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The New Strategic Triangle: U.S. and European Reactions to China's Rise

The transatlantic rift over the European Union's proposed lifting of its arms embargo on China is emblematic of the shifting geopolitical global order, in which the interaction of the United States, China, and the EU will be a defining feature of the international system in the years to come. These three continental powers increasingly possess the bulk of global economic and military power as well as normative and political influence. Given the combined economic, political, and strategic weight of these three principal actors on the world stage today, it behooves policymakers and analysts to pay much greater attention to the interactions of this new strategic triangle.

Along with U.S. military supremacy and unparalleled power, the EU's increasing coherence and economic weight, and the acceleration of technological and economic globalization, China's rise in world affairs is one of the four principal trends that define the new global order. In this new order, China is becoming a more responsible player on the global stage and is involved with a growing number of issues on the international agenda, such as counterterrorism, environmental degradation and global warming, energy security, international crime, international peacekeeping and nation building, nuclear nonproliferation, public health, and the stability of the global financial system. Beijing's shift from passive nonplayer and free rider to

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proactive engagement in addressing these challenges reflects Chinese leaders' increasing self-confidence as well as their recognition that China's responsibilities in the global arena are growing along with their nation's rising power and influence. As China becomes more involved in the global system, the United States and Europe increasingly interact cooperatively with Beijing on these and other global governance challenges. Yet, in other areas their interests diverge.

The entanglement over the arms embargo exposes the significantly different prisms through which Europe and the United States view China's rise. To be sure, U.S. and EU approaches toward China share important commonalities that should not be minimized, but it is also essential to recognize the differences. If Europe had any significant strategic interests or military presence in East Asia, for example, or was committed to Taiwan's security, European leaders would probably be much less tempted to lift the arms embargo.

Given the deeper differences in transatlantic perspectives that the arms embargo illustrates, it is long overdue that those in the United States and Europe who work on China and Asian affairs interact considerably more with those involved in transatlantic relations. Had this interaction been occurring with any regularity in recent years, the arms embargo issue would not have surprised and shaken transatlantic ties to such a significant extent, as the U.S. government would have seen it coming and the EU would have been more sensitive to Washington's objections.

It is therefore important to probe the deeper interests and perceptions in U.S. and European approaches toward China that underlie the transatlantic tensions that have erupted over the arms embargo. Significant differences in national interests and perceptions must be clearly understood if the EU and the United States are to avoid faulty assumptions about the other's policies and priorities. Yet, these differences should not be overstated because the United States and Europe share similar views on many aspects of China's place in the international community and, on balance, those transatlantic commonalities outweigh the differences.

Transatlantic Convergences on China Policy

Although there are nuanced differences in approach, at the most basic level the United States and Europe have a shared desire to enhance China's place at the global table and to enlarge its stake in the global system. Both want China to be a status quo rather than a revisionist power and believe that enmeshing China in the widest possible range of international institutions might help ensure this outcome by socializing Beijing into international norms of behavior. Thus, the United States and the EU welcome China's

growing constructive involvement in the international system. Indeed, this core premise has guided U.S. and European policies and approaches toward China since at least the 1980s.

As far back as 1968, President Richard M. Nixon argued that a China that lived in isolation from the international community was destabilizing to world affairs, and this belief was one of Nixon's expressed motivations for opening relations with China in 1972. President Jimmy Carter deeply shared this view, which guided his decision to normalize diplomatic relations between the United States and the People's Republic of China in 1979. President Ronald Reagan also came to share this perspective, and his administration did a great deal to engage Beijing bilaterally on a series of global issues and to bring China into several multilateral international institutions. President George H. W. Bush perhaps held this conviction most deeply of all recent U.S. presidents, but unfortunately the tragic events of 1989 in China prevented him from fulfilling his vision. The Clinton administration also adopted this strategy during its second term, successfully concluding negotiations for China's accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO). Even the current Bush administration, which is not known for embracing global institutions, has regularly argued that China needs to work constructively within such entities, even though in practice the administration has sought to engage China on these issues bilaterally. In some cases, such as China's quest for membership in the Missile Technology Control Regime in 2004, the Bush administration stonewalled both Beijing's application and the EU's endorsement of China's application. Yet, overall the United States has been a consistent advocate of integrating China into the international institutional order.

On balance, transatlantic commonalities about China outweigh the differences.

Europe has also long believed in the wisdom of binding China into the international institutional order, perhaps even more so than Washington. This perspective is based on several reinforcing rationales in the European worldview, which is animated by the belief that predominant powers should be counterbalanced and that a multipolar world is more stable than a hegemonic or anarchical order; that nations should adhere to international law and codified norms of behavior; that international institutions should be strengthened and empowered to achieve effective global governance; that sovereignty has its limits and, under certain conditions (such as in the EU), can be shared; and that soft power should be more influential than hard power. These core elements of Europe's *weltanschauung* all apply to the way Europeans think about China and its potential role in the international system.

Europe and the United States also share an abiding interest in the improvement of human rights in China. This shared goal has been consistent over time, even though the policy instruments and tactics used to achieve it have varied. The United States has tended toward public diplomacy, as well as the introduction of a resolution on China at the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva. On the other hand, Europe has preferred private diplomacy and has eschewed this particular UN mechanism, although the EU has strongly encouraged China's ratification of and adherence to various UN human rights covenants.

Most U.S. analysts principally view China's rise through its increasing hard power.

Despite their shared humanitarian convictions, European and U.S. leaders also exhibit discernible differences in their emphasis on which human rights to promote in China. Washington has always placed a priority on the rights of political prisoners and dissidents and in recent years, particularly under President George W. Bush, on freedom of religion. Forced abortions and female infanticide have also figured prominently in Washington's condemnations of Chinese practices. Religious and cultural repression in Tibet, as well as the ideal of a free Tibet, have aroused passions in the United States and have commanded congressional attention.

Europeans seem somewhat less concerned about political dissidents and subterranean democracy activists, as well as about religious freedom. Instead, European entreaties to the Chinese government stress improving workplace safety, reducing gender discrimination, decreasing state control of the media, improving prison conditions, and eliminating the death penalty. Europe, particularly the United Kingdom, Germany, and the Netherlands and countries in Scandinavia, shares U.S. distress about Tibet, but it is part of a broader European concern about the protection of all ethnic minorities in China. Above all, Europeans have a strong desire to improve all forms of civil society in China. This approach sometimes leads to conflicts, such as those that arose over European suggestions that China permit the establishment of autonomous trade unions or over recent efforts by the Chinese government to vet and approve Chinese nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) with which the EU works. Nevertheless, on the whole, the Chinese government has been receptive to EU programs in the public sphere. Despite these differences in emphasis, human rights is an area of strong convergence for Europe and the United States, and their differing emphases should be seen as more complementary than contradictory.

The United States and Europe also stress the need to build and enforce the rule of law in China. Both believe that achieving this objective is funda-

mental to reaching several broader goals: respect for human rights, the smooth functioning of a market economy, predictability for international investors, rooting out corruption, and the creation of legal safeguards against an arbitrary and repressive state. Europe invests considerably more into rule of law programs in China than does the United States.[1] Only since 2003 has the U.S. Congress authorized the direct expenditure of public funds for rule of law programs in China. The U.S. government, notably the U.S. Agency for International Development, is still inhibited from undertaking many types of assistance programs in China because of congressional legislation and sanctions that have remained in place since 1989. The EU, however, as well as several individual member states, particularly Sweden and the United Kingdom, have expended significant and sustained resources for many years to establish various types of legal, judicial, and penal training programs in China and in Europe.

Transatlantic commonality also exists on the issue of China's adherence to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which China joined in 1992. China's past proliferation practices have long been a concern to the U.S. government, which has engaged in intensive negotiations with Beijing as well as occasionally sanctioning Chinese firms, and the EU has opened its own separate dialogue with China on nonproliferation in recent years. These joint efforts have borne fruit, as Beijing has developed its own export control regulations and has become more sensitive to the dangers of proliferation of materials associated with nuclear weapons. Beijing has also improved its controls over the proliferation of ballistic missiles and component parts.

Europe focuses on assisting China to successfully manage internal transitions.

Finally, Europe and the United States share an abiding interest in China's adherence to and full implementation of its obligations as a WTO member. Washington and Brussels worked in tandem to bring China into the WTO and now pursue parallel efforts with Beijing across a broad range of economic and financial reforms and commitments, particularly protecting intellectual property rights, liberalizing foreign financial services in China, deregulating distribution rights for retail sales of consumer goods, and curtailing Chinese nontariff barriers and dumping practices. Even though U.S. and European companies compete directly in China, at the governmental level there has been long-standing solidarity on most trade-related issues.

The EU negotiated just as hard, and in some areas even harder, than the United States in admitting China into the WTO. Since then, the EU has been a stringent enforcer of China's obligations and has been particularly

tough-minded against Beijing's demands that China be granted market-economy status (MES), which would effectively eliminate antidumping tariffs. In 2004 an EU internal study concluded that China still fell far short on four of five criteria necessary to achieve MES status.[2] Over the past year, Beijing has exerted considerable pressure on Brussels to grant MES and relax its antidumping penalties, but thus far the EU has not succumbed to this pressure. For its part, the U.S. Department of Commerce is also bringing an increasing number of antidumping cases against Chinese firms. In both cases, this trend reflects not only unfair Chinese trade practices, but also the ballooning trade deficits that the EU and United States have with China.

Transatlantic Divergences on China Policy

Although the United States and Europe agree on many important policy areas, their respective understandings of China's rise differ significantly, and consequently, many policy approaches diverge accordingly. Understanding these differences in substantive policy areas requires an appreciation of the underlying philosophical premises and prisms through which Europe and the United States analyze China and its rise.

Systemic Worldviews and the Impact of European Integration

Many Europeans are disquieted by the extent and use of U.S. global power, particularly military power, and the doctrine of preemption. Most western Europeans believe that multipolarity is more conducive to global stability than unipolarity and that it can better advance Europe's own security and economic interests. This view is held most strongly in France and Germany, the Benelux countries, Scandinavia, and the Mediterranean states. Although the British government may not share this enthusiasm for multipolarity, in the wake of the war in Iraq, much of the British public is equally disquieted by U.S. unilateralism. The 10 new EU members in eastern Europe ("New Europe") tend not to support multipolarity as ardently as western European governments and publics, but even these nations firmly believe in a strong and united Europe.

As a result, with respect to the global structure of power, Europe and China find common cause in strengthening alternative poles of national power and regional organizations, such as the EU, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and share the view that U.S. power and preeminence should be diluted and counterbalanced.[3] In addition to agreeing on the value of multipolarity, Europe and China also share similar views about multilateralism. They share

the view that global institutions, particularly the United Nations, need to be strengthened, in part as a further check against a unipolar hegemon and in part because such institutions should be the central actors to address various challenges of global governance. For its part, Beijing has become more receptive to and deeply involved in global and regional institutions. The American public, on the other hand, tends to be deeply skeptical of global institutions and regimes, and the current administration has gone further than its predecessors in circumventing or undermining the authority of these entities. The United States is often scornful of the United Nations, viewing it as cumbersome and often impotent and in need of radical reform. Washington is also frequently dismissive of many regional organizations, such as the ASEAN Regional Forum, considering them hollow talk shops that have few tangible accomplishments because of their lack of enforcement mechanisms. The U.S. government tends to dismiss such institutions because they possess little, if any, hard power and legally binding responsibilities. By contrast, Europeans and Asians are much more comfortable with institutions that shape normative behavior through consensus and the exercise of soft power. This attitude may reflect their relative weaknesses in hard-power terms, but it also indicates a preference for resolving differences through consensual negotiation.

A mutual desire exists to enlarge China's stake in the global system.

The entire European experiment of pooled sovereignty is also alien to many Americans who, despite the system of decentralized federalism on which the United States was founded, do not trust the idea of sacrificing sovereign rights to a greater pan-regional superstate. As T. R. Reid argues in his recent book, *The United States of Europe*, although many Americans may instinctively distrust the idea of European integration, it is still important that they understand its dynamics and strengths as well as the direct impact the EU has on the daily lives and economic interests of the U.S. population.[4] Jack Welch, former CEO of the General Electric Company, and many other titans of corporate America have had to learn the hard way that the EU is for real and can directly affect their businesses inside the United States.

To date, however, the powerful processes of pooled sovereignty and economic integration in Europe have not been matched by similar coherence of policy on the global stage. At present, the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) remains little more than a series of declaratory ideals, but if the new European Constitution is ratified and adopted, there will be a concomitant reorganization of the European Commission and the European

Council. The power and authority of the new EU minister of foreign affairs will be strengthened, and the EU will begin to act with a more coherent and authoritative voice in international diplomatic affairs.[5] U.S. pundits as politically diverse as Robert Kagan and Reid, both of whom have lived in Europe, argue that a combination of generational change in European societies, the rise of a more coherent European identity, deeply held philosophical attitudes about the use of force and interstate relations, and a stronger EU foreign policy apparatus collectively serve to exacerbate transatlantic differences.[6] Other commentators, such as British scholar Timothy Garton Ash, recognize these differences but also argue that core common values anchor U.S.-European relations and that, with renewed commitment and some policy adjustments, transatlantic relations can be reinvigorated.[7] A bevy of transatlantic think tank study groups have also debated the causes and likely consequences of U.S.-European fissures.[8] Despite the ultimate prognoses of such observers, they all agree that transatlantic differences have widened considerably since the end of the Cold War and that, if the trend is not arrested, it could undermine the bedrock of the international system. The worry is that the West is being reduced to a mere geographical designation, rather than being the powerful political actor and moral beacon the world has known since the Second World War.

Understanding the Rise of China

These structural and perceptual differences underlie divergences in the U.S. and EU approaches to China. The principal difference in their approaches lies in how each understands a "rising China." The public discourse in the United States concerning China invariably refers to its rise and is dominated by analysis of China's increasing hard power: the growth in Chinese military power and its effect on U.S. national security interests in East Asia, both with respect to Taiwan and more generally. This is the principal prism through which most U.S. analysts view China's rise and the main factor that animates the debate in Washington. Notwithstanding popular discontent over the loss of U.S. manufacturing jobs as a result of outsourcing to China, even China's substantial economic prowess and trade surplus with the United States take a backseat in these debates to the national security implications of China's rise.

Europe, on the other hand, considers China's rise more in terms of China's domestic transitions, that is, Europeans see China as a large developing country in the midst of multiple transitions leading it away from state socialism and toward a market economy, a more open society, and a more representative and accountable government. Unlike analysts in the United States, who focus on China's external posture, European analysts focus primarily on

China's internal scene. This is a substantial difference in perspective, from which policy decisions and resources follow.

This perspective underlies the main thrust of European policies toward China: to assist China in successfully managing these internal transitions and reforms. Europe does not want China to become a failed state. The EU is more willing to accept China as it is and to assist Beijing in meeting its domestic challenges. Accordingly, European nations and the European Commission believe that they have a great deal to offer, both in advice and resources. This is the case not only because of western Europe's own long experience with social democracy and public welfare but also the ongoing eastern European states' experience as transitional economies and polities that have emerged from a similar period of state socialism. To be sure, China has not abandoned its one-party system nor is it likely to do so voluntarily, but Europeans are drawing on their own experiences with the velvet revolution and social democracy in order to contribute to the growth of civil society and the public sphere in China. They know well that these were the precursors to the democratization of Eastern Europe. Europeans are also keen to share their experiences with industrial reform, higher education, science and technology policy, media deregulation, privatization of public transport, political transparency and accountability, as well as many other areas. In brief, the EU believes it has much to offer to assist capacity building in China and is investing heavily in such programs.[9]

Europe does not want China to become a failed state.

The strategic partnership between the EU and China, agreed to in 2003, further reflects the European view that China has already become a key player on the types of soft security issues that Europe considers significant. The EU believes that the main threats to its security are of the transnational variety: illegal immigration, international crime, contagious diseases, energy, environment, and problems related to poor governance. The EU views China as one of the major powers that will shape the outcome of these problems.

Although European and U.S. companies are locked in intense competition for market share in China, at the governmental level the difference in investment of resources is indicative of the divergent approaches to managing a rising China. The United States invests its resources primarily to monitor the growth of China's hard power and to deter potentially aggressive Chinese behavior beyond its borders, whereas the EU is investing in initiatives inside of China to increase the country's soft power and facilitate its sustainable development.

Analyzing China

Underlying the philosophical differences between the U.S. and European approaches to China is the question of how each comes to understand China. Not only does each side view China through the divergent prisms described above, but there are pedagogical differences in their respective professional China communities at the governmental and nongovernmental levels. Understanding these analytical differences as well as the varying levels of commitment of resources that Europe and the United States invest into understanding China help explain these differing approaches.

Both the U.S. government and the governments of the individual EU member states have officers in charge of China issues in their respective foreign ministries, intelligence agencies, and functional government departments. Yet, two characteristics set the United States and Europe apart: the number of such officers and their training. China specialists in the U.S. government substantially outnumber their European counterparts, and they receive a significantly greater amount of training in contemporary Chinese affairs.

At present, the Department of State has about 200 Foreign Service officers who have completed advanced Chinese language training. Many hold advanced graduate degrees in Chinese studies and will have numerous tours of duty devoted to Greater China (the mainland, Taiwan, and Hong Kong). Such "China hands" follow a long and distinguished tradition of U.S. diplomats who have served in China since the nineteenth century. The Commerce Department has a somewhat smaller (between 20 and 30) but also highly qualified cohort of China-trained Foreign Commercial Service (FCS) officers. The U.S. Departments of Energy, Education, Treasury, and others all have China desks and maintain smaller numbers of China specialists on their staffs.

In the U.S. military, the U.S. Army has a corps of about 50 China-trained foreign area officers, and the Navy and Marine Corps have started similar programs. These officers serve most of their careers doing intelligence work as military attachés in China and as staff officers advising relevant officials in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, or the Pacific Command in Honolulu.

The number of intelligence personnel devoted to China analysis is even greater. China has been a growth industry in the U.S. intelligence community in recent years, and the number of analysts has grown apace. Reasonable estimates are that the Central Intelligence Agency has nearly 200 analysts devoted to full-time work involving China; the Defense Intelligence Agency and the National Security Agency each has about 200; the

National Geospatial Agency employs approximately 100; and the U.S. Pacific Command maintains several hundred personnel throughout the Asia-Pacific region whose full-time job is to monitor the People's Liberation Army.

These reasonable estimates provide a sense of the level of effort and resources the U.S. government devotes to tracking developments in China. Not only is the number of personnel and level of resources significant, but Chinese language capabilities and analytical training in Chinese studies is also commonplace in these communities.

Outside of government, the U.S. academic community's expertise on China is unparalleled in the world. Literally hundreds of professors specialize in contemporary China studies (post-1949), and similarly large numbers conduct research related to China's modern and premodern histories. As recently as a decade or so ago, a student wishing to study China had to attend one of about a dozen leading universities that offered programs in Chinese studies. This is no longer the case. Chinese studies programs have proliferated rapidly in state universities and private liberal arts colleges around the country in recent years. In many ways, these institutions are proving to be feeder schools, providing quality undergraduate training in Chinese studies for students who then go to the premier postgraduate programs. The vast majority of graduate students now arrive in M.A. and Ph.D. programs armed with undergraduate degrees or concentrations in Chinese studies, relative fluency in Chinese, and the experience of having lived in China for two years or more. The background and experience with which students now enter graduate school is truly impressive, and they are even better trained when they leave. Demand for Chinese studies is high and growing in universities throughout the United States, and there will be no shortfall of expertise to fill jobs in the government and private sectors in the years ahead. This is one significant way in which the United States is meeting the "China challenge."

> The EU believes that the main threats to its security are transnational.

Outside of universities, considerable expertise on China can be found in research institutes and think tanks, particularly in Washington, D.C., as well as at the Council on Foreign Relations in New York and the Seattle-based National Bureau of Asian Research. Today, virtually every leading think tank in the nation's capital has at least one China specialist on staff, and many have several. In addition to these nonprofit institutions, a number of for-profit consulting firms, frequently referred to as "Beltway bandits," such as Centra Technologies, Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC), and many others, maintain considerable research staffs of China

specialists who are awarded government contracts to conduct research on China for various government agencies. Finally, a number of federally funded research and development centers, most notably the RAND Corporation and the CNA Corporation, receive substantial government grants and contracts to research China.

By contrast, in Europe one does not find anywhere near this level of institutional or financial commitment. Compared with the United States, the depth of expertise on China remains very limited. This deficiency is the result of structural and intellectual impediments.

There are pedagogical differences in the respective professional China communities.

Structurally, European universities have never done a good job of integrating area studies with the social sciences; British universities have traditionally done a better job of integrating the two. In many continental European universities, students are frequently forced to choose between the two early in their academic training. If students choose area studies, they end up learning, in the grand Sinological tradition, Chinese language, history, and culture, but little about how the contemporary Chinese system functions. If they choose one of the social sciences, they are trained in comparative systems and methods, but not necessarily in the specifics of China or its language or culture, and hence cannot use Chinese materials in their research. Today, there is a dearth of scholars in European universities who specialize in contemporary China. I am aware of only three scholars in these universities who specialize in the Chinese economy, eight who specialize in domestic Chinese politics, five who specialize in Chinese foreign policy, a handful who study contemporary Chinese society or demography, and none who specialize in Chinese military and security affairs. Chinese studies in European universities have steadily atrophied over the last two decades, and unless there is a significant EU-wide initiative to reverse the trend, European universities will continue to lag badly behind their counterparts in North America and Asia.

The situation in European think tanks is better, with some experts in these areas working in at least 10 organizations in the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Italy and in Brussels.[10] The quality of the expertise of researchers in these institutes is quite good, but many of them suffer from the structural impediments noted above in their university training. Consequently, many do not speak Chinese or use primary Chinese sources in their research. These researchers tend to be trained in functional subjects related to China, such as security studies or economics, but not in Chinese studies per se.

To cope with the absence of expertise in China that should be coming out of European universities, European companies operating in China have opted for an arrangement that is not available to governments: they have hired significant numbers of Chinese citizens. Not only do native Chinese increasingly staff their commercial operations in China, but European corporations are also promoting many native Chinese employees into their management structures in Europe and elsewhere around the globe.

Expertise on China in government ministries across Europe is uneven. Although the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office has a long and distinguished tradition of training its career diplomats and providing them all the tools needed to understand and navigate around China, the same cannot necessarily be said about other foreign ministries in Europe. Continental European governments have a limited number of diplomats or military attachés who possess strong Chinese language skills, have earned advanced degrees in Chinese studies or have studied in Chinese universities, or have a deep grasp of the intricacies of the Chinese political scene, economy, society, or military establishment. Nor do EU member states tend to have midcareer training programs for these officers, many of whom arrive in China with little, if any, Chinese language capability or in-depth knowledge of how China works. As a result, many of these officers do rotational service in China but remain quite isolated from Chinese society and institutions while there. The European Commission does no better to train its diplomats in Chinese affairs, although the commission has some very capable and dedicated civil servants who manage EU relations with China. Europe's intelligence agencies also display the same general lack of expertise.

None of these observations is meant to imply that Europe lacks officials who are competent to manage their governments' relations with China; many handle their portfolios very capably. It is simply to note that Europe does not invest very heavily in China-specific training for their government officials, nor in university-based programs that provide the pool from which these civil servants are drawn.

An additional important feature that distinguishes European from U.S. understanding of China is the interaction between government officials and analysts and their nongovernmental counterparts. Such interaction has long been a hallmark of the U.S. system, with specialists outside of government frequently interacting with those on the inside and some serving stints in government service themselves (the revolving-door phenomenon). Over time, such synergy has substantially benefited both communities in the United States. In Europe, however, such interaction is minimal. Cooperation has im-

proved in France and Germany in recent years, but usually only those working in government-affiliated research institutes enjoy such consulting opportunities. Sweden and Denmark offer somewhat better opportunities for interaction between university scholars and government officials. Without such interaction, a virtual firewall exists between those who make policy and those who research China. As a result, the research in Europe is very scholarly but generally lacks policy relevance. Conversely, policy toward China is developed exclusively within the governments of member states, with minimal input from nongovernmental experts. The European China Academic Network (ECAN) was created in 1996, with five years of funding from the European Commission, precisely to rectify these deficiencies, and it accomplished a great deal in its initial period of operation. ECAN's funding has not yet been renewed, however, and its future remains uncertain.

A virtual firewall exists between European policymakers and researchers on China.

Curiously, the EU's relative lack of depth and expertise in Chinese affairs does not seem to have been a handicap for European countries as they have attempted to forge strong ties with China. Europe, both at the EU level and that of its member states, has been able to build very robust relations with China in recent years. The parameters of the Europe-China relationship have been described elsewhere.[11] They are truly impressive across the board, in trade and investment, cultural and educational exchanges, diplomatic interactions, military exchanges, and the range of programs that the EU operates in China.

Clearly, Europe's relative lack of expertise on China has not impeded this burgeoning relationship. How can this disjunction be explained? The reason is converging national interests. Europe and China share basic common interests in developing trade and investment, building exchanges at all levels of society, helping China manage its internal transitions, and promoting a multipolar and multilateral world order. Such convergences do not necessitate an enormous cadre of China experts to work in European governments or nongovernmental institutions.

Pursuit of these mutual interests are further facilitated by the lack of European strategic interests or presence of European military forces in Asia, as well as the important fact that Europe has no responsibility for the defense of Taiwan and there is not an active pro-Taiwan lobby in Europe. These differences are enormously important as Europe has the luxury to develop its relationship with China unencumbered by the strategic and security responsibilities that the United States shoulders in Asia or the domestic role that

the Taiwan lobby plays in Washington. Although the United States has also built an excellent and productive relationship with China in recent years, the Taiwan issue and these strategic factors constantly lurk in the background and hang over the Sino-U.S. relationship.

Navigating the New Strategic Triangle

What should analysts think about this new strategic triangle? How is it likely to evolve, and what impact will it have on world affairs? It would be a mistake to conceive of the new strategic triangle among Beijing, Brussels, and Washington in the same way as the old one among Moscow, Washington, and Beijing during the 1970s and 1980s. The new one exhibits several key differences.

First, the respective legs of the new triangle are more fluid and less static. An action on one side of the triangle does not trigger an opposite reaction on the other sides. Nor are two nations strategically aligned against the third. Also, unlike the old strategic triangle in which China and the United States had little contact with Soviet society, the new triangle is far more interactive. Today, each economy, society, and government is interlinked in a variety of ways and is deeply interdependent with the other two. Concomitantly, this is not a zero-sum triangle of two against one; rather, it is a largely positive-sum triangle that includes some mutually shared interests among all three. The United States and Europe share a variety of common perspectives about China's integration into the international order as well as on safeguarding human rights, transitioning to a market economy, establishing the rule of law, enfranchising civil society, liberalizing the political system, making the media more independent, and protecting the environment. Europe and China have common interests in multipolarism and multilateralism, as well as commercial and cultural issues. Indeed, all three sides are in agreement on some issues, such as nuclear nonproliferation and the liberalization of global trade.

A second difference is that national security concerns do not dominate the triangle as they did during the Cold War. Although they do play a significant role in the U.S.-China relationship, especially in the context of Taiwan, the U.S.-China relationship is extraordinarily deep and operates at multiple state and substate levels, with extensive linkages between the two societies. National security is simply not a feature of the relationship between Europe and China, which is driven by commerce, an increasing cultural attraction, Europe's desire to assist China's reform programs, and a shared vision for building a more egalitarian and institutionalized international order. Thus, unlike the old strategic triangle, the new one does not

hinge on the nuclear balance of terror, global competition for client states and influence, or on zero-sum assumptions about the other side's policies and behavior on the global stage.

Third, significant divergences exist along all the legs of the new strategic triangle as well. The United States and Europe have certainly had their fair share of recent disagreements about Iraq, a series of international treaties and regimes, the role of the United States in the world, and the China arms embargo. China and Europe have had a series of disputes over trade and MES classification as well as disagreements over human rights. Europe has concerns about China's proliferation practices, as well as the arms embargo. More recently, China's Europe specialists have begun to criticize the motives underlying EU programs to promote civil society in China as an ideological ruse to "Westernize and divide China" (*Xi-hua, fen-Hua*).[12] The United States and China have also disputed human rights, trade, and proliferation, as well as Taiwan, missile defense, and regional security in East Asia.

All these features add up to a very fluid and shifting set of relationships in which mutual positions sometimes converge and sometimes diverge. The EU and the United States sometimes side with each other, China and the EU sometimes find themselves in agreement, the United States and China sometimes work well together, and sometimes the interests and policies of all three intersect, all while each side simultaneously has disputes with the other two parties. What has not occurred, to date, is a situation where U.S. and Chinese perspectives converge against European interests.

For these and other reasons, today's strategic triangle among the United States, China, and Europe has different dynamics than the one that dominated world affairs from the Sino-U.S. opening of 1971 to the Sino-Soviet rapprochement of the late 1980s. Although tensions exist on both the U.S.-Chinese and U.S.-European axes, neither is likely to develop the competitive or adversarial character that typified relations among the powers in the Sino-Soviet-U.S. triangle. Of course, a conflict between the United States and China over Taiwan or even potentially North Korea would radically alter this prognosis. Exacerbated tensions across the Atlantic over a range of issues, such as Iraq, Iran, the UN, NATO, or trade, could also change the dynamic by increasingly pulling the United States and Europe apart.

In the near term, the EU's arms embargo on China is also potentially a very disruptive and divisive issue. When the embargo is lifted—and it is eventually likely to be lifted—no matter how much the EU's Code of Conduct and export controls over dual-use technology are strengthened, the political symbolism of lifting the embargo will not go down well in Washington and is likely to trigger substantial acrimony and punitive measures by Congress against European companies. Symbols are sometimes more important

than sabers; it is difficult to imagine a worse message than the one that lifting the embargo sends to the United States at a time when China is strengthening its military capabilities and passing antisecession laws aimed at Taiwan. Lifting the embargo will also sow the seeds of substantial distrust in Washington and will have spillover effects on other aspects of transatlantic relations and cooperation.

Maintaining common diplomatic positions and managing issues such as Iran's nuclear program could become an extremely complicated task. Should European nations and companies actually begin to sell weapons and increase defense technology transfers to China, thus potentially endangering U.S. military forces and altering the security balance in East Asia, a substantial rupture in relations between Europe and the United States may occur. Such an outcome could undermine the Atlantic Alliance, which has proven to be the bedrock of the international order for the past 60 years. Therefore, getting China right between the United States and Europe is of the highest priority.

The new strategic triangle is not like the old one of the 1970s and 1980s.

To that end, the executive branch of the U.S. government is long overdue to establish a regular dialogue about China with Europe, a dialogue the EU has suggested in the wake of the arms embargo imbroglio. Congress also needs to increase its understanding of EU-China relations. To its credit, the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, a congressionally mandated body set up in 1999 to monitor China, traveled to Belgium and the Czech Republic in late 2004 to hear testimony of European officials and experts and to learn more about relations between Europe and China.[13] But efforts cannot stop there. In Europe, officials and analysts need not only to develop a much better grasp of U.S. national security interests in East Asia and the complexities of Sino-U.S. relations, but also to deepen their own understanding of contemporary China. Such increased transatlantic consultation and interaction on China is intrinsically important for both sides to learn from each other and will also decrease China's propensity to play the United States and Europe off against each other.

Most fundamentally, all three sides of the new strategic triangle are in agreement on the most important and overarching issue: to manage China's integration into the established global system smoothly and peacefully. Historically, rising powers, including Europe and the United States, have often catastrophically disrupted the global order, and it is incumbent on all three to ensure that history does not repeat itself. This effort will require all three

to keep their eye on this macro issue, while not getting bogged down in minor disputes. It will also require intensified dialogue not only along all three individual legs of the triangle, but among all three together. An annual or semiannual triangular summit of the heads of state of China, the EU, and the United States would be a very useful mechanism, while functional working groups drawn from all three governments could regularly meet to coordinate common approaches to global challenges. If these three leading global powers could find their way to such positive dialogue, policy coordination, and tangible cooperation, the world would be much more stable. The new strategic triangle should be thought of as a positive-sum instrument for effective global governance.

Notes

1. See "EU-China Legal and Judicial Co-operation Programme - Introduction," http://www.legaljudicial.org:9280/euc/contents/en/programme_overview/Folder.2004-04-03.7022221162/Document.2004-04-03.7039919760.
2. European Commission officials conversations with author, Brussels, July 2004.
3. See Information Office of the State Council, *China's EU Policy Paper* (October 2003), http://www.english.peopledaily.com.cn/200310/13/print20031013_125906.html (accessed October 24, 2003).
4. T. R. Reid, *The United States of Europe: The New Superpower and the End of American Supremacy* (New York: Penguin Press, 2004).
5. "EU Foreign Policy Under the European Constitutional Treaty," *EU Focus*, Washington, D.C, March 2005, p. 6.
6. Reid, *United States of Europe*. See Robert Kagan, *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order* (New York: Knopf, 2003).
7. Timothy Garton Ash, *Free World: America, Europe, and the Surprising Future of the West* (New York: Random House, 2004).
8. See, for example, Giuliano Amato et al., "Test of Will, Tests of Efficacy," *Initiative for a Renewed Transatlantic Partnership* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2005); *Renewing the Atlantic Partnership* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 2004), http://www.cfr.org/pdf/Europe_TF.pdf.
9. See "Commission Policy Paper for Transmission to the Council and the European Parliament: A Maturing Partnership—Shared Interests and Challenges in EU-China Relations," COM(2003) 533 fin., October 9, 2003, http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/china/com_03_533/com_533_en.pdf; "Joint Statement of the Seventh EU-China Summit," December 8, 2004, http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/china/summit_1204/conclusions.pdf. The EU's "capacity building" initiatives are also well chronicled in *EU-China News*, a monthly publication of the Delegation of the European Union to China, available at http://www.delchn.cec.eu.int.
10. The International Institute of Strategic Studies in London; the Stiftung Wissenschaft ünd Politik (SWP) (German Institute of International and Security Affairs); Deutschen Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik (DGAP) (Research Institute of the German Council for Foreign Affairs) in Berlin; the Institute für Asienkunde (Institute for Asian Studies) in Hamburg; the Akademie für Politische Bildung (Political Academy) in

Tutzing, outside of Munich; the Centre Asie of the Institut Francais Relations Internationales (IFRI) (Asia Center at IFRI), Institut de Relations Internationales et Stratégiques (Institute of International Relations & Strategic Studies), and Center d'Etudes des Relations Internationales (CERI) (Center for Studies of International Relations) in Paris; the Aspen Institute Italia in Rome; the European Institute of Asian Studies; and the European Policy Center in Brussels.

11. For a survey, see David Shambaugh, "China and Europe: The Emerging Axis," *Current History* (September 2004): 243–248. See also "The EU's Relations With China – Overview," http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/china/intro/index.htm (series of European Commission policy documents related to China published since 1995).
12. See Huo Zhengde, "On the China-EU Strategic Relationship," *International Studies*, no. 2 (March 2005): 13.
13. See U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, *Symposia on Transatlantic Perspectives on Economic and Security Relations With China* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2004).