



# EU-CHINA SECURITY RELATIONS

Policy Report  
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## **Executive Summary**

EU–China relations are one of the most important bilateral relations in the world. However, when reviewing the relationship between Brussels and Beijing, most of the analysts focus on economic and trade issues. The EU’s rising intention to become a global security actor and China’s increasingly active involvement in international affairs motivate the two sides to pay more attention to their security relations. This policy brief is to examine the following questions: how is the security relationship between the EU and China evolving? What are the converging and diverging interests and concerns? What are the major issues that the EU and China will need to address to build more robust security ties? And how is the bilateral security relationship likely to develop in the coming years? As a conclusion, this policy brief points out that uncertainty exists in EU–China future security relations. More dialogue and consultation mechanisms should be introduced at different levels and for different issues in the first pillar of EU–China institutional arrangements in order for EU–China security relations to be further enhanced.

## Introduction

EU–China relations are one of the most important bilateral relations in the world. However, when reviewing the relationship between Brussels and Beijing, most of the analysts focus on economic and trade issues. As a matter of fact, their nearly forty-year diplomatic history has been dominated by economic and trade relations — the first of their bilateral agreement was on trade, and the current one under negotiation is on investment. Nevertheless, as demonstrated in the three pillars of EU–China institutional arrangements, the high-level strategic dialogue (in the first pillar) and the high-level people-to-people dialogue (in the third pillar) have been established side by side with the high-level economic and trade dialogue (in the second pillar) in recent years, marking a noticeable step forward in EU–China relations.

EU–China security relations fall in the first pillar of political dialogue, which could be dated back to 1994. In 1998, the two sides established the EU–China summit mechanism, the most important platform for bilateral exchanges. With an exchange of letters in 2002, the two sides decided to formalise and broaden the political dialogue into a regularised and structured series of meetings at several levels.<sup>1</sup> Since then, the ‘scope of the EU–China political dialogue has gradually broadened to cover issues ranging from non-proliferation to the security situation in Asia, from global warming to the fight against illegal migration and trafficking in human beings.’<sup>2</sup> After Brussels and Beijing declared to establish a strategic partnership in 2003, the strategic dialogue, at the vice ministerial-level, was established at the 8<sup>th</sup> EU–China Summit Meeting in 2005, and upgraded in 2010 to a high-level dialogue co-chaired by China’s State

Councilor in charge of foreign affairs and the EU’s High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. As a result of developments in dialogue scope and content, a regular EU–China dialogue on security and defense policy was initiated in 2012<sup>3</sup> and the first round EU–China Dialogue on the Middle East and North Africa was held in early 2014.<sup>4</sup>

The EU’s rising intention to become a global security actor and China’s increasingly active involvement in international affairs motivate the two sides to pay more attention to their security relations. This policy brief is to examine the following questions: how is the security relationship between the EU and China evolving? What are the converging and diverging interests and concerns? What are the major issues that the EU and China will need to address to build more robust security ties? And how is the bilateral security relationship likely to develop in the coming years?

## The Evolution of EU–China Security Relations

In the author’s point of view, EU–China security relations started from the year 2003, when the two sides established strategic partnership. In that year, two policy papers on bilateral relations were issued respectively by the EU (on 13 September) and China (on 13 October). The EU’s policy paper ‘A maturing partnership — shared interests and challenges in EU–China relations’ stated that ‘EU and Chinese interests converge on many issues of global governance, in particular as regards the key role of multilateral organisations and systems. Through a further reinforcement of their

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<sup>1</sup> See David Shambaugh, Eberhard Sandschneider and Zhou Hong (eds.), *China–Europe Relations: Perceptions, Policies and Prospects* (London: Routledge 2008), p. 318.

<sup>2</sup> Delegation of the European Union to China, EU–China Political Dialogue, [http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/china/eu\\_china/political\\_relations/pol\\_dialogue/index\\_en.htm](http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/china/eu_china/political_relations/pol_dialogue/index_en.htm) (accessed 10 April 2014).

<sup>3</sup> Interview with a Chinese diplomat in the Chinese Mission to the EU, 28 March 2014.

<sup>4</sup> Joint Statement—Deepening the EU–China Comprehensive Strategic Partnership for mutual benefit (31/03/2014), [http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/china/press\\_corner/all\\_news/news/2014/20140331\\_02\\_en.htm](http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/china/press_corner/all_news/news/2014/20140331_02_en.htm) (accessed 19 April 2014).

co-operation, the EU and China will be better able to promote these shared visions and interests, and thus to shore up their joint security and other interests in Asia and elsewhere'.<sup>5</sup> One month later, China's EU policy paper was published as an overall response to the rapidly developing China–EU relations. More or less around the same time, leaders from both sides started to address each other as strategic partners.

While for decades that the U.S. stays on top of Chinese foreign policy agenda, Beijing has never produced a U.S. policy paper. China tried to reach a 'constructive strategic partnership' with the U.S. during the Clinton administration, but Bush regarded China as a strategic competitor when he came to power in early 2001. Although Sino–U.S. relations found its turning point after 9/11 and went for a 'constructive and cooperative partnership', it is lower in importance than the strategic partnership.

Against this background, one can understand that 2003 was a special year for EU–China relations — China intended to upgrade its relations with the EU to a more or less equal level to Sino–U.S. relations. Needless to say, China's policy adjustment was somehow a reaction against the U.S.' unilateral action in the Iraqi war. China's intention to have closer strategic and security cooperation with the EU was based on its design of a new international order — the formation of a multipolar world not only needs China's own efforts, but its collaboration and cooperation with other potential poles. The EU's opposition to the U.S.' Iraqi policy in the first half of 2003 convinced China the strategic importance of

the EU in balancing against the U.S., and China hoped to check the U.S.' global influence by supporting the EU's position.<sup>6</sup>

On 30 October 2003, the EU Galileo Satellite Navigation Cooperation Agreement was signed at the 6<sup>th</sup> EU–China Summit. As Loyola de Palacio, the then European Commission Vice President in charge of Transport and Energy, said, 'This is a very important step ahead which shows the high level of confidence ... The partnership with China is a good news and paves the way for future other bilateral and regional agreements which are of mutual benefit'.<sup>7</sup> On 12 December that year, the EU published its first European Security Strategy, in which 'China features as one of the key partners for the EU's strategic security relationships'.<sup>8</sup> In the same month, the Chinese government issued its first white paper on China's Non–Proliferation Policy and Measures, which paved the way for the Joint declaration of the People's Republic of China and the European Union on Non–proliferation and Arms Control at the 7<sup>th</sup> EU–China Summit in December 2004.

The close exchanges between the EU and China in 2003 seemed to open a new page of strategic and security cooperation. In the following years, the two sides met regularly to address mutual concerns on nuclear security and non–proliferation: a working group meeting was held in Beijing in January 2005, addressing potential cooperation and exchanging views on preventing the trafficking of technology for nuclear or chemical weapons.<sup>9</sup> At the 9<sup>th</sup> EU–China Summit, the two sides reiterated their

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<sup>5</sup> Commission of the European Communities, 'A maturing partnership — shared interests and challenges in EU–China relations', Brussels, 10.9.2003, COM(2003) 533 final, p. 7.

<sup>6</sup> Shi Zhiqin, 'Understanding Sino–EU Relations', *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 15 October 2012, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2012/10/15/%E7%90%86%E8%A7%A3%E4%B8%AD%E6%AC%A7%E5%85%B3%E7%B3%BB/e8o9?reloadFlag=1> (accessed 13 April 2014).

<sup>7</sup> Galileo: Loyola de Palacio welcomes the green light for an EU–China agreement, Brussels, 27 October 2003, IP/03/1461, [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-03-1461\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-03-1461_en.htm) (accessed 10 April 2014).

<sup>8</sup> Joint Press Statement of 6th China–EU Summit, Brussels, 30 October 2003, 13424/03 (Press 298), [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/en/er/77802.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/er/77802.pdf) (accessed 12 April 2014).

<sup>9</sup> Bates Gill and Melissa Murphy, *China–Europe Relations: Implications and Policy Responses for the United States* (Washington DC: The CSIS Press, 2008), p. 17.

willingness to further cooperation in the field, and the preparation for a review conference on Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention in November 2006 and the Preparatory Committee for the next review conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.<sup>10</sup> In most of the EU–China summits thereafter, the EU and China called for an early start of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament and the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty. They also agreed to continue cooperation in the field of export controls and prevention of illicit arms trade and strengthen the dialogue on thematic issues such as non-proliferation and anti-terrorism.<sup>11</sup>

Yet, after a short ‘honeymoon’ between the EU and China, both were disappointed at the partnership. In the EU, the original enthusiasm of exploring a strategic partnership with China has been increasingly replaced by suspicion and anxiety at China’s rise. The EU’s decision to maintain the arms embargo against China in 2005, in view of Nicola Casarini, approved ‘a victory for the advocates of American primacy in world affairs’ and the U.S. ‘was still firmly in command of major political decisions within the Western camp’.<sup>12</sup> The EU’s 2006 China policy paper attached, for the first time, ‘clear political conditionality for the furthering of EU–China relations and an eventual lifting of arms ban’.<sup>13</sup> The ‘Guidelines on the EU’s Foreign and Security Policy in East Asia’ released by the Council of the EU in the last month of 2007 aligned its policy with that of the

U.S. In July 2008, the procurement scheme for the second phase of Galileo ‘excluded Chinese contractors from the manufacturing, services, and launch of the remaining 26 satellites of the EU–led global navigation satellite system’.<sup>14</sup>

The updated Guidelines on the EU’s Foreign and Security Policy in East Asia released by the Council of the European Union in June 2012 and the Joint U.S.–EU Statement on the Asia Pacific Region one month later were perceived by Beijing as Brussels’s endorsement and support of the U.S.–driven China containment policies.<sup>15</sup> Although different from the U.S. ‘pivot to Asia’ policy that the EU’s Asia policy is not ‘aimed at any country, EU policymakers are nonetheless confronted with the energy-consuming task of explaining to Chinese colleagues why an alleged EU re-balancing towards Asia does not stand for the EU allying itself with the U.S. to contain China’.<sup>16</sup>

Up till now, cooperation between Brussels and Beijing in the domain of traditional security has not been well developed, which may be attributed to several reasons. First of all, they are two different players in nature. The EU is a regional organisation composed of 28 Member States. The problem of speaking in one voice within the EU exists in all the decision-making areas including security. Furthermore, ‘Europe has allowed the United States to take the main responsibilities for its own security’.<sup>17</sup> China, in contrast, is an authoritarian state with a

<sup>10</sup> Council of the European Union, Ninth EU–China Summit Helsinki 9 September 2006 Joint Statement, 11 September 2006, 12642/06 (Presse 249) Brussels, p. 2, [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressData/en/er/90951.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/er/90951.pdf) (Assessed 15 April 2014).

<sup>11</sup> See the Joint State or Joint Press Communique of EU–China summits from 2006 to 2013, on the website of the European External Action Service: [http://eeas.europa.eu/china/summits\\_en.htm](http://eeas.europa.eu/china/summits_en.htm).

<sup>12</sup> See Nicola Casarini, *Remaking Global Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Axel Berkofsky, ‘The EU in Asian Security — Too Much for Beijing, Not Enough for Washington’, EU–Asia Centre, 11 November 2013, [http://www.eu-asiacentre.eu/pub\\_details.php?pub\\_id=122](http://www.eu-asiacentre.eu/pub_details.php?pub_id=122) (Accessed 14 April 2014).

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Frans–Paul van der Putten and Chu Shulong (eds.), *China, Europe and International Security: Interests, Roles, and Prospects* (London: Routledge, 2011), p. 2.

centralised system, its Standing Committee of the Politburo has the highest decision-making power for all the important issues, in particular, national security. While China is a rising hard power, the EU is regarded as a normative power, an economic power, a civilian power, and, in general, a soft power.<sup>18</sup> In addition, the EU and China belong to two different worlds: the liberal EU promotes democracy and respect for human rights, civil society and the rule of law; and China stresses 'socialism with Chinese characteristics' and authoritarian control. The different approach and procedure of security decision-making, complicated by the differences in ideology between the EU and China, make it difficult for the two sides to easily understand each other and to establish concrete cooperation in security field. Second, the EU, unlike the United States, has no military bases in East Asia. China is wary of U.S.' 'back in Asia' strategy, but feels not much challenge from the European side — as Bates Gill said, 'Europe has no strategic military commitments or alliances in the Asia Pacific.'<sup>19</sup> The fact that the EU and China has 'no fundamental conflict of interests'<sup>20</sup> in this area, to a certain degree, leads to a lack of incentives and urgency to have more military and security exchanges between the two sides. Third, as Oliver Bräuner pointed out, by far, 'the security agendas of China and the EU only overlap on a very limited number of issues'.<sup>21</sup> Both players are only regional powers. Unlike the United States which has keen global strategic concerns, the EU and China are mostly concerned with

their own neighborhood relations. The EU's peacekeeping missions were either in Africa or in the Balkans, but China focuses more on its East Asian neighbors and the territorial disputes with some of them.

Despite of slow development in EU–China security relations, one needs to point out that there is a great potential for the two sides to enhance cooperation, since they do not have serious conflict of interests and as long as they both are willing to take measures to strengthen exchanges and cooperation. As a matter of fact, EU–China non-traditional security relations have already achieved some encouraging results. In the field of anti-piracy, representatives from the EU attended an international conference on this subject that China hosted in November 2009. *EUNAVFOR* and *PLAN* vessels conducted their first ever joint maritime exercise in March 2011.<sup>22</sup> The joint naval exercise on counter-piracy was held on 20 March 2014 in the Gulf of Aden, 'which reflected the successful joint efforts of the Chinese Navy and of EU operation ATALANTA in strengthening maritime security and fighting piracy'.<sup>23</sup> In the field of civil protection and disaster relief, the 12<sup>th</sup> EU–China Summit in Nanjing in 2009 placed an emphasis on emergency management cooperation. On 29 November 2010, EU Commissioner Georgieva and then State Councilor Ma Kai signed an agreement for enhanced cooperation in the field of disaster management, which allowed the launching of the EU–China Disaster Risk

<sup>18</sup> See Robert Cooper, 'Hard Power, Soft Power and the Goals of Diplomacy', in David Held and Mathias Koenig-Archibugi (eds.), *American Power in the 21st Century* (London: Polity Press, 2004), pp. 167–180.

<sup>19</sup> Bates Gill, 'Managing tensions and promoting cooperation: U.S.–European approaches on security issues with China', in Robert Ross, Øystein Tunsjø, Zhang Tuosheng (eds.), *U.S.–China–EU Relations: Managing the New World Order* (London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2010), p. 261.

<sup>20</sup> Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'China's Policy Paper on the EU: Deepen the China–EU Comprehensive Strategic Partnership for Mutual Benefit and Win-win Cooperation', 2 April 2014.

<sup>21</sup> Oliver Bräuner, 'Think small: How to improve China–EU security cooperation', 16 January 2014, Friends of Europe, <http://www.friendsofeurope.org/Contentnavigation/Publications/Libraryoverview/tabid/1186/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/3645/Think-small-How-to-improve-ChinaEU-security-cooperation.aspx> (Accessed 18 April 2014).

<sup>22</sup> PAWEŁ BIENKOWSKI, 'The EU and China as Partners in Security—The Case of Transnational Threats,' Centre for International Initiatives, <http://centruminicjatyw.org/?q=pl/node/145>

<sup>23</sup> Joint Statement—Deepening the EU–China Comprehensive Strategic Partnership for mutual benefit (31/03/2014), [http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/china/press\\_corner/all\\_news/news/2014/20140331\\_02\\_en.htm](http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/china/press_corner/all_news/news/2014/20140331_02_en.htm) (accessed 13 April 2014).



Management (DRM) Project on 15 June 2012. One year later on 15 June 2013, the EU–China Institute for Emergency Management was inaugurated.<sup>24</sup> EU–China Cyber Security Task Force was established in 2012 after the 14<sup>th</sup> EU–China Summit. These mechanisms pave the way for further exchanges and discussions between the two sides, which may lead to more concrete results in the coming years.

## Converging and diverging interests and concerns

In general, the EU and China share the interests of maintaining global peace and sustainable development. They face common security challenges<sup>25</sup> and hope to extend cooperation and collaboration at bilateral, regional and global levels. Yet, when looking closely, one may easily find that they often take different positions and policies due to diverging interests and concerns. In a research done by Jonathan Holslag on EU–China relations, he pointed out that the two sides have much less shared ‘interests’ than the ‘needs’ to have ‘dialogue’ and ‘exchanges’, and the wordings in international security and policy clauses of bilateral official documents remain limited to ‘observing’ and ‘welcoming’ rather than ‘agreed’ cooperation.<sup>26</sup>

Anti–piracy is one of the few areas that the EU and China have clearly shared interests.

In view of Susanne Kamerling and Frans–Paul van der Putten, ‘China’s counter–piracy mission is not regarded by the European Union as a threat, but rather a welcome contribution to the international effort to combat Somali piracy.’<sup>27</sup> The EU welcomes China’s readiness to increase the frequency of escorts of the World Food Programme vessels transporting food aid to Somalia, and both sides agree to enhance their cooperation to the benefit of partners in the African continent.<sup>28</sup>

In the field of cybersecurity, Brussels and Beijing have a clear convergence of interests that both sides make huge efforts to fight against cybercrime. The most recent EU policy paper by Chinese Foreign Ministry in April 2014 includes cybersecurity as an important area to strengthen coordination and cooperation: ‘Strengthen cybersecurity dialogue and cooperation and promote the building of a peaceful, secure, open and cooperative cyberspace. Facilitate practical cooperation between China and the EU in fighting cyber–crimes, emergency response to cybersecurity incidents and cyber capacity building through platforms such as the China–EU Cyber Taskforce and work together for the formulation of a code of conduct in cyberspace within the UN framework’.<sup>29</sup> However, pointed out by Franz–Stefan Gady, one of the biggest concerns for the EU Member States within cybercrime is ‘digital and online

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<sup>24</sup> See Veronika Orbetsova and Jing Men, ‘China–EU Experience and Budding Cooperation in Emergency Management’, in Inge Govaere and Sara Poli (eds.), *EU Management of Global Emergencies: Legal Framework for Combating Threats and Crisis* (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill nv, 2014), pp. 388–408.

<sup>25</sup> These could cover traditional as well non–traditional security threats, and defence– and security–related matters such as disarmament, non–proliferation issues, arms control and cybersecurity issues. See Mattias Lentz, ‘The View from the EU’, in Nicola Casarini (ed.), *Brussels–Beijing: Changing the Game?*, *European Union Institute for Security Studies*, Report No. 14, February 2013, p. 60.

<sup>26</sup> Jonathan Holslag, ‘The Elusive Axis: Assessing the EU–China Strategic Partnership’, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 49, No. 2, 2011, pp. 293–313.

<sup>27</sup> Susanne Kamerling and Frans–Paul van der Putten, ‘An Overseas Naval Presence without Overseas Bases: China’s Counter–piracy Operation in the Gulf of Aden’, *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*, 4/2011, p. 137.

<sup>28</sup> Joint Statement–Deepening the EU–China Comprehensive Strategic Partnership for mutual benefit (31/03/2014), [http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/china/press\\_corner/all\\_news/news/2014/20140331\\_02\\_en.htm](http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/china/press_corner/all_news/news/2014/20140331_02_en.htm) (accessed 13 April 2014).

<sup>29</sup> Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ‘China’s Policy Paper on the EU: Deepen the China–EU Comprehensive Strategic Partnership for Mutual Benefit and Win–win Cooperation’, 2 April 2014.

intellectual property theft originating from China'.<sup>30</sup> A European Cybercrime Centre within Europol was established in 2013, with the purpose of, among other issues, actively combatting IP theft, and China stays as a top concern.<sup>31</sup>

In the field of non-proliferation and nuclear security, while Brussels and Beijing share some general principles, they don't have much cooperation on the North Korean nuclear crisis or the Iranian nuclear crisis. It is uncertain whether China would welcome closer EU involvement in North Korea because the EU has limited added-value on this issue. Moreover, EU involvement could even be undesirable if it helped strengthen the U.S. position.<sup>32</sup> The EU and China have addressed the Iranian issue many times at their summits, but they 'appreciate' — rather than support — their mutual efforts.<sup>33</sup> China opposes sanctions or a stronger stance against Tehran both because of its own economic interest and its diplomatic principle of sovereign rights and non-interference in the internal affairs.<sup>34</sup> Needless to say, China's emphasis on sovereignty and opposition against international interference in domestic affairs is very different from the EU's position which often gives priority to human rights.

The arms embargo is a key issue in EU-China relations. Between 2003 and 2005, the EU and its Member States had a serious debate on whether to lift the arms embargo or not. By

spring 2005 it became clear that the embargo would be maintained in the foreseeable future in EU-China relations. China's political regime and its human rights record, cross-Strait relations, and the huge pressure from the U.S., contribute to this result. Although the EU argues that the embargo is largely symbolic, the maintenance of the embargo is a serious barrier for enhancing EU-China partnership.

As mentioned earlier, the differences in the political system and norms keep the two apart. Their cooperation is largely motivated by pragmatic calculation of material gains. In other words, they remain business partners. The EU is China's largest trading partner, and China the EU's second largest trading partner. The more sensitive issue-areas, such as security ties, still need to be developed. The EU does not trust China because China is not a democratic regime. China does not trust the EU because the EU is close to the U.S. As the European Security Strategy states, 'the transatlantic relationship is irreplaceable. Acting together, the European Union and the United States can be a formidable force for good in the world'.<sup>35</sup> China has been promoting the idea of a multipolar world since 1980s — this idea is in direct conflict of a unipolar world dominated by the U.S. If the EU follows the U.S. in international relations, China will have more difficulties in pushing multipolarity in the world.

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<sup>30</sup> Franz-Stefan Gady, 'China-EU Cooperation on Combatting Cybercrime: A Model for China-U.S. Relations?', China-U.S. Focus, 24 April 2014, <http://www.chinausfocus.com/peace-security/china-eu-cooperation-on-combatting-cybercrime-a-model-for-china-u-s-relations/> (Accessed 26 April 2014).

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Thomas Renard, 'Partnering for a nuclear-safe world: the EU, its strategic partners and nuclear non-proliferation', ESPO working paper No.3, October 2013, p. 16.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>34</sup> Oliver Meier, 'European Efforts to Solve the Conflict over Iran's Nuclear Programme: How has the European Union Performed', Non-Proliferation Papers, No. 23, February 2013, p. 8, <http://www.sipri.org/research/disarmament/eu-consortium/publications/nonproliferation-paper-27> (Accessed 8 April 2014).

<sup>35</sup> European Security Strategy: 'A secure Europe in a better world,' Brussels, 12 December 2003, <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/78367.pdf> (Accessed 7 April 2014).

## Construction of security relations

EU–China relations are nothing but complicated — they converge in some lofty objectives but diverge in interests. In the joint agreement *EU–China 2020 Strategic Agenda for Cooperation*, the two sides list thirteen initiatives that they need to take in order to make joint efforts for world peace and security. Many of these initiatives are related to the construction of bilateral security relations. The document addresses the necessity of dialogue and cooperation in the fields of nuclear security, international non–proliferation, transnational crime, illegal migration, anti–terrorism, maritime safety and security, cyber security and disaster relief, and consultations on issues from Africa, Central Asia, Latin America and the respective neighborhoods of the EU and China, at different levels including not only bilateral mechanisms, but also regional fora of ASEM and the ARF as well as the international platforms of the UN and G20, with the objectives of ‘increase mutual understanding’, ‘deepen mutual trust’, and ‘build common ground’.<sup>36</sup>

Apart from those more general ideas mentioned above, the document also states several initiatives more specifically in security cooperation:<sup>37</sup>

- Holding regular dialogues on defense and security policy, increase training exchanges, and gradually raise the level of EU–China dialogue and cooperation on defense and security, advancing towards more practical cooperation.
- Continue cooperation on maritime security, including on counter–piracy, and conduct joint counter–piracy exercises.

- Develop joint activities to promote maritime safety and security; share expertise in relation to relevant international law; develop exchanges on the Arctic, including joint research projects.
- Intensify co–operation with a view to promoting and facilitating the delivery of humanitarian aid solely based on the needs of people affected by disaster or crisis, and in accordance with humanitarian principles.

On the other hand, divergence exists and will not likely to be shortened in the foreseeable future. Therefore, if the EU and China want to develop more security cooperation, they need not only to outline a number of specific areas and tasks, but more importantly, to increase mutual understanding between each other. In order to do so, both of them have some homework to do. China needs, first of all, to upgrade its overall relations with the EU. The most recent visit by Chinese President Xi to the EU indicates ‘the Union’s growing political importance for China’.<sup>38</sup> The strategic competition between the U.S. and China seems to be unavoidable — the U.S. has taken a series of actions perceived to contain China’s rise, under the policy of ‘pivot to Asia’. In such situation, the EU, both as a close partner of the U.S. and an influential international player, is getting more important for China. If China could get more understanding and cooperation from the European side, the international environment for China would be more favorable.

China treats the EU differently from the U.S. in its foreign policy agenda, not only because the EU is regarded as an ally of the U.S., but also because the EU does not have a military presence in East Asia. However, as the EU, recently, has made

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<sup>36</sup> *EU–China 2020 Strategic Agenda for Cooperation*, launched at the 16th EU–China Summit, December 2013, [http://eeas.europa.eu/china/docs/eu-china\\_2020\\_strategic\\_agenda\\_en.pdf](http://eeas.europa.eu/china/docs/eu-china_2020_strategic_agenda_en.pdf) (Accessed 16 April 2013).

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Nicola Casarini, ‘Xi Jinping and the EU,’ *European Union Institute for Security Studies*, Report No. 22, April 2014, p. 2, [http://www.iss.europa.eu/uploads/media/Alert\\_22\\_China–EU.pdf](http://www.iss.europa.eu/uploads/media/Alert_22_China–EU.pdf) (Accessed 28 April 2014).

clearly that it has both security interests in Asia and intention to extend its influence in the region, China should reflect upon such EU policy change and adapt itself actively in order to maximise the possibility of cooperation with the EU. Second, for the EU to develop more trust in China, Beijing needs to increase transparency of its military modernisation programme. Not only the EU, but also many other countries are concerned about the rapid increase of China's military budget and would like to know its intention and objectives behind its military modernisation. China's rapid economic growth allows financial modernisation of its military. However, due to potential security problems in East Asia, including Cross-Strait relations, China's territorial disputes with Japan and some countries in Southeast Asia, China has become a focus of attention in the region. Many Europeans are skeptical about China's peaceful development policy. China's announcement of air defense identification zone in the East Asia Sea in November 2013 triggered deep concern from the EU, which commented in its declaration that such 'development heightens the risk of escalation and contributes to raising tensions in the region'.<sup>39</sup> In order to alleviate anxiety from the EU, China should establish a high level defense and security dialogue and more military-to-military exchanges with the EU. As Beijing invited U.S. Defence Secretary Chuck Hagel to tour its first aircraft carrier in early April 2014, the Chinese leaders may also consider inviting the Director General of the EU Military Staff to visit it, as a gesture of openness and transparency.

For the EU, since it has 'significant interests'<sup>40</sup> in East Asia, how it will proceed in the region in the field of security is crucial. Admittedly, the EU 'is building a strategy on East Asian security affairs that is more focused and ambitious than it has ever been'. The challenge is 'to keep up its engagement, develop an independent voice and to uphold a long-term commitment to strengthening stability in the region'.<sup>41</sup> If the EU can do so, and 'speak out' 'if the United States acts in a way that threatens stability in East Asia', then it will help 'strengthen the EU's image as a neutral but engaged stakeholder in East Asian stability'.<sup>42</sup> The EU's efforts of getting more actively involved in Asian affairs are motivated by promoting rules and standards based on international multilateralism. While Washington's strategic shift towards Asia seems to target at containing China's rise, the European policy in Asia should be made clear that it is 'untrammelled by binding military alliances and is not aimed at/against any particular country in the region'.<sup>43</sup> In this way, China may be convinced of the EU's value of presence in East Asia.

## Prospects for the coming years

For the moment, EU-China security relations are in the process of development. It takes time for such relationship to become mature. How such relationship will evolve in the coming years will depend, to a large degree, on how each of them deals with the U.S. The EU, eager to "counteract the perception that it does not engage enough with the Asia Pacific region and that it is only an

<sup>39</sup> EU Press Release, 'Declaration by the High Representative Catherine Ashton on behalf of the European Union on the establishment by China of an "East China Sea Air Defence Identification Zone"', 28 November 2013, Brussels, 17082/1/13 REV 1, PRESSE 514, [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/139752.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/139752.pdf) (Accessed 29 April 2014).

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Maaïke Okano-Heijmans and Frans-Paul van der Putten, 'The EU should stay its independent course in East Asia,' *Europe's World*, 29 January 2014, <http://europesworld.org/2014/01/29/the-eu-should-stay-its-independent-course-in-east-asia/#.U2Dj59KKC70> (Accessed 23 April 2014).

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Nicola Casarini, 'The European "Pivot"', *European Union Institute for Security Studies, Alerts*, No. 3, 26 March 2013, p. 3, <http://www.iss.europa.eu/publications/detail/article/the-european-pivot/> (Accessed 23 April 2014)

economic actor”,<sup>44</sup> intends to get its voice heard and its influence felt, be it economic, political or security. While the “EU shares with the US the interest to influence and shape the regulatory environment in the Asia–Pacific”, they may also be competitors when their interests ‘may not converge’.<sup>45</sup> China, on the other hand, has less convergence with the U.S. than with the EU in security relations, since the U.S. and China are, to a large degree, strategic competitors in the region.<sup>46</sup> If the EU develops into an independent player in East Asia, free from the influence of the U.S., neutral and engaged in the regional stability, China may develop more trust with the EU and would more welcome the EU’s involvement in security issues of East Asia. Bilateral security cooperation will be stimulated. If the EU fails to keep an independent policy, but manages only to support the U.S.’ role of balance in the region, then EU–China security relations will stagnate or even retreat. China will try to frustrate the EU’s efforts in the region, which will back–fire the

overall EU–China partnership. China will regard the EU’s ‘pivot to Asia’ as a zero–sum game, just as that of the U.S. Of course, one cannot forget the influence of China’s domestic development on bilateral relations. China’s deepening reform will have a notable impact on its economic and social development. The success of reform will give more confidence to Chinese leadership and will probably lead to a more assertive foreign policy; yet, domestic problems may also lead to rising nationalism and hostility against the outside world.

Needless to say, uncertainty exists in EU–China future security relations. Among all the dialogues established between the EU and China, more than two thirds fall under the second pillar, serving bilateral economic and trade ties. More dialogue and consultation mechanisms should be introduced at different levels and for different issues in the first pillar in order for EU–China security relations to be further enhanced.

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<sup>44</sup> Michael Reiterer, ‘EU–U.S. engagement in the Asia–Pacific’, in Yeo Lay Hwee and Barnard Turner (eds.), *Changing Tides and Changing Ties — Anchoring Asia–Europe Relations in Challenging Times*, EU Centre in Singapore, Singapore, 2012, pp. 105–106.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 111.

<sup>46</sup> The Sino–U.S. relations are even more complicated than Sino–EU relations. To say that they are strategic competitors does not exclude the necessity of cooperation between the two sides in bilateral, regional and international affairs.

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