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Striving for Symmetry in Partnership: An Analysis of Sino-EU Relations Based on the Two Recently Published Policy Papers

On October 13, 2003, the PRC government published its “*Policy Paper on the Relationship with the EU*”. This was the first time in PRC history that the Chinese government made its assessment of and strategic orientation for its relationship with a foreign country or a particular region of the world known to the public. This fact alone shows how much Sino-EU relations have gained in importance and how much hope is vested into the future development of this relationship on the side of the Chinese government. The EU had published its latest policy paper under the title of “*A Maturing Partnership – Shared Interests and Challenges in EU-China Relations*” slightly earlier. In this paper, the EU underlines the maturity of its relationship to China and outlines a prospect of positive developments for the future.

This article aims at comparing the two above mentioned policy papers by giving them a close reading and putting the interpretation of the texts into a historical context as well as into the context of academic debates on EU-China relations as conducted both in China and in Europe. The idea is to explore the mutual perceptions of what both sides call a “maturing” partnership and to assess to which degree their mutual perceptions are compatible with each other.

THE CHINA STRATEGY OF THE EU

The European Community (transformed into the European Union by the Treaty of Maastricht of 1993) had already established diplomatic relations with the PRC in 1975, several years before the US had done so and as a logical consequence of several EC member states establishing or resuming diplomatic relations with the PRC since the late 1960s. However, in the beginning stages of its relationship, cooperation was confined to import export activities resulting into a Trade Treaty of 1978, renewed in 1985, and a Textile Treaty of 1979. A deepening of this relationship envisioned for the 1980s was jeopardized by the 1989 incident

on Tian'anmen Square which was prompted by a halt to contacts. Since 1992 a process of normalization has taken place which has gained momentum since 1995 with the growing interest of both sides pushing the relationship to the point reflected by the two above mentioned policy papers.

The EU's China strategy is marked by a fundamental particularity which makes it different from its policies towards countries of the so called Third World and countries in Eastern Europe. This is first and foremost true for the EU's human rights policies. Safeguarding human rights, developing democracy and introducing the rule of law are basic preconditions the EU demands to be fulfilled both in cooperating with Third World as well as post-socialist countries from Eastern Europe. Although these items are also on the EU's agenda in its relationship to China, the EU does not dispose of any mechanisms to enforce its demands. The instrument of political dialogue established in 1994 does not include any sanctions in case the PRC does not comply with its rules except for the EU interrupting the relationship (as in the case of the Tian'anmen Incident of 1989) or supporting UN resolutions critical of China. Under these circumstances, however, the PRC could call off its participation in the political dialogue depriving the EU of its sole instrument through which to exert at least a certain influence on China (Baker 2002:59).

As a consequence of this constellation, the EU's main aim has so far been to convince the PRC government of the necessity to become a positive and active member of the international community of states by accepting and implementing international norms and standards. Simultaneously, the EU tries to accompany the process of internal transformation in the PRC by "developing an overall partnership based on dialogue and oriented towards solving practical problems" (Schubert 2002) avoiding public criticism, confrontation and sanctions. Since 1995 the EU has actively supported reforms of politics and economy in China and thus tried to influence the further development in the PRC:

"I believe *political reform* will become increasingly irresistible as China's economy opens up to the world. Europe must keep up its support for reform not merely through high-minded statements but through practical and effective actions: *applying political pressure from the top down and helping China create a civic society, including a fully-fledged legal system, from the bottom up.*" (IP/95/731) (Italics added by the author)

Already in its 1995 policy paper "A Long Term Policy for China-Europe Relations" (COM (1995) 279) did the EU define human rights questions as of central importance for its cooperation with the PRC. In this paper, human rights issues occupy a sub-chapter of their own in the context of what is called "political relations". Three aims are to be achieved: integrating China into the international community, especially the WTO, supporting reforms in China, especially those

related to human rights, and developing economic cooperation between China and the EU. On the top of that, the situation of the so called national minorities (Tibet), and the special situation in Hong Kong and Macau are mentioned separately (COM (1995) 279). This shows that economic interests in cooperating with China had already gained some prominence. Nevertheless, the EU passed an official resolution on December 14, 1995 criticizing the imprisonment of Wei Jingsheng (PESC/95/102) and underlining its insistence on enhancing the human rights situation in the PRC. As a result, the PRC broke off the political dialogue with the EU in 1996.

Since 1996, several EU member states such as France, Spain, Italy, Greece and Germany have refrained from supporting resolutions critical of the human rights situation in the PRC, obviously responding to the needs of more bilateral trade with the PRC. As a result of this, the EU has been unable to define a stand towards human rights issues supported unanimously by all member states (Schubert 2002). A new EU China strategy was implemented in 1998, the keyword of which was a “comprehensive partnership” to be developed between the EU and China (COM (1998) 181). This paper is also a reaction to the CCP’s 15th Party Congress which decided on intensifying market reforms, as well as China’s role in the Asian Financial Crisis and its involvement in solving regional problems related to Korea, Cambodia and Hong Kong (Wiessala 2002:96). At the same time, the EU stopped backing UN resolutions critical of the human rights situation in the PRC as a trade off for resuming the dialogue on human rights issues with the PRC. From this point on, the EU Parliament rather than the EU Commission has been standing at the forefront of criticism against human rights violations in the PRC, a form of criticism that has so far not had any negative impact on the EU relationship to China as it is only part of an internal discussion process and never officially forwarded to the PRC (Wiessala 2002:97).

With the help of the new concept of “comprehensive partnership” with China formulated in 1998, the political dialogue was intensified and complemented by annual summit meetings between the EU and the PRC. The first summit of this kind took place in April 1998 shortly after the publication of the second China policy on the occasion of the ASEM summit in London. It was during this summit that China’s integration into the ASEM process which had started in 1996 was formally proposed underlining the EU’s strategy to influence China’s process of transformation through integration into international organizations. Bilateral cooperation from this time on has been organized into the very five agendas outlined in the 1998 policy paper and all strategy papers to come. These include the growing integration of China into the international community, the support for the establishment of a society in which the rule of law guarantees the safeguarding of human rights, the promotion of China’s integration into the world economy,

increasing financial aid from the EU and last but not least efforts to enhance the EU's visibility in the PRC (COM (1998) 181).

Since 1998, the EU has voiced its assessment of EU China relations several times. These assessments reflect the progress of the EU's ability to define its China strategy. They are documented in two important communications called "*Report on the Implementation of the Communication 'Building a Comprehensive Partnership with China'*" (COM (2000) 552) and "*EU Strategy towards China: Implementation of the 1998 Communication and Future Steps for a More Effective EU Policy*" (COM (2001) 265). The March 2002 "*Strategy Paper for China*" also does not depart from the 1998 communication, however it is characterized a shift towards focusing the cooperation on technical and financial development aid for China. For the next five years to come, the EU is willing to support China with 250 million Euros to be spent on sustainable development, on the rule of law and the expansion of civil society. "Good governance" is the primary concern of the EU's China policies, a new orientation which has already been reflected by the EU's aid to the introduction of democratic elements into the Chinese political system such as the experiments with local elections at the grassroots level in the Chinese countryside which have been going on since 1987 (Umbach/Fulda 2003:47–56).

In the summer of 2003 the European Union published its to date latest communication based on the 1995 strategy. The policy paper "*A Maturing Partnership – Shared Interests and Challenges in EU-China Relations*" is quite obviously an attempt to adapt the EU's strategy to the new situation since 2001 both in China and in the EU. The system of political dialogue is expanded in the 2003 paper (COM (2003) 533). What has already been established as regular meetings and arrangements found between the leaders of both sides since 2002 is complemented in this paper by multiple levels of coordination, transforming the top-down structure of cooperation into a more and more complex and multi-faceted system of contacts. With regard to the dialogue on human rights, the EU's policy paper states that the aims formulated in 1995 had been reached with the PRC government basically accepting the human rights mechanisms of the UN and entering the discussion on the UN convention on human rights. The next step as discussed by the EU Council during its meeting on March 18, 2003, would be for the PRC government to ratify the UN convention (PRES/03/63).

While discussions on questions concerning the implementation of human rights continue, additional mechanisms have been created to discuss questions related to the development of information society, of free trade and of nutrition safety. As far as security and technology questions are concerned, the EU and the PRC have decided to intensify their cooperation (Galileo Project) knowing that the technological cooperation would be a much easier to handle issue compared to

human rights and the transformation of the political system. Visible successes in this field are expected despite the problems of defining the dividing line between the civil and the military sectors (dual use technologies) and of safeguarding intellectual property by avoiding unintended technology transfers.

CHINESE PERSPECTIVES ON SINO-EU RELATIONS

Friedrich has shown that the Chinese perception of the EU and its policies does not necessarily reflect the matter of fact understanding of the situation. Instead, what academic debates in the PRC are aimed at is to develop a theoretical framework with the help of which to define China's position in the world. That is why he introduces the concept of "articulated perception" as the result of "transferring Chinese conceptions of the world order" to the analysis of the world as such (Friedrich 2000:220). Consequently, any analysis of Sino-EU relations has to take the theoretical framework into account that moulds the "articulated perception". Since the 1980s, this theoretical framework has been marked by the concepts of "independence and self reliance" as well as "multi-polarity" while the concept of triangularity which opens up the opportunity for the PRC to manoeuvre between the US and Russia still persists and exerts a certain influence (Friedrich 2000:220–226).

Already since times when the PRC government used the theory of intermediate zones and later on the theory of the three worlds as its theoretical frameworks, Europe was given an important strategic position in the Chinese world order. At the time, PRC strategists knew very well that it could deploy its strengths best when acting as a third global player in situations of bipolar conflicts. During the Cold War, especially since the beginning of Ping-Pong-Diplomacy, this strategy had proven successful which is why the dissolution of the Soviet Union was perceived as a loss of international influence and strength by the Chinese government. A uni-polar world is disadvantageous to the PRC, especially as China is easily pushed into the unfavorable position of a counter pole to dominant power structures. Consequently, the PRC government reiterates the necessity of a multi-polar world order, trying to act as often as possible as mediator in upcoming conflicts.

Only when several poles compete with each other, does the PRC have the possibility to choose between different options in its strategic orientation (Xi Runchang 2000:45–48). The centre of its attention is the necessity to secure a stable and peaceful situation for economic growth in terms of the overall global situation as well as of the countries in its immediate neighborhood. The development of strategic alliances, for example with the EU, the US or with India, reflects a modern understanding of international politics as well as the self assessment on the

side of the PRC government of a regional power pursuing its legitimate interests as part of the international community.

The US, Europe, Russia and Japan are together with the PRC the five poles of the multi-polar system. The rise of the US as a consequence of the decline of Russia, however, threatens the continued existence of the multi-polar system. In response to this, both government and academic publications in the PRC underline that the PRC's foreign policy is still based on the "Five Principles of Peaceful Co-Existence" and therefore aimed at avoiding military conflicts in international politics (Liu Qingcai 2001:104–109).

The PRC has always encouraged the EU to take over the role of a pole in the multi-polar system underlining a common foreign policy as well as an independent defense strategy as two important preconditions for taking over this role. That is why the position of a High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, created by the Treaty of Amsterdam and currently held by Javier Solana, the role of the EU Troika as well as plans to organize a European army independent of NATO structures are seen by academics from the PRC as steps into the right direction (Feng Zhongping 2004a:51).

Even though the EU and China both officially declare that their political dialogue in its institutionalized form as well as their growing relationship is not directed against third parties, the academic discussion in the PRC reveals a slightly different perspective as it does not reiterate the idea that Sino-EU relations could be confined to fulfilling the respective self interests. Instead academic contributions to the discussion underline that strengthening relations with the EU serves the purpose of counterbalancing the hegemonic tendencies of the US.

"As the superiority of the Sino EU strategy is reflected in the economic sphere rather than in the realm of military power, the EU and China stand for a new political and economic order as a result of reforms and not for a form of military superiority as a means to dominate the world as displayed by the US." (Liu Wenxiu 2002:71)

Chinese researchers conceive of the EU as using financial incentives as well as means of cooperation and dialogue in order to transfer its system of norms and structures to other countries. It is in this context that they cast an eye over the situation of post-socialist countries in Eastern Europe and their integration into the EU. They pay close attention to the fact that with its expansion into Eastern Europe the EU has not only enlarged its geographical space and economic power, it has also gained in importance as a focus of identification. With this gain of symbolic power the EU is prepared to apply more successfully as in the past hard power strategies vis à vis third party states, but, what is even more important, its preconditions for applying soft power strategies have been enhanced especially

in multi-lateral contexts. Consequently, according to the academic discourse in the PRC, China will have to cope with the EU making stronger efforts to export its own (“capitalist”) values, especially its understanding of human rights, to Asia (Wang Haixia 2003:21–22; Zeng Yuan 2001:59).

Also in security matters has the EU gained in importance since its expansion into Eastern Europe. This implies that the EU could be regarded as a potential counter player besides the US and Japan, especially if the EU decided to interfere with what China regards as the geopolitical order of Asia. That is why those researchers interested in questions of geo-strategy and security argue in favour of China developing its cooperation with the EU and the US simultaneously in order to use one to restrict the other with the aim of consolidating China’s position in the region (Xiao 2004:49).

The main difference between the academic discourse in the PRC and in Europe consists in a difference of assessment regarding the importance of the EU in the realm of international relations and the implications of the human rights issue for Sino-EU relations. Only recently has the Chinese academic discourse acknowledged the weight of the EU in international politics as equaling the importance of the US, Japan and Russia (Feng Zhongping 2004a:49). This is clearly due to the progressing integration of Europe and the ongoing discussion on the European constitution. However, the two discourses do not show any sign of conversion when it comes to discussing the implications of the human rights issue for Sino-EU relations. While the EU regards the human rights issue as highly important not only as a matter of principle but also in order to avoid being labeled as only pursuing selfish economic interests, academics in the PRC tend to downgrade this problem and its relevance for the future relationship between the PRC and the EU.

The situation in Hong Kong is another aspect of Sino-EU relations the implications of which are often overlooked by researchers from the PRC. This contrasts sharply with the EU’s view that the former British crown colony should be regarded as “an agent of change” helping to transfer (Western) standards of administration as well as human rights to the polity of the PRC. During his term as the last British Governor of Hong Kong as well as in his capacity as the EU’s Commissioner for External Affairs Chris Patten did not miss any chance to make this point clear (Wiessala 2002:98–99). Macao, too, is seen as a model for China, especially as Macao belongs to the founding members of the WTO (Wiessala 2002:101). But neither the Chinese government nor academic discourse raises these issues. Instead, they tend to underline that there are no direct conflicts inhibiting the relations between the EU and China from progressing as contrary to China’s relations with Russia and Japan there are no territorial or border conflicts involved.

THE CHINESE EU POLICY

With its EU policy paper the PRC for the first time in the 30 year history of Sino-EU relations makes its view of this strategic partnership known to the public. No comparable strategy paper has so far been published with regard to China's relations with ASEAN states or the US, with other countries of the region or other regional organizations.

The Chinese EU policy was published on October 13, 2003 only shortly after the EU had made its own strategy paper for future relations with China known to the public (COM (2003) 533). The document is subdivided into four parts. In its introduction, it defines the position of Sino-EU relations in the realm of international politics. This is followed by remarks about "the status and the role of the EU" and a chapter on the "Chinese policy toward the EU". The final chapter is dedicated to "deepening Sino-EU relations in all fields". This is where the PRC government outlines its view for the next five years of cooperation.

In the introduction, the paper reiterates the PRC's view on a multi-polar globalised world in which peace, stability and development have to be maintained. It transfers the notion of "*xiaokang shehui*" (welfare society) from the realm of internal politics to the international field defining a fair world order of equal rights as the aim to be achieved by a "foreign policy of independence and self reliance". In this context, the EU takes over the role of a regional and global player which is economically integrated by a common currency and geographically expanded to 25 member states.

A central argument of the paper deals with the necessity of a partnership of equals, based on mutual respect (*huzhong*), mutual confidence (*huxin*), mutual advantage (*huli*), and reciprocity (*huhui*). Cooperation is asked for in the fields of politics, economy, science and technology as well as education. Social, administrative, and judicial aspects as well as the military sector are mentioned. In the realm of politics, the PRC document is mostly interested in questions of stability, both in terms of internal and regional politics. This includes problems of labour migration, social security, human resources, poverty alleviation, and pollution control. When referring to the limits of the EU's Taiwan policies, the insistence on the One-China-Principle and the EU's stand toward the issues of Tibet, Hong Kong, and Macao, the PRC paper reiterates the Chinese government's position on maintaining and safeguarding territorial integrity and sovereignty.

The issue of regional and international security is covered in a comparatively long sub- chapter of the paper. The PRC wants both sides to get involved in finding solutions for regional problems (i.e. North Korea) and to strengthen international cooperation by actively participating in UN and ASEM activities. The PRC paper also backs the fight against international terrorism as well as activities for

international arms control before taking up the issue of military cooperation and lifting the EU arms embargo.

This shows that the PRC government is primarily concerned with using foreign politics as an instrument of reaching aims in the realm of internal politics. Its relations with the EU are seen as favorable in terms of economic growth and social stability. Questions of international concern are only raised if in the interest of both sides. This means that no demands are being forwarded that are not or only indirectly linked to the EU as well as no issues are being raised which are of concern only for the EU and not for China. The issues that are being raised as possible fields of cooperation read like the agenda of the PRC government for solving social problems in China. The inclusion of classical issues of development policies such as migration, poverty alleviation, pollution control, public health and similar topics reflects the new leadership's concern for questions of social stability, a political orientation that has long been asked for, but which did not form the focus of attention of the Jiang Zemin/Zhu Rongji leadership. Quite obviously, the new leadership sees these problems as major risk factors for the social and political stability of the country.

The fact that the PRC paper subsumes the Tibet problem to the possible fields of cooperation shows a slight, but important deviation from its earlier stance. While it used to insist that the Tibet question was a question of internal politics where international involvement should be rejected as an infringement of sovereignty, the PRC paper now asks for the EU's support for its Tibet as well as Taiwan policies. In contrast to its earlier stance, the PRC now tries to instrumentalise its international partners for reaching aims that had so far been explicitly left to internal politics.

The principles raised in the introduction of the paper are easily put aside as formulae without content. However, they should not be neglected as they reflect the self perception of China's position in the world. China regards itself as strong enough to demand equality in its international partnerships. External norms imposed on China therefore potentially violate the principle of equality no matter whether they relate to questions of economics or of politics. To raise certain demands and to define their fulfillment as a precondition to future collaboration as the EU tries in the case of its cooperation with Third World countries seems utterly counterproductive and will only meet with repulsion from the PRC government.

DIVERGING ORIENTATIONS AND TERMINOLOGIES

The China policy as forwarded by the EU defines the aims of Sino-EU relations in two areas: on the one hand as support for "China in its transition to an

open society based on the rule of law and on human rights”, on the other hand as promoting the “opening of China’s economy” (COM [2003] 533). The development of civil society, the establishment of an open society and progress toward a full fledged market economy are mentioned. All this taken together equals a system change for the PRC. Also in the fields of cooperation on issues of law and administration as well as what China’s integration into the WTO is concerned, the EU policy defines standards and criteria for the PRC to comply with. The PRC paper is silent on these issues, preferring to stress economic growth as the result of Sino-EU relations hoped for.

The two policy papers quite obviously have conflicting policy aims. From the point of view of the PRC government, the EU’s demands for fundamental change in China are the main obstacle to a “maturing partnership” which is alluded to in both papers. The EU’s hope for what amounts to a system change in China violates the principle of a “partnership of equals” formulated in the Chinese paper and reveals a lack of equality which the Chinese side so urgently asks for in the introduction to its paper. Even though commentators on both sides applauded the positive development of Sino-EU relations in responding to the two policies, a closer look reveals a certain autism on both sides that is quite remote from an adequate understanding of respective particularities and respect for diverging interests. The Chinese side keeps silent on all issues that are not directly related to its economic interests and security considerations. This silence, however, does not prevent the EU from sticking to its hope of transferring its own norms to the PRC.

“Governance” is one of the keywords that are frequently used in the EU’s China policy. The term refers to the problem of “governability” on two levels. When used in the sense of “global governance” it refers to the realm of regional and international politics whereas it is used in the sense of “good governance” in the context of the rule of law, of transparent administrative structures and democracy. However, the fact that this is a keyword of central importance for the EU policy paper does not mean that the Chinese paper would adopt or else respond to it (for a discussion of the concept of “governance” in the PRC see Wang Yizhou 2000:30). When looking at the academic debate in the PRC, one will easily find an answer to this lack of responsiveness: the term does not play a major role in these discussions, and it is quite difficult to find an adequate translation for the term to begin with. Two possibilities occur in the few texts related to the issue: “*shanzhi*” stands for the art of governing, “*zhili*” for rules of governing and administration. No matter what term they use all participants in the debate stress that good governance is only possible if based on the cooperation of government institutions with non government organizations. The capabilities of the state are to be complemented by the self organization of society so that the state is in a bet-

ter position to maintain its rule over society. Very often the term “governance” in the sense of “*zhili*” is used when discussing questions of rural administration or of “corporate governance”. However, “governance” in the sense of the EU policy does not occur in Chinese language articles on the topic. That is why, where the EU paper speaks about governance, the Chinese paper does not¹. The human rights issue is mentioned in the EU paper as a problem of governance, while the PRC paper raises it in the context of “political dialogue”. As the two papers were published consecutively, the fact that the Chinese side refrains from joining into the use of the term “good governance” has to be seen as a conscious departure from EU terminology.

When Chinese authors use the term “governance”, they refer to the situation in rural areas. The EU however is focused on the situation in the more developed urban areas. During recent months, many reports about unrest in the Chinese countryside have shown that overcoming the rural urban dichotomy by ameliorating life in the Chinese countryside is a precondition to making China stable for the future. If the EU continues to overlook this problem and instead continues to focus on the situation in urban areas, its hope for a positive development in China might be jeopardized by growing unrest in Chinese villages. The development in Eastern Europe is not a model for what is happening in China. To hope that the situation in China might follow the rules of peaceful regime change in Eastern Europe means designing a future for China which is unlikely to be matched by what is going to happen. The high percentage of rural population still marks a major particularity of post-Mao China that any scenario for the future development has to take in account.

According to Minxin Pei (2002) China’s governance crisis is a crisis of rural areas and structures. The loss of legitimacy and esteem for the CCP has led to a loss of state control as well as state services in the countryside. Regional disparities, a deepening divide between state and society, and a more and more obvious gap between rich and poor go along with a diminishing capacity of the CCP to maintain its power monopoly. Conflicts between state and society aggravate, as the state gets rid of its enterprises and ideologically and politically motivated mass campaigns are replaced by an orientation toward economic success, putting the CCP into a position where its claim to power monopoly in China is measured against economic growth. As long as the CCP leadership is unwilling or unable to

¹ The Chinese Policy Paper on the EU does not mention the term “*zhili*”, but refers to “*guanli*”, which can be translated as “managing”. However, the term “*guanli*” appears only in the chapters on transport, finance and environmental issues, which in this context do not belong to the European concept of “governance” (*Zhongguo dui Oumeng zhengce wenjian* 2003, chapter 2.3; 2.4; 2.7).

find a solution for what some people call the negative consequences of its reform policy, the danger of growing local unrest, especially in the densely populated areas of Hunan, Henan, and Anhui might well lead to an overall destabilization of CCP rule in China (Pei 2002).

To focus on the democratization of China's urban areas complies with EU principles, however, under the given circumstances in the PRC, this strategy involves the danger that a weakened state loses control of the rural areas and cannot prevent rural society from exerting a destructive influence on the cities. There will be no space for civil society any more, and hopes for the development of a market economy will be jeopardized by social destabilization.

The Chinese policy paper develops the concept that the EU should support China's economic development and administrative capacities. It reiterates the PRC's demand for equality in the partnership time and again using wordings such as "collaboration" (*hezuo*), "exchange" (*jiaoliu*), "reciprocity" (*huhui*) and "constructive understanding" (*liaojie*) wherever possible. It does, of course, not envisage system change. Cooperation in the fields of agriculture, sustainable development and in the energy sector is welcome, but only if not damaging to the overall demand for a partnership of equals. In future, China not only wants European institutions and delegations to come to China, it also wants its own financial institutions and other facilities to become active in Europe.

On the other hand, the PRC paper picks up some of the basic issues raised by the EU Commission since 1995. The terminology of "political dialogue" and human rights appears as an integral part of the paper's vocabulary, for example. But as natural as the usage of these words seems to be, a closer look reveals that even in this domain, the two partners have a different understanding of one and the same word. For the PRC only those topics are worth mentioning under the title of "political dialogue" that are controversial and at the same time high on China's list of priorities. That is why the "One-China-Policy" and the future of Hong Kong, Macao and Tibet are subsumed in the category of "political dialogue" while problems such as illegal migration, trans-national pollution and arms export – all of vital importance for the EU – do not fall under this category. Both partners have the safeguarding of peace and international stability on their agendas, however these issues are part of what the EU calls global governance and not of "international cooperation", a term used in the PRC paper rooted in an understanding of international politics based on the concept of sovereignty.

When it comes to the problem of political transformation, the PRC side asks for an exchange of political parties and institutions avoiding the keywords the EU uses in this context. Take the keyword "civil society" as an example. The Chinese side does not use it in its paper although it has long since been established in the

academic discourse in the PRC where the term is adapted to the political system so that even the mass organizations of the CCP can be included². No wonder that delegations from these organizations can be exchanged under the category of “strengthening civil society”.

CONFLICTS OF STRATEGIC DIMENSIONS: ARMS EMBARGO, MARKET ECONOMY STATUS
AND MEASURES TO COUNTER TERRORISM

Not only on the level of language and wording do we find diverging ideas between the EU and the PRC. The strategic partnership both sides like to herald also reveals a divergence of strategic orientations. This becomes obvious when reading the PRC based interpretations of the two policy papers.

On October 14, 2003, one day after the official publication of the PRC document, the state news agency *Xinhua* published a commentary to the Chinese policy paper. In this commentary, three aspects are underlined: China’s demand for an end to the EU’s arms embargo that has been in effect since the PRC government’s bloody suppression of the students’ movement in 1989, the demand for an officially acknowledged market economy status and China’s hope for a close cooperation with the EU in fighting international terrorism (*Xinhua* 10/14/2003). The three aspects mentioned by *Xinhua* should play a key role in all other commentaries to be published and are crucial for an adequate understanding of the PRC’s paper. Up until today, even academic commentaries refer to these main ideas.

An April 2005 article in the academic journal *International Studies (Guoji wenti yanjiu)* by Huo Zhengde argues that based on what *Xinhua* had selected as the three major aspects of the policy paper the Sino-EU relationship cannot be assessed as a “mature partnership”. As long as the EU did not lift its sanctions against the PRC, the EU’s policy could only be understood as an attempt to westernize (*xihua*) China by unconditionally adopting European concepts of human rights and the rule of law. In addition to criticizing the EU for its attempt to transfer its norms and models to China, Huo also mentions that the EU applies different standards when assessing counter terrorist measures. What the EU sup-

² See Yu Keping’s study on “civil society” and “good governance”, in which he analyses the changing definition of the Chinese civil society (*gongmin shehui*) and its position in the political system in relation to China’s domestic development. He also refers to mass organizations of the CCP (workers’ union, youth organization) in the 1990s: Yu Keping: *Zhongguo gongmin shehui de xingqi ji qi dui zhili de yiyi* (The rising of a Chinese civil society and its governance implications). Available online: <http://www.gongfa.com/civilsocietyykp.htm> (22.07.2005). See also: Yu Keping et al. (2002) (eds.): *Gongmin shehui de xingqi he zhili de bianqian*. Beijing: Shehui kexue wenzhai chubanshe.

ports as counter terrorism in one country is being criticized in the context of East-Turkestan, Xinjiang, Taiwan and Hong Kong (Huo Zhengde 2005:4–5).

Huo Zhengde's articles make clearer what had been left slightly vague in the above mentioned Xinhua commentary. As part of its fight against terrorism on its own territory, the PRC seems to seek support from those countries and regions like the EU and its member states which acknowledge the PRC as the only legitimate representative of the Chinese people. This includes supporting the Beijing government in its repulsion of Taiwan's demand for independence. This new turn toward internationalizing the Taiwan issue can be understood as a reaction to the EU's policies toward Russia and Chechnya. To subsume the Taiwan issue into the category of counter terrorism means that China is aimed at gaining international support even for violent steps against Taiwan. As a matter of fact, this argument was put forward quite frankly in a TV discussion broadcasted by the Chinese TV. Participants of this discussion used the term "to chechnise Taiwan" when comparing the situation in Chechnya and in Taiwan. In both cases, the demand for independence was interpreted as a form of separatism with governmental actions against it seen as measures of counter terrorism (Fenghuang 2004). When the PRC used to stress international involvement in the Taiwan question was unacceptable, the new Taiwan policy seeks the opportunity to internationalize the question in times of the international fight against terrorism. The above mentioned TV discussion was by no means a discussion on internal politics. On the contrary, it was a discussion on counter terrorist policies in Russia, on the third anniversary of 9/11 and on the problem of nuclear weapons in East Asia. Thus, the Taiwan question was raised in the context of international politics and the legitimacy of this approach underlined by outlining the scenario of a nuclear armed Taiwan demanding independence. Looking at Taiwan's independence from this angle, the argument goes, it is quite clear that it is for the benefit of the international community to support China's claim for national unity even if forwarded by force.

If this interpretation of the situation is correct, it forces us to look at the partnership between the EU and China from a different angle. What seemed to be a lack of equality in the partnership to the disadvantage of the PRC turns out to be a chance for China to treat its endurance of the EU's insistence on system change for the EU's support for China's policy against Taiwan. In both cases, demands are being raised that are over-demanding which again reveals the "mature partnership" to be a dream for the future rather than an adequate description of the status quo. Only if the EU goes so far as to unconditionally support the PRC in whatever measure it might take to "safeguard national unity" the precondition of the Chinese side for a further deepening of the partnership is fulfilled. And only if the PRC is willing to undergo system change is the ground set for what the EU envisages as the future of the relationship of equals.

The Xinhua commentary also sees international terrorism as the main threat to peace and stability (Xinhua 10/14/2003). As the EU has a similar assessment of the international situation, this opens up the opportunity to cooperate on an international level and for the PRC to be an acknowledged participant of the worldwide fight against terrorism. This again supports the PRC's claim to act as mediator in regional conflicts related to terrorism. It is in this context that Feng Zhongping analyses the EU's stand toward talks with North Korea and comes to the conclusion that in contrast to the US, the EU does not favor a policy of isolating North Korea. Instead it prefers dialogue as a means of avoiding military conflict in East Asia. Consequently, with China participating in the North Korea talks, it can lend support to the EU's stand and thus underline its role as a stabilizing factor in the region. To some degree, this situation adds to the attractiveness of a "deepened partnership between the EU and the PRC" especially as the EU is still weakened in its international activities by a lack of common strategy for East Asia (Feng Zhongping 2004b).

Besides striving for international support for its Taiwan policy and for unequivocal commitment to its One-China-Policy the PRC aims at a normalization of Sino-EU relations by demanding a lift of the arms embargo and for acknowledgement of its market economy status. This becomes very clear when taking the fact into account that the PRC's strategy paper refrains from voicing an overall assessment of Sino-EU relations at the end of the paper, but finishes it with a rather abrupt reference to the EU's arms embargo. Quite obviously, the market economy status and the lift of the arms embargo are two major preconditions to a deepening of the relationship (*Zhongguo dui Oumeng zhengce wenjian* 2003).

The arms embargo is also raised as an issue by several authoritative commentaries published together with the internet version of the PRC document. All of these commentaries refer to the problem of the arms embargo either in their titles or in their texts³. Only if the EU complies with the PRC's demands and puts an end to the sanctions as well as trade restrictions, these commentaries say, is it possible for the partnership to develop positively. The then Chinese ambassador in Germany Ma Congrong puts this idea into the following words:

"The continuation of the embargo was 'discriminating', Ma said. 'It's an embarrassment. It hinders the relationship. We cannot have a normal relationship with the EU as long as the embargo is in place.'" (International Herald Tribune 04/06/2005).

³ See for example *Renmin Ribao* (10/29/2003): "*Jiechu dui Hua junshoujinling – Tuidong Zhong-Ou guanxi wending fazhan: Zhonggou shouci fabiao dui Oumeng zhengce wenjian*" (Lifting the arms embargo – Promoting the stable development of Sino-EU relations: China issues its first policy paper on the EU).

In the eyes of China's Prime Minister Hu Jintao, the arms embargo is "a product of the Cold War" (*lengzhan chanwu*). It has to be removed to put an end to the "discrimination (*qishi*) of China" (*Xinhua* 12/8/2004). The idea of partnership, says Hu Jintao, excludes the privilege of one side to punish the other through sanctions. Thus the PRC should not be misconceived as being passive in its partnership with the EU, to the contrary, China wants to actively mould the partnership according to its own requirements.

It is important to note that the Chinese side likes to underline that the lifting of the arms embargo is but a symbolic act of only minor practical consequences. It is widely known that the PRC imports products from the EU which are needed for the modernization of its army. To downgrade the political meaning of lifting the arms embargo therefore mostly serves the purpose of refuting the argument that Taiwan's security could be affected by this move. Symbolic might also mean that rather than helping the PRC to buy more weapons for its army, the EU's lift of the arms embargo could be counted as a major diplomatic success for China's foreign policy and its strive for "equality", "normalization" and multiple options in international politics. Not symbolic, but clearly practical would be the result of lifting the arms embargo if the PRC used its success to convince Russia to continue selling weapons and to reconsider the sales conditions in the face of growing competition from EU member states (Umbach 2005b:75).

Apart from the problem of the arms embargo, Chinese commentaries raise yet another problem impeding the partnership of equals (*Xinhua* 10/14/2003): The EU has not yet acknowledged China as a country with a full fledged market economy even though by the year 2005 the EU had grown to be the most important trade partner of China, ranking first before the US and Japan (Renmin Ribao 4/29/2005). The PRC has already tried to gain acknowledgement of its "market economy status" since 1998 when it was taken from the EU's list of "non market economy" countries. Every time the EU rejected the request on the basis of its examinations having shown deficits in four out of five areas under scrutiny: in the banking sector, concerning property rights and insolvency regulations, corporate governance and the reduction of state involvement into companies (MEMO/04/163).

THE 2004 SUMMIT: A DEEPENING OF PARTNERSHIP?

After the EU-China Summit in The Hague in December 2004 both sides reiterated their interest in intensifying cooperation. The EU showed its acknowledgement for the PRC's continuing reform efforts and regarded its own strategies for China as successful. On this basis, the EU made certain concessions while the Chinese side tried to flatter its partner by underlining the growing impor-

tance of the EU as a result of its expansion into Eastern Europe (Joint Statement 12/8/2004). However, the Chinese Prime Minister Hu Jintao did not miss the chance to explain China's principles of international politics and to renew, even before the summit, the demand to lift the arms embargo and to comply with the One-China-Principle. Thus he did not refrain from criticizing members of the EU parliament who keep in close contact with President Chen Shuibian. The latter had been rejected the necessary visa procedures for a visit to Europe which had been planned for the spring of 2005. However, in spite of diplomatic pressures from the PRC a video conference took place on March 1, 2005 in which members of the EU parliament discussed the consequences of the PRC's Anti-Secession Law for Taiwan with Chen Shuibian.

China's demand for a partnership of equals was reiterated underlining that future cooperation should be based on understanding (*xianghu liaojie*) and confidence (*xianghu xinren*) (Ministry of Foreign Affairs PRC 12/10/2004), indirectly hinting at the transfer of norms and standards to be unacceptable for the Chinese side.

An agreement was signed during the summit on the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and on arms control. As Chris Patten already explained before the summit, these two agreements as well as the acknowledgement of the international code of conduct were necessary preconditions to be fulfilled before the lifting of the arms embargo could come into effect. Additionally, Chris Patten asked for progress in questions of human rights (SPEECH/04/483,11/16/2004). Thus, he was referring to the code of conduct for arms exports from EU member states that had been in existence since 1998. However, a global agreement which had been discussed by the EU Parliament before the summit in The Hague is still pending.

Some EU member states, among them France and Germany, backed the demands raised by the Chinese side in its 2003 policy asking for a lifting of the arms embargo as a sign of normalization and deepening of partnership. This argument, however, was met with severe criticism from NGOs since the National People's Congress passed the Anti-Secession-Law in March 2005 (*Fan fenlie guojia fa* 03/14/2005). They regard lifting the arms embargo as a wrong signal in times of tightening relations across the straits and ask for progress in human rights issues as well. Otherwise, an aggravation of the human rights situation and threats of violence against Taiwan and against national minorities on the mainland would be the bitter consequence of the EU's decision. If the EU accepted these consequences, major damage for its image and trustworthiness could not be excluded (Report on Human Rights 36, Gesellschaft für bedrohte Völker GFBV:2004).

While France and Germany continue to support the call for a lift of the arms embargo, Great Britain sides with the US in voicing its reservations. However,

as the UK seems to prefer not to “solve” the arms embargo dilemma during the British EU presidency, a shift in the strategic orientations of the UK and its participation in a new discussion on a code of conduct as necessary preconditions for a lifting of the embargo are likely to occur.

The US have in the meantime threatened with sanctions against the EU in case the decision in favor of lifting the embargo should be taken, the argument being that this decision would contribute to a further tightening of tensions between Taiwan and the mainland and to destabilizing East Asia (Umbach 2005a:49). The US regards its interests as violated and criticizes the Sino-EU cooperation in the field of satellite technology (Galileo) and the export of “dual use” technologies (Umbach 2004).

The EU faces criticism both from inside and outside regarding the lifting of the arms embargo. That is the reason why the decision which had originally been planned for June 2005 has been postponed indefinitely. On a supra-national level, however, the EU continues to comply with the PRC’s demand without, of course, giving an exact date, when the High Representative for the EU’s Common Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana, says:

“It is our aim to totally normalize relations with China and to lift the last sanctions that have been in effect since the Tian’anmen-Incident in 1989. China has a new generation of leaders, and in future we should be able to avoid sanctions. With regards to the embargo, this is a political and not a military decision.” (Handelsblatt 04/15/16/17/2005)

Umbach argues in his analysis of the arms embargo issue that the outcome of the summit in The Hague shows how the contents of the strategy papers and the reality of Sino-EU relations gape enormously. The EU did not use the opportunity to relate the lifting of the embargo to the demand of having the UN Convention on Human Rights ratified by the Chinese side. Additionally, he criticizes the fact that the EU simply ignores security issues in its policies toward China and takes decisions solely based on economic considerations. As a consequence, compromises are found at Taiwan’s expense and the so called “strategic partnership” is asymmetric in the sense of a “multi-lateral kowtow” of EU members to the PRC (Umbach 2005b). His statement shows that the above mentioned asymmetry in Sino-EU relations is not only perceived by the Chinese side, it can also be argued to exist if looked at through the angle of EU interests. This assessment of Sino-EU relations casts even more doubts on the validity of what is called “a maturing partnership” in both policy papers!

With regard to economy and trade, the summit discussed the necessity of compliance with WTO rules and with the TRIPS agreement (safeguarding of intellectual property), and a treaty against smuggle and illegal copying of trademark products was signed. The President of the EU Commission, José Manuel Barroso,

underlined in his press release China's responsibility as a global player in sticking to a moderate and stable export orientation and developing close ties with the EU (SPEECH/04/523). As a plan for the future, both sides agreed on designing a new framework program for the development of Sino-EU relations and for deepening mutual understanding through the instrument of political dialogue.

Since December 2004, the PRC government has been waiting for the acknowledgement of market economy status in vain. The EU stresses that it is not due to political considerations, but due to lacking technical preconditions that this step has still not been taken (MEMO 04/163), the Chinese side refers to several anti-dumping charges put forward against China by the EU, criticizing the EU for its protectionist tendencies (Huo Zhengde 2005). In case of acknowledging China's market economy status, the WTO rules would not make these measures impossible, but at least more difficult to pursue. China is also unhappy about the situation because Russia was granted market economy status in May and June 2002 by the EU and the US.

With President Barroso stressing China's responsibility as a global player, the EU reveals its strategic orientations in the realm of economics. In early 2005, the global quota system for textile products expired and the export of Chinese T-shirts to the EU market grew by 187% during the first four months of the year (if compared to the year 2004) (FAZ 06/10/2005). On June 10, 2005, the EU and China signed a textile agreement in which the Chinese side compromised on the issue by promising to self restrict its export to the EU (MEMO 05/201). Peter Mandelson, the responsible commissioner for trade, saw in this step a sign for the possibility of intensifying the Sino-EU partnership in the future:

"Today's agreement is a significant demonstration that China is entering the global economy as a responsible and valued partner [...] China is entitled to reap the comparative advantages and its WTO accession, while managing its integration into the global economy in a way that avoids fear of China, and in a way that does not provoke a protectionist backlash by European industry and the general public." (SPEECH/05/344:10-06-2005)

The PRC's concessions should not let us forget that there are still some unresolved issues obstructing the partnership. When the EU Troika visited China in June 2005, the PRC government did not rest to reiterate that the lift of the arms embargo was still pending thus criticizing the EU's position in the Taiwan issue.

CONCLUSION

The two policy papers discussed in this article reflect a growing interest of both sides to deepen the relationship. The EU policy stresses its access to the Chinese market and the possibility to gain in international influence by coop-

erating with China. However, the EU cannot influence the situation in China as much as it has done so in Eastern Europe and in Third World developing countries. Nevertheless, the EU likes to refer to the positive experience of transformation in Eastern Europe since the end of the Cold War and to positive results in its cooperation with Third World countries. Despite the overall positive assessment of the relationship, the Chinese side still fears a transfer of norms and standards connected with the EU's financial support and technological cooperation. This is an obstacle to the development of the partnership although the EU has never tried to define the PRC's compliance with norms it had demanded from Eastern European countries as a precondition to cooperation, but refers to the system of political dialogue as a means of reaching rapprochement in areas of dissent.

The Chinese side does not refrain from putting forward demands that are difficult to fulfill for the EU. As a reaction to the EU asking for an open society and a full fledged market economy, the PRC tries to use its relationship with the EU as support for its Taiwan policies and for enhancing its position as a regional power in East Asia. In this context, China's demand for the lifting of the arms embargo is of crucial importance. The PRC government is trying to get the same kind of support against Taiwan's "separatism" as Putin for his policies in Chechnya. If the EU complies with these demands, the asymmetry of the partnership as perceived by the Chinese side is healed. If not, as happened on the occasion of the last major summits, the reality of the partnership cannot develop to the level that is described in the two EU policies.

The two policies show fundamental differences in their strategic orientations. Even though both speak positively of cooperation their stance in many crucial questions are quite divergent. This is especially obvious when the EU stresses the necessity of a system change in China to be supported by its soft power strategy while China is interested in the EU as support to its effort of attaining economic growth and political stability simultaneously. For China, complying with its demands for a One-China Policy and acknowledging equality in the partnership are two necessary preconditions to be fulfilled for future cooperation. This means that the strategic orientations of the two partners do not reflect mutual respect and understanding to a degree that should be expected if both sides speak of a mature partnership. Instead, both sides cling to their respective interests and speak in positive terms of a good collaboration that is, as we have shown, blind to what the other side is concerned with.

That is why the political dialogue both sides seem to applaud has not yet shown results that really stand for a deepening of mutual understanding. This becomes very clear when we see that the EU's concept of supporting change in China through integration into international organizations is met with severe

criticism. In addition, the specific challenges politics in China have to face up to do not seem to have made enough influence on the EU's China policy. The PRC counters the EU's demand for system change by asking for support for its Taiwan policy as a means of healing the asymmetry of Sino-EU relations has so far not attracted enough attention.

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