

Politeja

No. 4(73), 2021, pp. 53-65

<https://doi.org/10.12797/Politeja.18.2021.73.03>

Licensing information: CC BY-NC-ND 4.0

**Martin MILANOV**

Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”

m.milanov@phls.uni-sofia.bg

## CHINA – EU’S “SIGNIFICANT OTHER”?

### NOT A CHESS GAME STRATEGY

**ABSTRACT**

Following the idea of the “other” in the work of Ernesto Laclau and the perspective of post-foundational discourse analysis, the study focusses on Chinese strategic internal and external pre- and post-Covid-19 political specifics and policies and how they interact (or contradict) with the “European” vision of the world and most importantly itself. As Laclau says, “the notion of “constitutive outside” emphasizes the always present possibility that differential relationship between an entity and its “constitutive outside” turns into antagonism.” For more than three decades, the EC/EU has been steadily building up its foreign relations architecture and has proven its desire to project its ideals and values worldwide. However, during the same period, after “the century of humiliation,” China has also reached a point in its history where it wants to see the world according to its national interests and views. This work attempts to analyze some key features inherent to both the EU and China, such as strategies, relation with other countries, typical governmental architecture, and some aspects of identity, which could help in better understanding the possible contradictions and areas of cooperation in their way of conceptualizing themselves as key players on the world stage. This will reflect the need for greater European civic awareness in the upcoming decades, as suggested by the author.

**Keywords:** European Union, China, strategy, identity, governance

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In chess, both players have the same pieces with the same functionality. Likewise Chinese game weiqi players have the same pieces with the same functionality. In both it is the strategy that makes the difference. In chess, each piece moves by its own rules and is used in a certain way, while in weiqi all the pieces are equal. It is a matter of strategy if a piece takes an attacking or defending position – and that can be understood long after a “pearl” has become part of a more significant network. As Dr Kissinger explains, *weiqi translates as ‘a game of surrounding pieces; it implies a concept of strategic encirclement [...]’. Multiple contests take place simultaneously in different regions of the board. The balance of forces shifts incrementally with each move as the players implement strategic plans and react to each other’s initiatives.*<sup>1</sup> At the same time, he compares the western strategic tradition to the game of chess as closer to the Clausewitzian concepts of “center of gravity” and the “decisive point” – *the game usually beginning as a struggle for the center of the board. Weiqi teaches the art of strategic encirclement. Where the skillful chess player aims to eliminate his opponent’s pieces in a series of head-on clashes, a talented weiqi player moves into ‘empty’ spaces on the board, gradually mitigating the strategic potential of his opponent’s pieces.*<sup>2</sup>

The article aims to build on the idea of Ernesto Laclau that *radical politics should no longer be understood as a collective struggle against a dominant system, then, but as a series of disconnected but potentially linkable nodes of resistance or intertextuality*<sup>3</sup> and expand that idea to the current global position of the European Union. With that in mind, the article tries to cover these elements of the “other” that hypothetically could result in a possible *creation of an antagonistic relationship with the “antagonistic Other” and its chain of equivalence depends on their own equation with the demand of the nodal point.*<sup>4</sup> This is why the article tries to outline these elements of that “other,” which could be vital in possible future misunderstandings between the two entities and lead to the *creation of that antagonistic other*. The work mainly targets the “other’s” foreign relations and experience with other countries because, at this moment, it could be argued that China needs European trade, especially with the currently ongoing “trade war” with the United States and because of that, both sides are still very careful with each other. Another motivation for this article is the fact that *[i]t is expected that closer economic integration helps to reduce international conflicts. For instance, China’s relations with the West soured after the 1989 Tiananmen Square Incident, prompting a fall in international trade and investment and also political relationship can lead to intended and unintended*

<sup>1</sup> H. Kissinger, *On China*, New York 2013, p. 97.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 100-103.

<sup>3</sup> B. Bertram, “New Reflections on the ‘Revolutionary’ Politics of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe”, *Duke University Press*, vol. 22, no. 3 (1995), pp. 81-110.

<sup>4</sup> R. Hartz, “‘The People’ and Its Antagonistic Other: The Populist Right-Wing Movement Pegida in Germany”, in T. Marttila (ed.), *Discourse, Culture and Organization. Postdisciplinary Studies in Discourse*, Cham 2019.

consequences for manufacturers and trading companies, operations leaders have a responsibility to put their companies in a position to capitalize on new opportunities for business creation and growth while avert the damages caused by potential political risks<sup>5</sup> having in mind that, not only the current tensions between the US and China but also tensions caused by the current minority situation in Western China which resulted in diplomatic tensions between the EU and China.

Keeping in mind that *strategy is the most important tool of victory that man has ever invented*,<sup>6</sup> there is no single winning strategy that could be used as a panacea. However, in the case of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, after decades of following Deng Xiaoping's *Observe carefully; secure our position; cope with affairs calmly; hide our capacities and bide our time; be good at maintaining a low profile, and never claim leadership*<sup>7</sup> it is now obvious that the EU and the West should rethink their strategical understanding because [*t*]oday the nature of the emergent world order is itself in dispute, and regions beyond Europe will play a major role in defining its attributes when Europe turns inward just as the quest for a world order it significantly designed faces a fraught juncture whose outcome could engulf any region that fails to help shape it. Europe thus finds itself suspended between a past it seeks to overcome and a future it has not yet defined.<sup>8</sup>

## 2. EU AS A "GLOBAL ACTOR"

Thirteen years after Javier Solana's presented his European Security Strategy, in 2016, EU High Representative Federica Mogherini presented the Global Strategy of the European Union. Unlike the first, adopted year before the "Great Enlargement" (2004 & 2007) and a few years after the adoption of the Euro, internal and global transformations have impacted the preparation of the second. It is a strategy for survival in a broader sense: it not only provides guidelines for security management and the citizens of the Union but serves strongly to reaffirm the EU's will and to maintain its position on the world scene while experiencing a significant crisis of legitimacy. In contrast to *Europe has never been so prosperous, so secure, nor so free*,<sup>9</sup> today's global strategy more maturely reflects and analyzes the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century the EU faces.

Having in mind Deng's strategical thought, European global claims are somewhat contradiction to his strategical advice and stating directly those claims could be a clear signal to the "other" that has already transformed its external relations with the same intention of more global reach. This by itself creates tension as the "other" player would always respond to the players' movement on the board and take appropriate measures.

<sup>5</sup> G. Whitten et al., "Do Political Relations Affect International Trade? Evidence from China's Twelve Trading Partners", *Journal of Shipping and Trade*, vol. 5, no. 21 (2020).

<sup>6</sup> T. Tanev, *The Statehood*, Sofia 2013, p. 136.

<sup>7</sup> H. Kissinger, *On China*, p. 382.

<sup>8</sup> Idem, *World Order*, New York 2014, pp. 93-95.

<sup>9</sup> From the "Solana" strategy from 2003.

Not only the direct declaration but just being an ally with the current global leader makes the EU a target, as is explained by Sun Tzu: *What is of supreme importance in war is to attack enemy's strategy. The next best is to disrupt his alliances by diplomacy. The next best is to attack his army. Moreover, the worst policy is to attack cities.* So, in short, a new role means new challenges, new players and most importantly, ill-wishers and opponents.

At the same time, after a decade of crises, the EU is still experiencing difficulties related to the freedom of information and free speech, which is one of the cornerstones of European freedoms. As the historian Niall Ferguson reminds us: *In central Europe, new technology helped to unleash the huge religious and political disruption we know as the Reformation, the Enlightenment and much else that was antithetical to the Reformation's original intent. Without Gutenberg, Luther might well have become just another heretic whom the Church burned at stake. By the time Luther was officially condemned as a heretic in 1521, his writings were all over German-speaking Europe. Printing was crucial to the Reformation's success. Cities with at least one printing press in 1500 were significantly more likely to adopt Protestantism than cities without printing, but cities with multiple competing printers were most likely to turn Protestant. The printing press has justly been called 'a decisive point of no return in human history.'*<sup>10</sup>

This historical flashback is essential, considering the new role the EU wants to achieve when the technological revolution of our time has made it even easier for ideas (whether valid or harmful ones) to reach the population. Similarly, back in the time of the time of the printing press, in the case of the Enlightenment and the Revolution, information could be both a motivation for human progress and the beginning of one of the bloodiest conflicts in human history. Besides, due to the unlimited access to information today, citizens tend to be more easily disinformed or get misinformed by one another. This fragility will additionally be tested in the upcoming decades. On the one hand, the new European global role as a new political entity in construction will face failure at some point, which could result in a "new crisis" like with the migrant "crisis" in 2013 whereas there were around 1,300,000 Venezuelan refugees in Colombia, 260,000 in Ecuador and 800,000 in Peru<sup>11</sup> – countries significantly less developed than the EU and without any desire to be global powers. On the other hand, after another EU's crisis – Brexit – the EU lost the member state with one of the world's most sophisticated intelligence capabilities, which will result in lowering the EU's preparedness to face the current global cyber and information situation.

Another critical point in shaping the EU as a global player related to the uncontrolled and unrestricted flow of information will be that the Union has portrayed itself around the globe as the primary protector of human rights for many years now. With or without a complete *Common foreign and security policy* structure, the European external mistakes would be displayed both inside and outside the EU. This opens another

<sup>10</sup> N. Ferguson, *The Square and the Tower*, New York 2018, pp. 82-83.

<sup>11</sup> E.C. Labrador, "The Venezuelan Exodus", *Council on Foreign Relations*, 2019, at <https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/venezuelan-exodus>, 31 May 2021.

area which could be called *the weakest* following the idea of Sun Tzu: *Take advantage of the enemy's unpreparedness, make your way by unexpected routes, and attack him where he has taken no precautions*, while at the same time, Chinese Communist Party (CCP) itself is "encircling" that weak spot with the Social Credit System which strategically prevents political disturbances and foreign involvement inside the country, thus keeps its "queen" (the citizens) protected.

The EU has undoubtedly gone a long way in building itself from a modest Coal and Steel Community on the ruins of World War II up to today's largest donor of humanitarian aid in the world and *the main trading partner of 80 countries*.<sup>12</sup> However, in its new role the EU still has a long way to go, especially when having such a "Global Strategy" means that global problems and enemies become your own problems and enemies when [*t*]he *pure balance-of-power strategy of the traditional European great powers is precluded by contemporary geopolitical and strategic realities. However, nor will the nascent organization of 'rules and norms' by a Pan-European elite prove a sufficient vehicle for global strategy unless accompanied by some accounting for geopolitical realities*.<sup>13</sup>

### 3. "THE SIGNIFICANT OTHER?"

During the many years of constructing the EU, in a decade of crisis, another world power has also built up itself as one of the world's leading actors and wants to shape the "geopolitical realities" by its own world view. Western policymakers, academics and even citizens should have in mind the cultural and political specifics of what could become EU's "significant other" not only because a lot of these new "realities" would be shaped by that rising power, but because never before the biggest countries in the world, no matter if allies or enemies, had the same level of interconnectedness and interdependence between them.

One of the things that make that future "other" predictable is that it wants to be number one. The Party is committed to the *Liang Ge Yibai Nian* (Two Centenary Goals) in the constitution of 2012. The first goal to be reached by 2021, on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Party's founding, is to double the GDP and per capita income from the 2010 levels and make the country a *moderately prosperous society*. The second centennial goal set for 2049 on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the state's founding is to *increase GDP per capita to the level of moderately developed countries and modernize as a whole*.<sup>14</sup> All added as part of the 2018 Party's amendments to the constitution as an aspect of the "national rejuvenation."

<sup>12</sup> *EU Position in World Trade*, 2019, at <http://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/eu-position-in-world-trade/>, 4 April 2021.

<sup>13</sup> H. Kissinger, *World Order*, pp. 94-95.

<sup>14</sup> Huaxia, "What Are China's Two Centennial Goals and Why do They Matter?", *New China*, 17 October 2017, at [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-10/17/c\\_136686770.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-10/17/c_136686770.htm), 31 May 2021.

It is essential to say that there is a big difference between European and Chinese position in history. On the one hand, the EU is in the middle of a crisis decade, surrounded by military conflicts right after one of the most progressive periods in the continent's history. Simultaneously, politicians of "the other" skillfully use the uniting force of history by continuously recalling the "century of humiliation" – more than a hundred years ago, the events included Hong Kong, Tibet, Taiwan, and the semi-colonization by the western powers. On the one hand, this rhetoric entirely coincides with Mao's strive for "permanent revolution": *Now our enthusiasm has been aroused. Ours is an ardent nation, now swept by a burning tide. There is a good metaphor for this: our nation is like an atom. When this atom's nucleus is smashed, the thermal energy released will have tremendous power. We shall be able to do things which we could not do before,*<sup>15</sup> which also corresponds with the current rhetoric of the Chinese leaders. According to Thayer, Beijing's aggressive activities in the South China Sea reflect its desire not to be perceived as weak by the domestic as well as foreign public opinion.<sup>16</sup>

The review of the domestic political situation should also include China's development with its remarkable economic growth over the last five decades. The removal of 800,000,000 people from the poverty line and the fact that China's economy grew by more than 1000% between 1990 and 2018 suggest a very favorable environment for the Chinese Communist Party, given that today's generations in China have lived during the period of the longest and fastest development in human history.

At the same time, the vast Chinese history is skillfully used as source of possible propaganda references, both by erasing and highlighting (in)convenient historical facts in accordance with the current political agenda. Unlike the reform movements in the West, which have traditionally led to a weakening of institutional power, Chinese reforms have been designed to strengthen institutional power. For example, after the protests of 1989, the Party, which had lost much of the popular trust, changed several curricula and the projected image of historical figures to quicken the pace of "Reforms and Opening" led by Deng Xiaoping at the time. When the new president came to power in 2014, he launched a large-scale anti-corruption campaign, using a time when the growing middle class was significantly more closely monitoring political life to consolidate the Party's power and drive out its political opponents. It should also be mentioned that during the 19<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Party, *Part of his speech mentions arming the whole Party with the idea of socialism with Chinese characteristics for a new era* – placing the concept within the *thoughts* and *theories*,<sup>17</sup> something that, added to his indefinite term, brings him closer to leaders like Mao.

<sup>15</sup> "Speech at the Supreme State Conference: Excerpts, 28 January 1958," in S. Schram (ed.), *Mao Tse-tung Unrehearsed: Talks and Letters: 1956-71*, Harmondsworth 1975, pp. 92-93; in H. Kissinger, *On China*, pp. 95-96.

<sup>16</sup> "Is China Taking Advantage of COVID-19 to Pursue South China Sea Ambitions?," *DW*, 26 May 2020, at <https://www.dw.com/en/is-china-taking-advantage-of-covid-19-to-pursue-south-china-sea-ambitions/a-53573918>, 1 April 2021.

<sup>17</sup> "China: Communists Likely to Enshrine 'Xi Jinping Thought'," *DW*, 19 October 2017, at <https://www.dw.com/en/china-communists-likely-to-enshrine-xi-jinping-thought/a-41027158>, 31 May 2021.

Over the last five years, there has been a visible power recentralization through a massive anti-corruption campaign and new decision-making mechanisms in the form of *small leading groups*.<sup>18</sup>

The “other” has also embarked on hundreds of projects in Asia, Africa, South America, and even Europe (17+1, Western Balkans, and Italy) to develop its economic relations and political ties. On the one hand, the One Belt, One Road initiative has implemented hundreds of infrastructure projects worth more than \$ 500 billion, accompanied by free trade zones, but on the other hand, Party-linked state-owned enterprises have diverted much of their work to Africa. Although the initiative has aroused the skepticism of numerous scientists and media worldwide, in addition to infrastructure projects such as *telecommunications giants have built most of Africa’s telecommunications infrastructure*.<sup>19</sup> *Firms that have been able to enter African markets early through development assistance projects have gained the advantage of getting to know local markets and then using their knowledge of Africa to make subsequent investments. Second, in particular, a limited number of clothing manufacturers have set up processing plants in Africa to increase sales. For some of them, the idea has been to circumvent US and EU trade restrictions on trade in Chinese products by changing the country of origin of their goods and gaining access to these developed markets under their preferential trade agreements with Africa. Third, investments include demand for oil and gas and other export resources to China.*<sup>20</sup> Yet again, the weiqi stratagem of encirclement (of Europe) is combined with the technological and information strategy.

Moreover, the enormous projects in countries like Iran, Pakistan, Syria<sup>21</sup> and Africa<sup>22</sup> undermine western sanctions, and the inflow of investment capital helps the undemocratic leaders of these states keep their power. While undeniably Africa needs investments and development aid, some argue that these actions tend to bypass domestic channels of debate and accountability and so tend to undermine good governance.<sup>23</sup>

As regards strategic thinking, James Freedman Clarke said: *A politician thinks of the next election; statesmen of the next generations*. In times when many scholars identify

<sup>18</sup> L. Chunrong, „The New Logic of China’s Global Influence”, *Friends of Europe*, 12 January 2017, at <https://www.friendsofeurope.org/insights/the-new-logic-of-chinas-global-influence/>, 31 May 2021.

<sup>19</sup> China Investment, Africa Version, Ministry of Commerce of the People’s Republic of China (MOFCOM).

<sup>20</sup> J. Gu, *China’s Private Enterprises in Africa and the Implications for African Development. The Power of the Chinese Dragon*, London 2016, pp. 149-173.

<sup>21</sup> D. Hemenway, “Chinese Strategic Engagement with Assad’s Syria”, *Atlantic Council*, 21 December 2018, at <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/syriasource/chinese-strategic-engagement-with-assad-s-syria/>, 30 May 2021.

<sup>22</sup> D. Shambaugh, “China’s Quiet Diplomacy”, *China: An International Journal*, vol. 5, no. 1 (2007), pp. 26-54.

<sup>23</sup> G. Mohan, “China in Africa: Impacts and Prospects for Accountable Development”, in S. Hickey, K. Sen, B. Bukenya (eds.), *The Politics of Inclusive Development: Interrogating the Evidence*, Oxford 2014, p. 19.

cultural differences as a determining factor in economic relations,<sup>24</sup> Chinese investments and projects are accompanied by 541 Confucius Institutes<sup>25</sup> around the world and more than 1000 interactive classrooms through which Beijing aims to promote the language and culture. It is officially denied that the institutes are part of the overall global strategy, but in his statement at the 17<sup>th</sup> Congress in 2007, Hu stressed *the need to strengthen Chinese culture as a 'soft power' of the country*.<sup>26</sup> In addition to the institutes, the FOCAC forum announced the construction of more than 100 primary schools between 2007-2009.<sup>27</sup> The UNESCO report excludes funding and activities of non-governmental actors such as Chinese corporations and social organizations, and self-funded international students.

As shown above, the Party's influence, both in China and worldwide, has been growing at an unprecedented rate in recent decades. On the one hand, the internal (re-)centralization and totalitarian nature of government allow the Party to use tools and measures that can only be compared to Russian disinformation and fake news in the EU, but on the other hand, the strategic pursuit of the "quiet rise" of the Dun era allowed this to go relatively unnoticed by the West. During this time, the EU and China have become highly interconnected.

Thus, having at the same time a long-term strategy to unite the population, unprecedented economic growth, a leadership position for life, and the absence of elections that consume time one can devote to international affairs, this makes the leader look more and more like historical figure of the Yellow Emperor.<sup>28\*</sup> On the other hand, Xi's leadership skills will be tested in the coming years, both due to growing international skepticism and recent responses from the West.

The events mentioned above happened mainly during the 2010s alongside global initiatives like the Belt and Road and constructing multiple international banks (like AIIB) and organizations. The author suggests that if examined one by one, or level by level (multilateral, bilateral, geopolitical, social or historical), most of the projects around the globe seem fairly insignificant. However, they are highly important because of the "strategical encirclement" of whole economic spheres (pharmaceutical products, microchips, telecommunications, etc.) and geographic regions (the encirclement of India by the BRI<sup>29</sup>

<sup>24</sup> K. Leung et al., "Culture and International Business: Recent Advanced and Future Directions", *Journal of International Business Studies*, vol. 36 (2005), pp. 357-378.

<sup>25</sup> At [http://english.hanban.org/node\\_10971.htm](http://english.hanban.org/node_10971.htm), 31 June 2021.

<sup>26</sup> "Hu Jintao Calls for Enhancing 'Soft Power' of Chinese Culture", *Beijing Review*, November 2017, at [http://www.bjreview.com.cn/17thCPC/txt/2007-10/15/content\\_80539.htm](http://www.bjreview.com.cn/17thCPC/txt/2007-10/15/content_80539.htm), 31 June 2021.

<sup>27</sup> "The Role of China as an Education Aid Donor", *UNESCO Digital Library*, 2015, at <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000232475>, 31 May 2021.

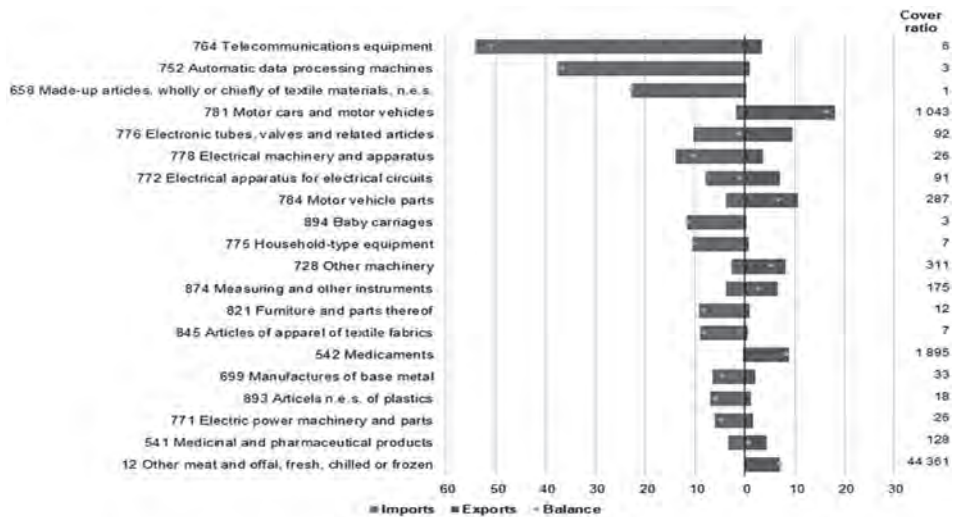
<sup>28</sup> In the tale of the Yellow Emperor, revered by many Chinese as the legendary founding ruler, China seems already to exist. When the Yellow Emperor appears in myth, Chinese civilization has fallen into chaos. "Ssuma Ch'ien's Historical Records—Introductory Chapter," transl. by H.J. Allen, *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* (1894), pp. 278-280 ("Chapter I: Original Records of the Five Gods").

<sup>29</sup> In the case of BRI, it could be argued that the Belt serves not only external, but also internal purposes



and CPEC) that happened relatively unnoticed by the public of other countries. For Europeans, it is important to understand the significance of strategic thinking in different policy areas. An excellent example is the need for the EU to find a new configuration of the trade with China, not because of the large trade deficit in some areas, but because sectors like motor vehicles, airplanes manufacturing, and medicines production would be considerably affected by the “made in China 2025” strategy while these products make most of the EU’s exports.

Most traded products between EU and China, 2020 in EUR billion<sup>30</sup>



Another perspective is that with all of the global initiatives, Chinese investors, diplomats and traders have indeed accumulated extensive experience regarding the trade, political, military and cultural affairs with countries from all over the Eurasian and African regions.

## CONCLUSION

The problem with the “game” illustration of the strategic outlook of both entities is that the primary purpose of chess is to annihilate your enemy’s pieces. In contrast, when the game of weiqi is finished, the board is almost filled with balancing pieces, meaning

as the economic corridor passes right through the Xinjian province, which results in its stronger economic position, but also a stronger power-grip in the western region.

<sup>30</sup> Eurostat. *China – EU – International Trade in Goods Statistics*, 2020, at [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=China-EU\\_-\\_international\\_trade\\_in\\_goods\\_statistics#EU-China\\_most\\_traded\\_goods](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=China-EU_-_international_trade_in_goods_statistics#EU-China_most_traded_goods), 31 May 2021.

that in certain positions and regions of the board the weaknesses of the enemy's pieces are used as an additional recourse in different strategic situations. Having in mind how interrelated and interdependent the main actors in the world are today when two of the leading powers are *destined for war*<sup>31</sup> in a *world of five (Bismarck counselled, it was always better to be in the party of three)*,<sup>32</sup> the EU should strive to take its role as "destined for balance" especially when taking actions on global events. When US-China relations are at their most critical point since the riots in 1989, the EU's role as a balancing actor is more important than ever.

On the one hand, the aim is to prevent a bipolar world again, but on the other, to be able to defend the principles of democracy and its own interests in the world. A balance between the old world order and a new, yet undefined one, while keeping balance between the old allies and the new "other" rising power with the desire to maintain that order according to its interests and views; between the need to shape and sustain the global world while still struggling to shape its own local one in a way that would allow the EU to play a vital role of the global relations; between the need of stronger integration of member states and the need of enlargement with the countries in the EU's immense neighborhood.

Keeping in mind the massive expansion of Chinese media and the idea of the "Other" inside the Union, Europeans should be more careful with the information as an instrument of the strategic aims. On the one hand, because European information and media space are easily accessible, and on the other, because it is more likely for the EU's external "Other" to use that media coverage from its own worldview to shape the processes and debates of European policy-making by affecting the inside "others" of the EU. As stated, like in the times of the printing press, the information can be a powerful drive for human progress, but in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there is a thin line between the free flow of news and the deception and disinformation used by the "other" to implement its external agendas and help fulfil its goals by influencing the EU public. This is very important when the Union is still figuring out its view of world problems. Especially when the new rising power's *efforts to manipulate foreign information environments have grown such that hundreds of millions of news consumers around the world routinely view, read, or listen to information created or influenced by the Party, often without knowing its origins*.<sup>33</sup> This means that the world view of the "other" will take a bigger and bigger part not only in the Union's citizens media attention but also in the EU's allies and enemies. It is clear that in the upcoming years, not only the Russian but now and the Chinese point of view will be an inseparable part of the West's information environment, not limited to global news but also on current European matters.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>31</sup> G. Allison, *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides' Trap?*, London 2018.

<sup>32</sup> H. Kissinger, *World Order*, p. 51.

<sup>33</sup> S. Cook, *China's Global Media Footprint Democratic Responses to Expanding Authoritarian Influence*, 2021, at <https://www.ned.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Chinas-Global-Media-Footprint-Democratic-Responses-to-Expanding-Authoritarian-Influence-Cook-Feb-2021.pdf>, 4 April 2021.

<sup>34</sup> A. Grace, "China's Influence Operations Are Pinpointing America's Weaknesses", *Foreign Policy*, 10 April 2018, at <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/10/04/chinas-influence-operations-are-pinpointing-americas-weaknesses/>, 1 June 2021.

In short, being a great power in an interdependent world means not only having a strong military, economy and demographic stability but also communicating not exclusively with your allies but with strategic rivals, too. As the author argues, the European scholars, policymakers, and citizens should never forget that *The Achilles' heel of the West has been that we do not understand China. In some profound way, we do not understand China. Furthermore, the reason for this is that the Western paradigm is that we are universal. We have to try to understand the difference that is China. China has never been like the West. It is not like the West and will never be like the West*<sup>35</sup> when debating our external and internal problems because of the global desires of the European leaders, which by itself presumes appropriate measures by the "other."

Although Ernesto Laclau discusses the antagonism and the relation with the "other" as a part of a community, the global positioning and the media characteristics nowadays create a reality in which the "external other" can influence the EU's internal "others" according to its wishes. As Martin Wight has observed, most international societies have tended to delineate the boundaries of their moral, political, and cultural community through a sense of "external differentiation" from the barbarian or savage.<sup>36</sup> Although as with other kinds of societies, "the 'other' can play an essential function in fostering the sense of cultural homogeneity and group identity which underpins order in international society".<sup>37</sup> In that sense, the author aims to stress the need for more comprehensive research about the European Union's internal and external sectors that consider the identity, history, cultural, strategic etc., distinctions and aims of the 'other' in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In the upcoming decades, the European leaders will face challenges dealing with external relations and threats and their abilities to communicate these global problems with the European citizens. On the other hand, if China succeeds in its strategic goals, the role and the power of the CCP would strengthen up to unprecedented levels. As Žižek explains, *it is not the external enemy who is preventing me from achieving identity with myself, but every identity is already in itself blocked, marked by an impossibility, and the external enemy is simply a small piece, the rest of reality upon which we 'project' or 'externalize' this intrinsic immanent impossibility*.<sup>38</sup> The main task for European leaders should be to strike a balance between connecting and influencing that "Other" but most importantly to protect their own citizens.

Jean Monet's *Europe will be forged in crisis* suggests that learning from these crises is the key to the Union's future. Nevertheless, at the same time, if the EU and European

<sup>35</sup> M. Jacques, at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uBjvkiYLSHM> – [00:02:42-00:04:05].

<sup>36</sup> M. Wight, *Systems of States*, Leicester 1977, p. 18. Wight points to this trend in the Greek world, the Chinese system of warring states, and in medieval and modern Europe. See also B. Porter, G. Wight (eds.), *International Theory: The Three Tradition*, Leicester 1992, esp. pp. 49-50. For a more detailed study of the history of European international society see G Gong, „The Standard of 'Civilization'”, in idem, *International Society*, Oxford 1984.

<sup>37</sup> J.M. Welsh, "The Role of the Inner Enemy in European Self-definition: Identity, Culture and International Relations Theory", *History of European Ideas*, vol. 19, nos 1-3 (1994), p. 55.

<sup>38</sup> S. Žižek, "Beyond Discourse – Analysis", in *New Reflections of Our Time*. Verso, London–New York, pp. 251-252.

citizens do not learn from the information mistakes from the last decade, there is a risk that the European “queen” (citizens) will get surrounded and every new crisis will turn into a new information chaos that our “constitutive other” could use as it pleases in times when *[i]t does not take much: love, hate, joy or sorrow are often enough to cause the Self to be replaced by the unconscious. Groups, societies and even entire nations can be affected in this way in the form of spiritual epidemics* (Carl Jung).

## BIBIOGRAPHY

- Allison G., *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides' Trap?*, London 2018.
- Bertram B., “New Reflections on the ‘Revolutionary’ Politics of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe”, *Duke University Press*, vol. 22, no. 3 (1995), pp. 81-110, <https://doi.org/10.2307/303724>.
- “China: Communists Likely to Enshrine ‘Xi Jinping Thought’”, *DW*, 19 October 2017, at <https://www.dw.com/en/china-communists-likely-to-enshrine-xi-jinping-thought/a-41027158>.
- China Investment, Africa Version, Ministry of Commerce of the People’s Republic of China (MOFCOM).
- Chunrong L., “The New Logic of China’s Global Influence”, *Friends of Europe*, 12 January 2017, at <https://www.friendsofeurope.org/insights/the-new-logic-of-chinas-global-influence/>.
- Cook S., *China’s Global Media Footprint Democratic Responses to Expanding Authoritarian Influence 2021*, at <https://www.ned.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Chinas-Global-Media-Footprint-Democratic-Responses-to-Expanding-Authoritarian-Influence-Cook-Feb-2021.pdf>.
- EU Position in World Trade*, 2019, at <http://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/eu-position-in-world-trade/>.
- Eurostat. China-EU – International Trade in Goods Statistics*, 2020, at [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=China-EU\\_-\\_international\\_trade\\_in\\_goods\\_statistics#EU-China\\_most\\_traded\\_goods](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=China-EU_-_international_trade_in_goods_statistics#EU-China_most_traded_goods).
- Ferguson N., *The Square and the Tower*, New York 2018.
- Grace, A., “China’s Influence Operations Are Pinpointing America’s Weaknesses”, *Foreign Policy*, 10 April 2018, at <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/10/04/chinas-influence-operations-are-pinpointing-americas-weaknesses/>.
- Gu J., *China’s Private Enterprises in Africa and the Implications for African Development. The Power of the Chinese Dragon*, London 2016, [http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-1-137-57449-7\\_7](http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-1-137-57449-7_7).
- Hartz R., “‘The People’ and Its Antagonistic Other: The Populist Right-Wing Movement Pegida in Germany”, in T. Marttila (ed.), *Discourse, Culture and Organization. Postdisciplinary Studies in Discourse*, Cham 2019, pp. 223-244, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-94123-3\\_10](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-94123-3_10).
- Hemenway D., “Chinese Strategic Engagement with Assad’s Syria”, *Atlantic Council*, 21 December 2018, at <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/syriasource/chinese-strategic-engagement-with-assad-s-syria/>.
- Herbert J., “Ssüma Ch’ien’s Historical Records: Introductory Chapter,” transl. by H.J. Allen, *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* (1894).

- "Hu Jintao Calls for Enhancing 'Soft Power' of Chinese Culture", *Beijing Review*, November 2017, at [http://www.bjreview.com.cn/17thCPC/txt/2007-10/15/content\\_80539.htm](http://www.bjreview.com.cn/17thCPC/txt/2007-10/15/content_80539.htm).
- Huaxia, "What are China's Two Centennial Goals and Why do They Matter?", *New China*, 17 October 2017, at [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-10/17/c\\_136686770.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-10/17/c_136686770.htm).
- "Is China Taking Advantage of COVID-19 to Pursue South China Sea Ambitions?", *DW*, 26 May 2020, at <https://www.dw.com/en/is-china-taking-advantage-of-covid-19-to-pursue-south-china-sea-ambitions/a-53573918>.
- Jacques M., at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uBjvklYLSHM> – [00:02:42-00:04:05].
- Kissinger H., *On China*, New York 2013.
- Kissinger H., *World Order*, New York 2014.
- Labrador E.C., "The Venezuelan Exodus", *Council on Foreign Relations*, 2019, at <https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/venezuelan-exodus>.
- Leung K. et al., "Culture and International Business: Recent Advanced and Future Directions", *Journal of International Business Studies*, vol. 36 (2005), pp. 357-378, <https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.jibs.8400150>.
- Mohan G., "China in Africa: Impacts and Prospects for Accountable Development", in S. Hickey, K. Sen, B. Bukenya (eds.), *The Politics of Inclusive Development: Interrogating the Evidence*, Oxford 2014, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198722564.003.0011>.
- Shambaugh D., "China's Quiet Diplomacy", *China: An International Journal*, vol. 5, no. 1 (2007), pp. 26-54, <https://doi.org/10.1353/chn.2007.0004>.
- Tanev T., *The Statehood*, Sofia 2013.
- "The Role of China as an Education Aid Donor", *UNESCO Digital Library*, 2015, at <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000232475>.
- Welsh J.M., "The Role of the Inner Enemy in European Self-definition: Identity, Culture and International Relations Theory", *History of European Ideas*, vol. 19, nos 1-3 (1994), pp. 53-61, [https://doi.org/10.1016/0191-6599\(94\)90197-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/0191-6599(94)90197-X).
- Whitten G. et al., "Do Political Relations Affect International Trade? Evidence from China's Twelve Trading Partners", *Journal of Shipping and Trade*, vol. 5, no. 21 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41072-020-00076-w>.
- Wight M., *Systems of States*, Leicester 1977.
- Žižek S., "Beyond Discourse – Analysis", in *New Reflections of Our Time. Verso*, London–New York 1990.

---

**Martin MILANOV** is a PhD student at Sofia University in the Faculty of European Studies. He is primarily concentrating his work in the field of European and Chinese Identity related to the foreign policy as his master's degrees are in "European integration and diplomacy of EU" in the same faculty with a thesis "European Common Foreign and Security Policy and the global initiative "One belt, One Road" of China" and in "International Organisations and Multilateral Diplomacy" in the Faculty of Law and International Relations in Sofia University with a thesis on "European Common Foreign and Security Policy in the East-Asian world order."