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Essay

The Pax Occidentalis and China's contesting: Who is world superpower?

Published in September 2018

About

Title: *The Pax Occidentalis and China's contesting: Who is world super-power?*

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Format: Essay

Published in field of studies: *Business, International Relations & the Political Economy*
Online Course, *London School of Economics and Political Science*.

Internet publication: available at www.soerenhars.de (2018), PDF.

The essay was published by the author himself on the internet, Kiel/Berlin, 2018

Layout: Soeren Hars

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Note of publication: This essay is based on a written assignment, produced during the studies at the LSE as mentioned above. The available version has been edited and specified to meet the feed-back from LSE tutors prior to publication on the internet. The original was submitted in September 2018, London (London School of Economics, Online), while the version on hand was published at www.soerenhars.de in November 2018.

The *Pax Occidentalis* and China's contesting: Who is world super-power?

After the end of the Soviet Union global power shifts took place. This essay articulates the thesis, that the *American Century* (LSE M4 U3, Notes), though dramatically changing, is far away from being over, once it is viewed in context of the western (military) alliance. Even though the American hegemony can not be considered as being unipolar anymore, since in the context of partnership with its allies the US is framed in a multipolar arrangement, compelled to make agreements with the allies. Overall, I would suggest to say that the cold-war *Pax Americana* shifted towards a *Pax Occidentalis* (Udo 2014) during the post-cold war period.

Following Kennedy (1987) "military conflict and economic change should be examined in the same context when studying the ascent and decline the biggest powers in history" (LSE M4 U2 Notes, p. 4): After the end of the Soviet Union, the European Union (EU) was founded in 1993, creating a continental power bloc (economically as market and political as federated political entity) within the before divided Europe (LSE M1 U2 Notes, p. 9), integrating until 2015 several countries of eastern Europe. In 2015 the EU-28 was with more than 18 trillion Dollars of adjusted GDP the world's biggest economic power, while military expenditures of EU member states decreased from 18 % (1990) to around 10% (2015) of global military spending in 2015 (Sueddeutsche 2017/ Capital 2018). The EU's share in % of World GDP (WGDP) declined in percentage from 33,3 % in 1990 to 26,3% in 2015, due to a rise of total economic activity worldwide and growing emerging markets. This shows EU's relative power in a paradox of a growing economy on one hand, while taking a declining part in percentage of WGDP share and a shrinking percentage of the world's military spending on the other hand during the post cold-war period.

The US, by far, stayed until today the world's biggest military power, having for instance in 2015 around 36% of global military spending (around 600 Billion Dollars) while the share of WGDP decreased from 26,6 % down to 25,4%. The war on Iraq caused high military expenditures for the US, missing in domestic investments and decreased its political credibility being criticized by allies (e.g France and Germany) for waging an unjustified war (LSE & GetSmarter 2018 M4 U3, P. 5).

The relative power of China grew during 1990-2015: China performed impressive growth in GDP during 1990-2015 (WGDP from 2,1% to 10,%) and China's military spending increased from 5% to around 13 % of worldwide military spending, becoming world's second biggest military power. By joining the WTO in 2001 and adopting policies of trade liberalization China's economy made another growth episode, becoming the biggest economic power in Asia and the third biggest economy by GDP in the world (LSE & GetSmarter 2018 M1 U2, p. 45).

When in 2008 the global financial crisis hit, Europe was split into those countries unaffected and those suffering from severe economic conditions. The US was hit severely, struggling also because of high and rising military expenditures of engagement in Afghanistan and Iraq as mentioned above. From 2011 the US economy recovered. Until 2015 the US stayed world's second powerful economy by total GDP. But China recovered faster, taking off with faster growing rates of GDP, now viewed as a serious competition to the US economy.

After 1990 continental power blocs (North-America, Europe, Asia, Russia) reconfigured global power relations, while the western blocs (North-America, Europe and others) are closely linked by today's world super-power, the NATO military alliance,.

Conclusion: The world power system reconfigured from two power blocs (US vs. Soviet) to continental power blocs during 1990-2015 (North America, Europe, East Asia, Russia). In many ways western interests cohere, underlined by the existence of the NATO. The NATO members and their associates together still hold the biggest economic power of WGDP, GDP per capita and the biggest key markets in terms of spending capacity, far ahead of China, even though, obviously, markets of NATO-members can still not be considered as an entity like, for instance, the markets of the EU. But still, the hegemonic western hard power (Nye 2004) of the NATO-members is politically mapped in global governance: Until today 3 of 5 permanent seats in the UN-Security Council belong to NATO-westerners. Their soft power is remarkable, worldwide unique and far ahead of China, as ideals of liberalism, human rights, free-trade and democracy are globally still associated with the west. Therefore western relative power in terms of influencing, e.g. on governments in Brazil and India, is still significant greater than China's. Within that western partnership of what I suggest to call '*Pax Occidentalis*', the US has aligned and saved its prior unipolar power and world leadership role by modifying it into a multipolar setting of collaboration and mutual agreements.

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