

Belt and Road Initiative in Full Swing in Europe

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The multipolar transformation that is occurring across the Eurasian continent confirms the industrial and diplomatic cooperation between China and the European continent in spite of strong opposition from the United States.

Xi Jinping's visit to Europe confirms what many of us have been writing about over the past few months and years, namely, the reality of an ongoing global transformation of a world dominated by the United States to a pluralistic one composed of different powers collectively shaping a multipolar world.

Europe therefore finds itself in fortuitous position, balanced as it is between its old world links to the United States on the one side and the fledgling Eurasian one being ushered in by Russia and China on the other.

Countries like Germany and France, but even the United Kingdom, have long implemented commercial policies that encourage integration between the countries of the Eurasian supercontinent. In 2015, the United Kingdom was among the first Western countries to join the Chinese Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), which finances projects of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

The Chinese BRI mega project kicked off in 2014 with the ambitious goal of integrating trade between China and Europe by sea and by land, in the process incorporating all the countries in between. The idea, as a natural consolidation of trade, is to shorten the delivery times of goods by rail and integrate sea routes. The project covers not only ports and rail lines but also the construction of technological infrastructure to achieve global interconnectivity using the 5G technology developed by the Chinese tech giant Huawei.

Germany and France have over the years deepened their partnerships with Beijing. Paris in particular boasts historical ties with China stemming from the nuclear cooperation between China General Nuclear Power Group (CGNPC) and Électricité de France (EDF) stretching back to 1978, as well as the aerospace one between Airbus and the Chinese aviation companies that has been ongoing since 1985.



Source: SCF

Italy has in recent months approached the BRI as a result of the new government consisting of the Lega Nord and Five Star Movement (M5S). The decision to sign a memorandum of understanding between Beijing and Rome underlines how the new government wants to maintain a balanced position between Washington and Beijing in certain sectors. This is exactly the approach of Germany, which has elected to continue deepening its ties with

Moscow vis-a-vis hydrocarbons and Nord Stream 2 in the face of pressure from Washington. Moreover, both Germany and Italy have confirmed that they want to rely on Huawei for the implementation and management of 5G traffic, which is fundamental to a world dominated by the internet of things.

The decisions of Germany, France and Italy to continue their cooperation with Moscow and Beijing in various fields flies in the face of the narrative advanced by the American-controlled scaremongering media controlled that attempts to discourage European politicians from acting in the interests of their countries and engaging with Russia and China.

What Washington continues to misunderstand is why certain European countries are so determined to embrace the opportunities offered by the East. Italy's recent example is quite easy to understand. The Italians hope that the BRI will provide much needed stimulus to their production industry, which has been in the doldrums in recent years. The desire for Chinese capital to give a boost to the export of Italian-produced goods is the driving force behind the proposed agreement between Beijing and Rome.

In addition to the obvious and natural desire for capital, there is also the idea of ensuring energy supply, as Germany is doing with the construction of the Nord Stream 2 with Russia. Despite strong US opposition, Berlin has favored its own national interest in energy diversification, avoiding giving in to pressure from Washington, which wanted Germany to rely on LNG supplied all the way from the US at an exorbitant price when compared to Russian-supplied gas.

There are striking divergences between Europe's politicians, especially if we look at the relations between Macron and Salvini in Italy, or those between May and her European colleagues. Even between Merkel and Macron there seem to be notable frictions surrounding energy independence. However, in spite of these apparent divergences, the prevailing theme in the final analysis is that of wishing to escape Washington's suffocating dominance in favor of a greater participation in the concept of a multipolar world.

No European capital – whether it be Paris, Rome, Berlin or London – intends to break the Atlantic pact with Washington. This is confirmed at every possible formal occasion. However, as Beijing becomes more and more central to questions concerning technology or the supply of liquid capital for investments or business expansion, the changes to the global order seem unstoppable.

The last obstacle remains those countries still closely linked to pro-Atlantic policies, those who find in Beijing, and above all Moscow, an excellent excuse to invite Washington's greater intrusion into the sovereign affairs of Europe. The Baltic countries and Poland seem to offer the best inroads for US policy makers to try to influence the debate on the old continent regarding ties with the East. The artificial crises created in Ukraine, Syria and Venezuela also serve as tools to divide European leaders into opposing camps, creating the conditions to scupper European cooperation with the East.

It is no coincidence that for US strategists the two greatest dangers lie in the possibility of Moscow and Beijing, or Moscow and Berlin, cooperating and coordinating their efforts. The Berlin-Moscow-Beijing triangle, with the addition of Rome and Paris, represents a scenario for Washington that is unprecedented in terms of its challenge to US hegemony in Europe.

Wang Yiwei, Senior Research Fellow at the Center for China and Globalization, during Xi Jinping's historic visit to Rome expressed in concrete terms the changing global order

“With the 16+1 cooperation plan between Central and Eastern European nations and China, several countries signed memoranda of understanding with China to jointly build the BIS. So far, the governments of 16 Central and Eastern European countries have signed memoranda of understanding on BIS cooperation with China. Currently, 171 cooperation agreements have been reached with 123 countries and 29 international organizations under the BIS “.

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