



WANG JISI

President of the Institute of International and Strategic Studies at Peking University in Beijing, Peking University Boya Chair Professor

Douglas Paal, Distinguished Fellow at the Asia Program Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, former Senior Director of Asian Affairs and Special Assistant to the President in the US National Security Council

Now, we turn to our good friend in Beijing – Wang Jisi.

Wang Jisi

I just returned to Beijing from Germany and talked to its officials and scholars. The Europeans continue to be strongly interested in trading with, and investing in, China. Chancellor Scholtz went to Beijing last month, and Charles Michel, the European Council President, was in Beijing in early December. They will be followed probably by President Macron of France. In Berlin, some business leaders told me that their commercial interests in China have met with public opinion polls and media reports in Germany that are increasingly negative about China. The draft of Germany's first China Strategy report was leaked to the press last month, and the German Foreign Ministry, under political pressure from home, has to modify it to appear somewhat more hawkish toward China. Some officials said to me that Germany will increase its military budget, be closer to the US in geostrategic terms, and try to strengthen NATO. And the Europeans hold similar views on China in ideological terms, being critical of China human rights. So on the one hand, Europe will keep its strategic autonomy, especially in the economic and technological dimensions, in dealing with China. Climate change is another dimension for China and Europe to work together. On the other hand, the EU and Britain will lean to the US as far as geopolitics and ideology are concerned.

At this moment, Xi joined Arab leaders in the first China-Arab States Summit and China-GCC summit. Ambition is to establish a "one-to-multiple" platform.

A massive military action, or a full-scale military takeover of Taiwan is not likely in any foreseeable future. The reference to Taiwan in the 20th Party Congress is milder than most observers expected. Peaceful unification and "one country, two systems."

China's top priorities at this moment are two-fold. First, Omicron or COVID. Beijing's COVID policy changed dramatically since last week, and people in Beijing like myself are perplexed to see confusing and conflicting regulations and signals announced by the government. Infection cases are surging alarmingly in my neighborhood and in the whole city. Unless and until we successfully deal with this problem, we are not ready to focus on Taiwan. It's hard to imagine that the PLA soldiers landing on Taiwan have to wear masks.



Second, the economy. The economic growth is record low this year, and unemployment is terribly high. This is why I think Taiwan is not that high on Beijing's political agenda. Xi-Biden summit.

However, we in China have to worry about two things on Taiwan. First, US approach to Taiwan is moving from assuring Beijing that Washington will stick to its one-China policy to assuring Taipei that it will be given more assistance to the island's defense. We see increased danger that one day Washington would give up its one China policy and instead recognize an independent Taiwan. Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan triggered a major military and political crisis. Kevin McCarthy, the prospective House Speaker, announced he would lead a large Congressional delegation to Taiwan early in 2023. If that happened, Beijing would have no choice but to respond with more decisive military moves, which could result in an uncontrollable confrontation. The second hidden danger is Taiwan's internal politics. The opposition party KMT won more seats, but even the KMT would not support reunification with the mainland.

Douglas Paal

Thank you very much, Jisi. You have given us a very concise tour of the horizon on Chinese policy towards Europe; Taiwan; foreign policy generally; and domestic politics.