

# Peter Legendijk

Onderzoekadvies en Beleidsontwikkeling



Leggeloo 38\*7991 PZ Dwingeloo\*tel.06-5141 8528\*KvK 0803 1294 \*Legendijk/Leebeek Hld bv  
\*peter@peterlegendijk.eu \*www.peterlegendijk.eu

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## EUROPE AS A WORLD POWER IS THE FUTURE AND OFFERS ITS INHABITANTS FREEDOM AND INDEPENDENCE

On one side of the world is our ally, the United States; on the other, China is a more recent world power. Europe is in between, topographically speaking. The USA is the country that Europe seceded to in the last century as a world power. On the other hand – it is Europeans who shaped North and South America.

Until a few decades ago at most, China was primarily a country used to manufacture our consumer goods cheaply. It is a Communist state ruled strictly and with an industrious population. China developed into a leading high-tech state with its own identity.

Europe has many nationalities and languages. Economically, Europe is a superpower that is only experienced as such by naming individual countries. On the other hand, Europe is insufficiently able to defend itself. Militarily, Europe is dependent on the United States. Fortunately, there is a military alliance, NATO, as a result of which Europe can consider itself reasonably safe. Europe loses credibility by making insufficient efforts to pay for its own defence.

Many people in Europe are happy with a USA that we'll be able to talk to again after the change of president. Without threatening language. It is gradually becoming clear that the United States wants to see more respect for its own interests. Things could change so much that Europe will have to take over part of America's role as world policeman. President Trump's message seems clear and lasting in this respect.

China is a country that the free West cannot ignore. China has long since ceased to be the producer that should be pleased with our orders. China's population is becoming prosperous. Domestic spending is a significant economic factor. China is manifesting itself materially and politically all over the world, particularly in Africa but also in south-eastern Europe. We could ask ourselves what is desirable and what is not. The restrictions imposed on China could apply to the whole of Europe. Outside the EU as well.

Europe has an interest in good relations with China as a producer of those articles that are best made there. There are also dangers in this relationship. China has no hesitation in copying our inventions and even spying on us.

One obvious danger is our dependence on China as a producer of medicines. That is what we have allowed to happen. It happens not only to Europe but also to the US, where, for example, heart operations can sometimes not take place because of a lack of heparin. Medicines are vital goods. When disaster strikes somewhere in the world, it is mainly food and medicines that provide help.

There are probably other goods that need to be produced closer to home.

Be that as it may. Europe has everything it needs to show itself to be a world power alongside the United States and China. The world has an interest in a strong Europe.

### Europe as a world power must be united

The European Union is a far-reaching cooperation of currently 27 countries. It has taken a great deal of effort and many years to arrive at the present European Union. The current collaboration has several predecessors, such as the EC and EFTA. After the end of the Second World War, the United States offered its support to the devastated continent. A critical precondition was that the various countries of Europe should work together. This can help prevent new wars.

The EU's objectives and values are enshrined in a Charter. The member countries are democracies with an independent judiciary and freedom of expression.

There are various threats to unity. Great Britain has now left the EU, and the actual withdrawal will take place on 1 January next. As far as European cooperation is concerned, the departure of the UK can be regarded as a significant loss. The UK is one of the most important countries in Europe and one of the oldest democracies in the world.

What is more, the UK, alongside France, has a powerful military. A country to be proud of and indispensable to Europe as a world power.

Once upon a time, there was a referendum in the United Kingdom in which mainly conservative and older Britons elected to leave the EU. The massive presence of mainly Eastern Europeans also prompted the British to vote in favour of Leave. It is an EU principle that all EU citizens are free to settle in any other EU country.

It does not seem to bother the Brexiteers that the Scots voted in the referendum in favour of Remain. This strengthens the already existing Scottish urge for independence.

Another threat is formed by the states that were once in the sphere of influence of the Soviet Union. In particular, we should mention Poland and Hungary. There are autocratic tendencies there. The independence of the judiciary is in danger while there is an attempt to gag the press. These are developments that do not fit in with the fundamental principles of the European Union.

There are major differences in prosperity and level of development within the EU. This encourages relocation within the EU. We see it in the UK. Conversely, a Member State can also see citizens leaving who are hard to miss. Closer to home - In the Netherlands, the existing housing problem is exacerbated by EU migrant workers demanding housing.

It makes one wonder whether any restrictions on freedom of establishment would have been sensible.

*After all, the EU is not meant to cause mass migration.*

### The current role of the EU

Differences in prosperity are reduced by economic support from the European heart in Brussels. The support ensures that less prosperous Eastern European EU members are not tempted to turn their backs on the EU too quickly. However, Eastern European states can be crippling when it comes to votes in the Council of Government leaders.

European values are anchored in the rule of law. European countries at the heart of the EU cannot question this. The states previously under Soviet influence have a different history. For them, there were imposed and prescribed ideas. Thirty years have passed.

In particular, it is now a question of showing young and developed people in these countries the way to freedom, peace and equality. This comment does not apply to the Baltic States.

### The future role of the EU as a world power

Around the Mediterranean, there are troubled regions ravaged by (civil) wars. If Europe wants to manifest itself as a world power, our responsibilities extend beyond the continent's borders.

The non-European countries around the Mediterranean can be regarded as falling within the European sphere of influence. Europe can offer significant advantages to the region. Not only in economic terms, such as employment, but also in knowledge for better organisation of internal affairs. Europe can provide good services. Europe knows the Mediterranean like no other power.

It is not the first time that the idea of European responsibilities outside the EU has been put forward. The Roman Empire is the most appealing predecessor.

A new advantage of European influence in the Mediterranean is the pressure exerted on our continent by swelling migratory flows from sub-Saharan Africa. The possibility cannot be ruled out that there will be a growing appetite for a prosperous Europe in the future. There are opportunities in the transit countries of Northern Africa to prevent Europe from being inundated. Several studies indicate that the pressure will be sustained. Even if the countries on the other side of the Sahara make economic progress.

Europe's ambitions will only be credible if there is a European army. National defence units will remain unaffected. At the same time, however, they will be part of a European army. The Allies during World War II were also made up of internal forces merged under a single command. The most striking example for Western Europe is the joint landing in Normandy in September 1944. The whole free world supplied ships and troops. National Socialism had to be defeated. For five years, the Netherlands suffered under a regime of oppression, violence and persecution of Jews and the resistance. The joy of liberation will never be forgotten by anyone who experienced it. I was eight years old, but the memories of the massive delight are indelible.

Perhaps that is why I argue for a strong Europe while preserving democratic values, freedom of the press and freedom of expression. We must never give up these achievements.

*Alongside the United States and China, Europe has to be a world power. The cooperation between the various countries of Europe has been difficult. To this day, there are threats to unity from dissent by the United Kingdom and some Eastern European states. Given Europe's historical role, there is little else to do but overcome the difficulties. Europe has a responsibility beyond the borders of the continent. Europe is doing the world a service by also playing a role in the Mediterranean countries.*

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