

## Self-rule yourself, Europe!

If there is a region in the world that was favored by Joe Biden's election as President of the United States of America, it was Europe. His predecessor, Donald Trump, quite skeptical of multilateral alliances such as NATO or the World Health Organization, and despising the European integration, looked to the countries of the Old Continent - especially to Germany - as states that take advantage of the economic and military power of a great world power like the USA.

How will the American perception of Europe change now? Biden administration will naturally proceed on putting competition with China at the top of its agenda, responding to Russian threats, and keeping Iran under control. The main difference is that Biden will invest, in this new phase, in revitalizing the transatlantic alliance and in establishing a working relationship with the European Union. It will be normal to give more relevance to multilateral understandings again, especially regarding pressing issues such as climate change and trade agreements.

Despite the greater alignment and cooperation that the Biden administration will bring between the United States and Europe, there is no doubt that, given China's growing preponderance globally, Europe will be far from being the center of American concerns. This reality aggregates the opportunity, and the need, for Europe to invest increasingly - and definitively - in its military and security autonomy.

The transatlantic alliance, which gives Europeans so much rest, should be the motto to honor the commitment related to the 2% of GDP allocated to Defense, gaining greater strength and autonomy in responding to the challenges that will arise in a 21st century that brings a new geopolitical configuration full of uncertainties. Europe's future must now be preserved and prepared.

Being the most enduring and successful military alliance in the history of humankind, NATO was created with the particular purpose of defending Europe - not what is happening directly on the Asian continent. It is precisely under this premise that Biden will be looking at Europe, intending to see it focusing on its internal challenges. At the same time, the USA will attribute its effort and focus to China which, in one way or another, represents and entails reverberations on a global scale.

The main risk for Europe lies in itself. Europeans will be tempted to interpret the renewed transatlantic commitment of the United States as a reissue of the old relationship between leader and followers. However, the truth is that this is no longer sustainable in a world with a renewed geopolitical configuration: undone by the Covid-19 pandemic and increasingly shaped by the US-China competition.

The Biden administration will present Europeans with the historic opportunity to achieve increasing strategic autonomy and transatlantic cooperation as mutually reinforcing dynamics. Each European State and the European Union as a whole must take advantage of this opportunity and assume their responsibility and actions given their own future. There are ideas and ideals that are not defended by themselves.

European defense action must focus on the importance of NATO - but more than that - in a strategy that is capable of facing the most complex security challenges in the region, whether dealing with a Russia eager for destabilization in regions such as the Baltics and the Balkans, in the growing impasse with Turkey, in the energy reserves in disputed waters in the eastern Mediterranean Sea, or in facing the cases of Hungary and Poland, with increasingly extreme positions and, as such, less free and less liberal.

World geopolitics is changing, and with it, American and Western preponderance is also at stake. There can be no doubt that many countries will do - already in practice - their best to undermine and destabilize a Europe that is fragile and far from being self-reliant. If we stay in this comfort zone, it will definitely be too late.

The Defense and guarantee of protection of our way of life as we know it are at stake, as well as our common values reflected on Democracy and in the uncompromising safeguard of Human Rights.

Now is the moment of taking advantage of the transatlantic miracle so that we can become more autonomous. More self-ruled.

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