed, which would permit a consolidated global approach by both political policy makers and enterprises. These plans for resources are to be coordinated with NATO. “It does not suffice to establish gender projects in Latin America or Africa (...) or to finance seminars on autonomous municipal administration,” Pflüger warns. “The EU must rather learn to define and impose its interests on the stages of the world’s theaters.” The CDU politician calls for Russia to be incorporated into the European energy planning – an indication that Moscow should be brought over to the side of the West and prevented from entering an alliance with Beijing.[3]

Military Policy Motor

Pflüger’s “Internationale Politik” article was published at a time when, Berlin is using the Greek crisis to demand extensive intervention possibilities into the primary sovereign rights

of EU member states. Last Tuesday, the German foreign minister reiterated that he will no longer tolerate that “ideas be banned” and raised, among others, the issue of a suspension, if necessary, of EU national parliaments’ budgetary sovereignty.[4] Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle insists, at the same time, that the EU must achieve “internal unity” – also in questions of a common military policy. This should be “a motor for Europe’s further consolidation.” “In the future, we will be faced with challenges that we cannot even fathom today,” explained the German foreign minister. The sorts of “challenges”, accompanying budgetary and possibly other future dictates within the EU, can be discerned in Friedbert Pflüger’s article: global struggles for power over the limited resources, above all against the major rival, China.

[1] All quotations: Friedbert Pflüger: Eine neue Ära des Energieimperialismus, Internationale Politik Mai/Juni 2010

[2] see also [The Principle of Interference](#)

[3] see also [A Question of Orientation](#)

[4] “Deutschland in Europa – eine Standortbestimmung”. Rede von Bundesaußenminister Guido Westerwelle an der Universität Bonn am 27. April 2010. See also [Keine Denkverbote!](#), [Europas Motor](#) and [The Lisbon Decade](#)

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