



College of Europe
Collège d'Europe



Natolin

DEPARTMENT OF **EU INTERNATIONAL
RELATIONS AND DIPLOMACY STUDIES**

InBev-Baillet Latour Chair of
European Union-China Relations



Issue 4, 2012

EU-China Observer

www.coleurope.eu

**InBev-Baillet Latour Chair of
European Union-China Relations****Table of contents**

1. ACTIVITY WITHOUT IMPACT? THE EU'S GREEN PUBLIC DIPLOMACY IN CHINA Sebastian Clark	2
2. CHINA'S PUBLIC DIPLOMACY IN EUROPE – INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION MISCONCEIVED? Lukas Kudlimay	9
3. THE ROLE OF THE EU IN HELPING TO REBUILD LEGITIMACY IN CHINA Thomas Stiegler	16

InBev-Baillet Latour Chair of EU-China Relations, College of Europe,
Department of EU International Relations and Diplomacy Studies, Dijver 11,
BE-8000 Bruges, Fax +32-50-477250, www.coleurope.eu

Editorial board:

Professor Jing Men: jing.men@coleurope.eu, Tel. +32-50-477258

Veronika Orbetsova: veronika.orbetsova@coleurope.eu, Tel. +32-50-477257

Views expressed in the *EU-China Observer* are those of the authors only
and do not necessarily reflect positions of either the editors or the College
of Europe.

InBev-Baillet Latour Chair of
European Union-China Relations**ACTIVITY WITHOUT IMPACT?
THE EU'S GREEN PUBLIC DIPLOMACY IN CHINA**

Sebastian Clark*

The European Union seeks to position itself as a leader in a 'green' transformation of world economic activity. Crucial to the success of such an ambition "is to take China on board."¹ Meeting this challenge coincides with the rising necessity to rethink the way diplomacy is conducted, as traditional notions of diplomatic practice appear increasingly outmoded. *Public diplomacy* (PD), "the process by which direct relations with people in a country are pursued to advance the interests and extend the values of those being represented", offers a rewarding policy pathway in such a context.²

Assessing the impact of PD, separating cause and effect in the subjective realm of perceptions, is problematic. Outputs, moreover, should not be confused with outcomes.³ Consequently, this article will operationalise the measurement of impact by evaluating whether the EU, through its PD inputs and outputs, has been able to effect tangible change on Chinese environmental and climate change policy by: (1) shaping perceptions and setting the agenda; (2) building networks and capacity; and (3) causing institutional change.⁴

Public diplomacy and the party-state

Any serious attempt at PD acknowledges and engages with local societal and political discourses. China presents a challenging PD environment: a continental sized country with a population of around 1.34 Billion;⁵ a disparate and enormous public to engage with. Further is an ideational clash between the EU and the People's Republic of China (PRC), who both draw their normative foundations from conflicting political and social narratives. A recent survey of public opinion on the EU across China, found that "more than half of the respondents perceive a conflict of values between China and the EU".⁶ Also present in the Chinese political narrative is the felt trauma

* Sebastian Clark is a graduate of the EU International Relations and Diplomacy programme at the College of Europe, Bruges. He is currently a trainee at the European Commission, working in trade relations with the Far-East.

¹ P. De Matteis, "EU-China Cooperation in the Field of Energy, Environment and Climate Change", *Journal of Contemporary European Research*, vol. 6, no. 4, 2010, p. 462.

² P. Sharp, "Revolutionary States, Outlaw Regimes and the Techniques of Public Diplomacy", in, J. Melissen (ed.), *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations*, Houndmills, Palgrave, 2005, p. 106.

³ P.C. Pahlavi, "Evaluating Public Diplomacy Programmes", *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* vol. 2, 2007, p. 256.

⁴ D. Steven, "Evaluation and the New Public Diplomacy", Presentation to the Future of Public Diplomacy, 842nd Wilton Park Conference, UK, *River Path Associates*, 2 March 2007, pp. 9-10.

⁵ Central Intelligence Agency, "The World Fact Book: China", retrieved 28 April 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ch.html>.

⁶ H. Dekker and J. Van der Noll, "Chinese Citizens' Attitudes towards the European Union and their Origins", Paper prepared for presentation at the "Chinese Views of the EU"

**InBev-Baillet Latour Chair of
European Union-China Relations**

of a century of humiliating de-facto control by Western colonial powers; creating an aversion to Western 'interference'.

The assumption that underpins the growing relevance of PD is of a "fundamental shift, and especially so in relatively open societies, of how power, influence and decision-making has spread, and how complex it has become."⁷ This is problematic in the case of China, where a top-down notion of civil society still exists: the party-state at the 'top' and the ordinary citizens at the 'bottom'; with intellectuals, academics and journalists providing the link at the 'intermediary' level.⁸ In this hierarchical structure, interest groups can be formed, but lobbying is carefully managed by the party-state – a 'hybrid of socialist corporatism and clientelism'.⁹ In this context, one EU official argues that where the government dominates the media agenda, delegations cannot explain or promote the EU and its policies "effectively without the support or acquiescence of the host government".¹⁰

Chinese narratives on environmental issues are not principally framed by CO₂ emissions. Pollution and desertification are issues of growing concern, having serious impacts on people's daily lives. The China Communist Party (CCP) perceives such economically destabilising effects as a direct threat to the Party's legitimacy.¹¹ China, nonetheless, puts its right to development first under the principal of "common but differentiated responsibility".¹² Namely, that the developed world's industrial development is primarily responsible for the crisis of man-made climate change, it is further guilty of environmental dumping on developing economies and thus has a duty to share low-carbon know-how.

In spite of this, general perceptions of the EU in the field of environmental protection are positive. Research finds that perception of the role of the EU in the protection of the environment amongst the public, elites and the media were overall 81.6% positive and 3% negative.¹³ Furthermore, it reveals that a majority perceive the environmental situation to be better in the EU than in China.¹⁴

Research Project Dissemination Seminar, Madariaga - College of Europe Foundation, Brussels, 24 November 2011, p. 5.

⁷ M. Wallström, "Public Diplomacy and its Role in the EU's External Relations", SPEECH/08/494, Mortara Center for International Studies, Georgetown University, Washington D.C., 2 October 2008.

⁸ S. Shen, "Popular Participation: Civil Society, Diverse Publics and Internet in Response to Chinese Diplomacy", in S. Breslin, (ed.), *Handbook of China's International Relations*, Routledge, 2010, Chapter 4, p. 38.

⁹ B. He, *The Democratic Implications of Civil Society in China*, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1997.

¹⁰ P. Fiske de Gouveia, *op cit*, p. 16., and P. Fiske de Gouveia, "Part I", cited in P Fiske de Gouveia and H. Plumridge, "European Infopolitik: Developing EU Public Diplomacy Strategy", *The Foreign Policy Centre*, 2005, p. 5.

¹¹ P. De Matteis, *op cit*, p. 463.

¹² Z. Xie, "Xie Zhenua, A Top Economic Planner, Discusses Carbon Tariffs, Embedded Emissions and Nations' Responsibilities", *Talking Tariffs, China Dialogue*, November 11, 2009.

¹³ Z. Wang, "Chinese Views of EU: Project Overview and Key Policy Implications", European Commission Directorate-General of Research, Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) Project, University of Nottingham, 2011.

¹⁴ H. Dekker and J. Van der Noll, *op cit*, p. 4.

**InBev-Baillet Latour Chair of
European Union-China Relations****Constrained and fragmented: inputs and outputs**

The ideational input that defines the strategic goals of the EU's environmental PD is based on three core messages: (1) climate change and environmental degradation are real problems that need to be dealt with; (2) the EU leads in the field of fighting climate change and environmental protection; and (3) cooperation on a global level is necessary to solve the problem.¹⁵ The main inputs into EU-China environmental relations are made by the European Commission, who possesses the institutional competence for this policy domain; the European External Action Service (EEAS) playing an external coordinating role. With a budget of €633 million, the recent EU programmes in China have clearly emphasised working in cooperation with Chinese influencers, engaging them in learning processes and facilitating China's quest for a low carbon economy.¹⁶

Operating under censorship laws, however, the EU's ability to create output in the Chinese media is highly problematic. Nevertheless, there is a generally positive framing of the EU in the environmental field. An analysis of EU environmental stories in the *People's Daily* from 1989 to 2008, "tells that 80.0% of such stories adopted a positive tone towards the EU and 20.0% of them adopted a neutral tone."¹⁷ This coverage, although positive, is minimal. After a one-year cross-section study in 2006, Zhang describes the EU's environmental activities and policies across the Chinese Media as "marginalised, occupying only 2.2% on average."¹⁸ A longitudinal study of the *People's Daily* from 1989 to 2008 also finds that the theme of EU environment related news took account of only 3.1%.¹⁹

There are a handful of noticeable environmental and climate change related programmes that have elements of PD output worth observing. The *EU-China Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) Facilitation Project*, from 2007-2010, had the objectives of providing policy recommendations, capacity building and awareness-raising through regional workshops and business facilitation conferences.²⁰ This programme superseded the *CO₂ managers for the industry*, which from 2005-2007 provided capacity building training to CO₂ management experts. Eight such regional workshops and three business facilitation conferences were conducted over this time-frame – gaining a moderate amount of media coverage.²¹ This project involves both

¹⁵ H. Dekker and J. Van der Noll, *op cit*, p. 4.

¹⁶ J. Holslag and D. Freeman, "Making wind: EU-China Cooperation on Climate Change", Brussels Institute of Contemporary China Study, *Asia Paper*, vol. 4, no. 4, 2009, p. 6.

¹⁷ L. Zhang, "Communicating the EU as an Environmental Actor to China: Raising EU's Profile in EU-China Environmental Cooperation", Research output paper, The University of Nottingham China Policy Institute, August 2011, p. 4.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ European Commission, "EU-China CDM Facilitation Project", EuropeAid Environment, retrieved 03 May 2012,

http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/documents/case-studies/china_environment_cdm-facilitation-project_en.pdf.

²¹ European Commission, "CO₂ Managers for the Industry in the People's Republic of China", EuropeAid Environment, retrieved 04 May 2012,

http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/documents/case-studies/china_co2-management-4-industry_en.pdf.

**InBev-Baillet Latour Chair of
European Union-China Relations**

public and private stakeholders, and academia, such as the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and Swedish Environmental Research Institute.

The EU-China Environmental Governance Programme contains PD components under the objectives of "improved public environmental awareness and enhanced participation in environmental decision-making and planning".²² Working with local partners, the project envisages helping to enforce existing environmental legislation and improving public awareness by strengthening the role of environmental journalists and NGOs in China.²³

In April 2010, the Beijing based EU-China Clean Energy Centre (EC2) was opened. One of the "the core missions" of this centre is to perform the PD functions of awareness raising and capacity building.²⁴ This includes classic self-promotional and educational information outputs such as highlighting "best practices and case studies related to clean energy, as well as to disseminate the outcomes of EC2 activities".²⁵ EC2 also hosts training courses and participates in events "aimed at promoting EC2 activities and raising awareness on clean energy", such as: "The Chengdu New Energy International Forum & Fair 2010" and "China's path towards a smart-grid: EU-China dialogue".²⁶

The inputs and outputs listed above are all very well, however, there is an absence of a strategy explicitly linking these separate parts together into a coherent whole. Instead, the picture is of a fragmented and atomised jumble – assembled together on a page but not in reality. While the broad brush strokes of an input narrative and funds are observable, they are not a substitute for a concrete policy direction – an actual reference to public diplomacy is conspicuous in its absence.

Inhibited and instrumentalised: impacts

The ability to shape perceptions and set the agenda is the core of PD. While 81.6% of the general public hold a positive attitude towards the EU as a global environmental actor,²⁷ the perceptions of the EU remain managed by the Chinese state. Moreover, previous data to compare and contrast these findings are conspicuously absent. The Chinese government already recognises that the EU is a leader in the field of environmental protection and is "mainly perceived as an opportunity for China to achieve its development goals", increasingly framed on sustainable development.²⁸

²² European Union Delegation of the European Commission to China and Mongolia, "MIP 2007-10: EU-China Environmental Governance Programme", Concept Note, Development and Co-operation, 15 April 2008, pp. 1-2.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Europe China Clean Energy Centre, "Activities: Awareness Raising - Raise Awareness and Benefit the Environment", retrieved 29 April 2012, <http://ec2.org.cn/en/about-us/activities/awareness-raising>.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ M. Morini, R. Peruzzi and A. Poletti, "Eastern Giants: The EU in the Eyes of Russia and China", cited in, S. Lucarelli and L. Fioramonti (eds.) *External Perceptions of the European Union as an International Actor*, London, Routledge, 2010, p. 36.

**InBev-Baillet Latour Chair of
European Union-China Relations**

Maintaining a positive narrative helps the Chinese central government to instrumentalise this idealised mental image to legitimise its own legislative agenda. The central government after all has its own battle with local party officials who have a tendency to ignore environmental protection laws in the pursuit of the short-term economic and financial benefits of industrialisation. While the EU is to an extent achieving its goals, it is due to a convergence of interests. The environmental agenda in China remains a highly managed realm that has shifted in response to endogenous concerns, not external engagement.

This instrumentalisation becomes clearer when one considers that many Chinese policy-makers still harbour the indignation that the EU “is using climate change as another stick to ‘humiliate’ China.”²⁹ Such sentiments, clearly visible at the Copenhagen summit in 2009, are significant: “the EU will need to be much more persuasive to overcome them”.³⁰ A distinction exists therefore, between the EU’s perceived role in climate change and environmental protection. Statements by leading Chinese experts and officials show that unlike environmental protection, China “only selectively embraced the European Union as an international leader” on climate change issues.³¹

In contrast to the structurally constrained and largely instrumentalised impact on shaping perceptions and agenda setting, the ability of the EU to build networks and capacity presents a different picture. In this less ambitious, more technical area, the EU has been allowed the societal space in which to develop partnerships with local actors to develop infrastructural capacity and target specific and receptive actors. Moreover, Chinese NGO activists rank climate change and environment cooperation as the area where EU-China cooperation can be best strengthened.³² A tentative degree of enmeshment of EU civil society into the policy environment is also observable. The CEO of the European not-for-profit, E3G, describes this process: “we’ve been working in China for over five years on a variety of issues, from carbon-capture storage to cooperation with Europe, to low carbon zones... and we’ve been operating behind the scenes on about 3 or 4 EU-China summits... so we’ve done a lot of diplomacy.”³³

EC2 acts as a locus for future EU efforts to build networks and capacity; bringing European and Chinese academics and experts together. The EU-China CDM Facilitation Project has created networks between the EU, European civil society and Chinese stakeholders through regional conferences and business facilitation workshops. Its precursor, the CO2 managers for the industry programme, is “a good example of how effective a small intervention can be”, creating a CO₂ alumni network: “to share expertise, know-how and capacity to jointly implement training programmes,

²⁹ J. Holslag and D. Freeman, *op cit*, p. 15.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² L. Zhang, *op cit*, p. 6.

³³ N. Mabey, *op cit*.

**InBev-Baillet Latour Chair of
European Union-China Relations**

capacity building and consulting services.”³⁴ Such experts have gone on to help make China, as of 2009, “the leading country on CDM projects.”³⁵ EC2, moreover, is starting to contribute to the development of new skills and personnel. Again this represents something of a convergence of interests; however, the EU has been able to create and shape networks and capacities far more on its own terms.

Given the negligible impact on preference-shaping and agenda-setting, it might seem implausible that EU PD practices could have induced institutional change. Perhaps the most serious attempt at meeting this holistic challenge is the EU-China Environmental Governance Programme. However, the November 2011 re-launch of this project admits that no real tangible change has been observable since 2008: “mechanisms for a culture of engaging the public and the private sector constructively and meaningfully in environmental governance have yet, for the most part, to be established.”³⁶

China's 12th Five Year Plan, launched in March 2011, represents a narrative shift in Chinese policy narrative however, from a ‘growth at all cost’ philosophy towards ‘inclusive growth’, leading to “growth which is slower in pace but more sustainable, in economic, ecological and political terms.”³⁷ The plan aims not just at greater environmental protection but a general restructuring of the economy from a carbon intensive one towards a more sustainable low-carbon economy. MEP Sir Graham Watson argues this policy movement, is again, purely driven by endogenous, self-interested concerns, not an increasing awareness and acquiescence to EU policy concerns or proposals.³⁸

Conclusion: focusing inputs for output with impact

While climate change policy remains problematic, the EU and China share compatible agendas on environmental and low-carbon policies. Consequently, ‘green’ issues provide an opportunity for both confrontation and strategic cooperation – the case for the effective use of PD would never seem so great. While public attitudes in China are very positive of the EU's global role on environmental issues, the scale of China, combined with deeply ingrained narratives about foreign interference, and an effectively managed single party-state apparatus, creates a daunting challenge.

This article has sought to distinguish between output activity and genuine impact, separating PD processes into three phases: inputs, outputs and impacts. Further, it has broken-down the impact of PD into the ability to shape perceptions and set the agenda, build capacity and networks, and

³⁴ European Commission, “CO2 Managers for the Industry in the People's Republic of China”, *op cit.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Devex, “Projects: EU-China Environmental Governance Programme”, EuropeAid, retrieved 29 April 2012,

<http://www.devex.com/en/projects/eu-china-environmental-governance-programme-egp>

³⁷ A. Abruzzini, “Europe's SMEs: Key Players for China's Move from Blue-Collar to Green-Collar”, *New Europe*, 11 Feb, 2011, p. 13.

³⁸ G. Watson, “The EU, China and the Green Economy”, *New Europe*, 22 Feb 2012, p. 18.

**InBev-Baillet Latour Chair of
European Union-China Relations**

cause institutional change. Future studies of EU PD in China, would nevertheless, be greatly enhanced by engaging directly with stake-holders in China.

This article concludes that while perceptions and the agenda may be moving in a direction generally desired by the EU, this is chiefly because of a happy convergence of interests, driven by the endogenous concerns of the CCP. On more controversial issues, such as global climate change regimes, the EU has got nowhere and has no voice in the debate in China. A similar evaluation can be made of the EU's ability to shape Chinese institutions through PD practices. On the other hand, more promising is the EU's ability to build networks and capacity amongst Chinese influencers. This is significant but limited. Before being able to achieve successful longer-term outcomes, the EU's impact in all domains will have to be improved. The significant structural limitations of doing PD in China aside, the EU suffers from an overarching lack of strategy. It needs to devote more attention to inputs, in terms of personnel and initial coordination at the strategic level. Such a refocusing of inputs would enhance the potential that output will have impact. A more explicit recognition that the EU is indeed trying to do PD would also be a welcome policy development. While conducting PD in China is hard, this does not mean that the EU should give-up; it just needs to get better.

InBev-Baillet Latour Chair of
European Union-China Relations**CHINA'S PUBLIC DIPLOMACY IN EUROPE – INTERCULTURAL
COMMUNICATION MISCONCEIVED?**

Lukas Kudlimay*

China's rise poses both a challenge and an opportunity not only to the European Union (EU), but also to the leadership in Beijing. Decades of economic reform and gradual political opening have caused increasing economic interdependencies with the outside world and specifically the EU, China's most important trade partner together with the United States. In today's mediated world and with China's prominent role and position in the news media, everybody has an opinion on China.¹ Since perceptions shape not only consumer behaviour, but also democratic governments' decisions, public opinion matters. This is precisely true for the EU's relationship with China, since it touches upon issues of essential importance to many Europeans.²

Yet, opinion polls and longitudinal studies of European perceptions of China's role in the world reveal a rather unfavourable environment for Beijing to act in. China has recognised the need for remedy and has started large-scale, as yet unsuccessful, public diplomacy efforts to brush up its image abroad. But why is Beijing so far incapable of creating more understanding among Europeans for its interests? This article sets out by briefly putting the motivation for China's public diplomacy into context. It then explains how diverging perceptions stemming from different value systems contribute to China's problems in effectively promoting a better image. The last part focuses on inbuilt limitations of China's public diplomacy initiatives and identifies a credibility gap as the main reason why attempts to strengthen its profile abroad have hitherto remained unsuccessful.

Need for public diplomacy

Smoothly developing relations between the two strategic partners have been interrupted by a diplomatic disaster in 2008 when Beijing suspended the annual EU-China Summit on short notice because the then President of the European Council Nicolas Sarkozy had planned to meet with the Dalai Lama. This incident illustrated the political and cultural incomprehension still present between the two alleged partners. In an attempt to tackle this problem, the 'third pillar' in EU-China relations has been introduced, concentrating on culture and people-to-people exchanges – which shall lay the foundation for mutual understanding and improved future relations.³ But what does China

* Lukas Kudlimay is a recent graduate in EU International Relations and Diplomacy Studies from the College of Europe, Bruges.

¹ I. D'Hooghe, "The Limits of China's Soft Power in Europe. Beijing's Public Diplomacy Puzzle", *Clingendael Diplomacy Papers*, No.25, The Hague, 2010, p.1.

² NB: Throughout this paper I will use the terms Europe and European Union interchangeably.

³ European Council, "Remarks by Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council, following the 14th EU-China Summit", Beijing, 14.02.2012, p. 2.

**InBev-Baillet Latour Chair of
European Union-China Relations**

think?⁴ There are still a number of sensitive issues which Beijing lists in its EU policy paper, e.g. Tibet, Taiwan, market economy status, economic protectionism, the arms embargo, and human rights. However, merely mentioning them and demanding a certain behaviour of European politicians proved not to be effective, since the EU's approach towards these issues has hardly changed over the last years.

With the Treaty of Lisbon in force, the role of the European Parliament (EP), which had a rather critical stance on China in the past, especially regarding human rights, has been strengthened. Public opinion and perceptions of the European electorate thus has (slowly but steadily) gained relevance in Brussels' policy-making process. Beijing, however, has been trying to raise awareness for its political interests notably among Europe's political leaders (e.g. via high-level meetings or sectoral dialogues), while European publics seem to have been ignored. China has recognised this and started to engage in large-scale public diplomacy.

Public diplomacy (PD) is a tool states use to strengthen their own profile abroad by aiming primarily at foreign publics, rather than their governments.⁵ Beijing's efforts include administrative reform and various activities along the classic PD elements *listening*, *advocacy*, *cultural* and *exchange diplomacy*, as well as *international broadcasting* (i.e. the usage of information and communication technologies).⁶ Numerous studies show, however, that in Western societies a predominantly negative image of China still prevails, e.g. because of its human rights record, military build-up, economic clout, poor product quality, oppression of minorities, censorship, corruption, land-confiscation, or one-child policy.⁷

The fact that China is a one-party state with a tradition of political propaganda makes it an interesting case because it affects China's PD both positively and negatively.⁸ While China can build on "decade-long experiences with domestic propaganda",⁹ its inability to allow a more open society limits the promotion of a better China-image abroad.¹⁰ Beijing's advocacy, for example, operates with a rather commercial logic. It plainly advertises its culture and policies without explaining deeper reasons or where positions derive from. Too often, explanations contain mantra-like recitations such as "we will follow the guidance of Deng Xiaoping Theory and the important thought of [the] 'Three Represents', apply the Scientific Outlook on

⁴ See also M. Leonard, *What does China think?*, London, Fourth Estate, 2008.

⁵ J. S. Nye, "Public Diplomacy and Soft Power", *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (AAPSS), No. 616, 2008, p.95.

⁶ N. J. Cull, "Public Diplomacy: Taxonomies and Histories", *ANNALS AAPSS*, No.616, 2008, pp.32-34.

⁷ See e.g. IfG-Monocle Soft Power Index or global and/or European opinion polls, such as BBC World Service Poll, Gallup World Poll, or PEW global attitudes project.

⁸ I. D'Hooghe, "Public Diplomacy in the People's Republic of China", cited in J. Melissen, *The New Public Diplomacy. Soft Power in International Relations*, Basingstoke, 2005, p.89.

⁹ *Ibid.* p.103.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

**InBev-Baillet Latour Chair of
European Union-China Relations**

Development and continue to implement the outcomes of [... various conferences]." ¹¹

Differing perceptions and values

To counter China-threat tendencies, Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi tries to assure: "China has no intention of exporting its ideology and values to any other country, nor does it have any intention of exerting its influence on the developmental modes or domestic and foreign policies of any other country." ¹² Yet, whereas "China views herself as being a peace-loving nation, international co-operator, and autonomous actor, [...] people in other countries may think exactly the opposite: China is a militant, an obstructive force, and an authoritarian state." ¹³ If Beijing wants to know why so many Europeans have a rather negative image of China, it should simply ask them. ¹⁴ Fears of China's economic clout are probably less frequent than expected in Beijing. ¹⁵ Foreign policy decisions and internal systemic legitimacy seem to play a greater role.

Tibet, for example, is an important issue to many Europeans, regardless of China viewing the matter as its own internal affair. ¹⁶ Beijing approaches foreign publics regarding this and further issues which darken its image abroad with advocacy tools such as articles, websites and white papers, in which China's official positions are described – but rarely explained. Yet, the government is not a credible messenger on these matters since it is perceived as causing the problem in the first place. This state-centric approach is particularly evident in China's apparent perception that EU Commission officials have authority to give directions to parliamentarians, or more precisely, to stop them from receiving the Dalai Lama. ¹⁷ In addition, Beijing is convinced that the Western media is a key cause for its bad image and lobbies Brussels to do something about it. But it is a misconception that European governments have a strong influence on their nation's media. ¹⁸

However, one of the major obstacles and causes for misperceptions between China and Europe are the different values and ideas the respective

¹¹ Yang, Jiechi, "Endeavor to Open a New Horizon of Public Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics", 16.02.2011 (a), retrieved 02.08.2012, <http://hr.china-embassy.org/eng/zxxx/t801925.htm#>.

¹² J. Yang, "China's Public Diplomacy", *English Edition of Qiushi Journal*, No.3, 01.07.2011 (b), retrieved 02.08.2012, http://english.qstheory.cn/international/201109/t20110924_112601.htm.

¹³ L. Zhang, *News Media and EU-China Relations*, Palgrave-Macmillan, New York, 2011, p.16.

¹⁴ See also G. Rawnsley, "The Chinese Government's Formulation of National Security Narratives in Media and Public Diplomacy", 08.05.2011, retrieved 02.08.2012, http://www.pdic.blogspot.com/2011/05/chinese-governments-formulation-of_08.html.

¹⁵ Yang, op.cit., 2011 (b) and Mei, Zhaorong, "China-U.S. Relations and China-Europe Relations in Global Governance", *Foreign Affairs Journal*, No.102, 2011, retrieved 02.08.2012, <http://www.cpifa.org/en/q/listQuarterlyArticle.do?articleId=218>.

¹⁶ D'Hooghe, op.cit., 2010, p.22.

¹⁷ W. Zhu, lunch talk, Chinese Embassy to the EU, Brussels, 12.12.2011.

¹⁸ Instead, it was precisely the Western media which triggered a spiral in the US' reputation when it reported explicitly on human rights violations by US soldiers in Iraq or Guantanamo. See G. Rawnsley, "China's International Outreach: Soft Power and the Soft Use of Power", Presentation, University of Oxford, 15.02.2012, retrieved 02.08.2012, <http://pcmlp.socleg.ox.ac.uk/videos/285>.

**InBev-Baillet Latour Chair of
European Union-China Relations**

societies are built on.¹⁹ Along with individualism and liberalism, “respect for human rights is at the core of European values.”²⁰ China's achievements regarding Tibetan economic development “cannot conceal the unattractiveness in its political values and its underperformance over many social issues”.²¹ Concerning its one-child policy, China's interpretation of the “right to life” based on collectivism conflicts with the European understanding of it being derived from individualism.²² The revival of Confucianism, to give a further example, can also be seen against two backdrops. Abroad, China's Confucius Institutes have closed a gap in its cultural relations with foreign countries and are well frequented with rising demand for Mandarin language skills. But Confucianism also carries traditional Chinese virtues such as mutual respect, e.g. between master and disciple or father and son, and which are translated into the expectation of total obedience, implying high hierarchical power relations.²³ In view of unbalanced economic growth and modernisation causing growing social inequalities, which progressively trigger social unrest, advertising Confucianism can be seen as an attempt to increase acceptance of the authoritarian style of governance exercised by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Civil society organisations, for example, are expected to respect and follow government policies and to “work with it (as opposed so often in the West to working against it).”²⁴ Yet Beijing's leverage over possible co-operation with such organisations is weakening its legitimacy among Europeans, especially due to the CCP's steady involvement in one way or the other. While it is precisely China's cultural diversity that might help to brush up its image, Beijing suppresses “a fairly natural source of its soft power.”²⁵ Against the environment of mistrust and perceived need for cautiousness,²⁶ a key to success might be greater trust. To constructively engage with Europeans, China needs to trust its people and let them engage with foreign societies without official involvement. This seems to be the most promising path to produce common understanding and a sustainable mutually beneficial relationship.

¹⁹ See e.g. D'Hooghe, op.cit., 2010, p.9, and S. Crossick and Zhou Hong, “Mutuality: Confucius and Monnet”, cited in S. Crossick and E. Reuter (eds.), *China-EU. A Common Future*, Singapore, World Scientific, 2007, pp.201-205.

²⁰ Interview with diplomat, European External Action Service (EEAS), conducted by the author in Brussels, April 2011.

²¹ S. Ding, *The Dragon's Hidden Wings. How China Rises with its Soft Power*, Plymouth, Lexington Books, 2008, p.9.

²² P. Sun, “Protection of the Right to Life by International Human Rights Law”, China Society For Human Rights Studies, retrieved 02.08.2012, http://www.chinahumanrights.org/CSHRS/Magazine/Text/t20081020_382205.htm; See also Dai, Bingran, “Promoting Mutual Understanding. China Perspective”, p.260f, cited in Crossick/Reuter, op.cit., 2007, pp. 249-263.

²³ See Crossick/Zhou, op.cit., 2007, pp.201-203.

²⁴ T. Heberer, “Governance. EU Perspective”, p.235, cited in Crossick/Reuter, op.cit., 2007, pp.234-240.

²⁵ S. Kalathil, “China's Soft Power in the Information Age: Think Again”, *ISD Working Papers in New Diplomacy*, 2011, p.10; See also Ding, op.cit., 2008, p.29.

²⁶ See e.g. M. Böllinger, “China-Kulturjahr unter Propaganda-Verdacht” [China-Culture Year under suspicion of propaganda], Deutsche Welle, 30.01.2012, retrieved 02.08.2012, <http://www.dw.de/dw/article/0,,15697159,00.html>.

**InBev-Baillet Latour Chair of
European Union-China Relations**

Another example for different respect-implicating hierarchies can be found in “professional news values.”²⁷ Whereas in Europe news often means bad news with the intention to constructively criticise, Chinese have a different approach.²⁸ News is good news and helps audiences enjoy their life,²⁹ which in Western societies is easily perceived as whitewashing or propaganda. Rather than being critical, there is a tradition to give (or not to give) “face”, acknowledgement and honour.³⁰ A similar example is provided by Chinese diplomats who often appear stiff or defensive.³¹ Even though it is repeatedly pledged that diplomats should approach foreign media more openly, incentives for officials to actively approach the media are perceived as non-existent.³² In fact, China's bureaucratic system tends to punish those who have the courage but fail to influence reports in a favourable way.³³ Beyond bureaucratic reform a more tolerant and progressive error-culture, where mistakes are not simply punished but analysed, lessons drawn and communicated to be learned from, could lead to better results.

Limitations

China's rise revealed that “old ideological shadows”³⁴ continue to obscure bilateral relations. Europeans perceive China's emphasis on socialism often as backward-looking and trapped in its own ideology – not very appealing.³⁵ China's structural lack of openness and its clinging to control make its PD “a highly centralised and state-controlled affair – a form of modernised propaganda”,³⁶ which substantially limits its success. Hiding facts or detaining disagreeable voices does not do the job in a mediated world with smart phones and high-speed, mobile internet connections. Moreover, diverging interests and different or even competing value systems cannot necessarily be overcome or communicated in any ‘appealing’ way, just as a product that no one wants cannot be sold.

When China announces the “need to [...] promote democracy, harmony, [...] and advocate political mutual respect [...], cooperation and trust in security matters as well as mutual assistance on environment issues”,³⁷ it raises expectations in Europe. Confronted with its internal actions concerning human rights or cultural and religious freedoms, its dubious military budget or environmental pollution, unmet expectations quickly turn into disappointment and consequently a credibility gap. Moreover, in many

²⁷ Rawnsley, op.cit., 2012.

²⁸ Interview conducted by the author with Zhang Xinghui, Brussels Bureau Chief, *China Youth Daily*, Brussels, 24.04.2012.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Interviews with EEAS diplomat and Zhang, op.cit., 2012.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Y. Lu, “Challenges for China's International Communication”, *Briefing Series*, No.52, University of Nottingham, 2009, p. 6.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Dai, op.cit., 2007, p. 256.

³⁵ *Ibid.* p. 259.

³⁶ D'Hooghe, op.cit., 2005, p. 102

³⁷ J. Yang, “China's Diplomacy since the Beginning of Reform and Opening-up”, *Foreign Affairs Journal*, No.90, Beijing, 2008, retrieved 02.08.2012, <http://www.cpifa.org/en/q/listQuarterlyArticle.do?articleId=72>.

**InBev-Baillet Latour Chair of
European Union-China Relations**

Europeans' eyes, China's authoritarian political system lacks democratic legitimacy, which also renders its messages as non-credible.³⁸ In March 2012, Yang Jiechi said regarding the Beijing Olympics that to enhance its image, China "engaged in dynamic public and cultural diplomacy,[...] and showed to the rest of the world a China that is culturally-advanced, democratic, open and making continuous progress."³⁹ Yet, the international audience felt betrayed with recurrent reports on restricted internet-access even for foreign journalists, or by China's obsession with perfection regarding the fraud concerning a girl found miming the song during the opening ceremony (because the actual girl who had recorded the song was not considered as sufficiently beautiful).⁴⁰

Self-criticism and the capacity to accept external criticism are fundamental prerequisites for credibility and successful PD.⁴¹ But a country that detains dissidents and impedes foreign journalists to travel to Tibet without being escorted undermines the image of a diversity-promoting, open and new China.⁴² A global power needs a confident approach to criticism.⁴³ China needs to learn to be self-critical when communicating with European publics, who like to be critical also of their own governments.⁴⁴ At least, to ensure that their audience understands, Beijing needs to explain why things are the way they are and what negative consequences China would face if it paid more attention to outside concerns.

Meanwhile, Europeans should not forget that China has never been democratic. In fact, it is more free and 'democratic' than ever before, with some arguing that its present political system may well be just what it needs at this transitional point in development.⁴⁵ To put China's challenges due to its huge population into perspective, Bo Xilai, the fallen Chongqing-mayor, pictorially enumerated: "We have 200 million middle school students. Every day [...] 44,000 babies are born. [...] Every day we eat 1.6 million pigs and 24 million chickens"⁴⁶ and "[w]ith one-sixteenth of the world's arable land, China has managed to feed one-fifth of the world population."⁴⁷ "China has lifted hundreds of millions of people out of poverty at an unprecedented rate."⁴⁸ and with over 30 million inhabitants, the municipality of Chongqing "is bigger

³⁸ D'Hooghe, op.cit., 2010, p. 30.

³⁹ J. Yang as cited by Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Finland, 27.03.2012, retrieved 02.08.2012, <http://www.chinaembassy-fi.org/eng/xwdt/t917815.htm>.

⁴⁰ See e.g. T. Branigan, "Olympics: Child singer revealed as fake", *The Guardian*, 12.08.2008, retrieved 02.08.2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/sport/2008/aug/12/olympics2008.china1>.

⁴¹ Rawnsley, op.cit., 2012.

⁴² *Ibid.* and E. Pan, "China's Soft Power Initiative", Council on Foreign Relations, 2006, retrieved 02.08.2012, http://www.cfr.org/publication/10715/chinas_soft_power_initiative.html.

⁴³ Interview with Horst Löchel in Euractiv, 28.12.2010, retrieved 02.08.2012, <http://www.euractiv.de/unternehmen-und-arbeit/artikel/zeitenwende-in-china-das-ende-westlicher-dominanz-004137>.

⁴⁴ Rawnsley, op.cit., 2012.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 260.

⁴⁶ Bo, Xilai, as cited in J. Kynge, "China Shakes the World. A Titan's Rise and Troubled Future - and the Challenge for America", New York, Mariner, 2007, p. 48.

⁴⁷ Dai, op.cit., 2007, p. 262.

⁴⁸ J. McClory, "The New Persuaders II. A 2011-Global Ranking of Soft Power", Institute for Government, 2011, p. 23

**InBev-Baillet Latour Chair of
European Union-China Relations**

than twenty-two out of the twenty-seven states of the European Union."⁴⁹ To be clear, China's challenges and hitherto achievements are no substitutes for social and political freedoms or fundamental rights. But they might be a further source for China to better illustrate to Europeans in what dimensions its development takes place.

Conclusion

China's development is characterised by its impressive domestic economic growth, which gradually evolved as the new legitimating foundation of CCP rule. However, Beijing's opening policy also dragged China into growing global interdependencies. To ensure persistent and sustainable growth and an internationally enabling environment for its further development, which also includes greater acceptance of the CCP's leadership abroad, China depends on mutual beneficial relations with foreign countries and markets, above all Europe's internal market. With its focus on output-legitimacy, the contribution of public opinion and support to the legitimacy of government decisions was considered to a lesser extent than economic growth and employment rates. Raising awareness and promoting understanding for its demands even among *foreign* publics is thus a relatively new task. Nevertheless, Beijing is strongly committed to increasing its *soft power* by means of public diplomacy. However, taking its unfavourable image and people's perceptions (especially in Europe) of China's role in the world into account, mere investments in PD initiatives do not do the job.

Instead, Europeans feel challenged by China's rising competitiveness, predominantly reject its development model, political system, domestic and foreign policies and the values they are based on, and even deny the legitimacy of the CCP's rule as such. The gap between expectations China raises e.g. by including terms like 'democracy' or 'democratic reform' in its communication with the EU, paired with its actual domestic actions as perceived in Europe, undermines its credibility. Moreover, with democratic European governments and the Lisbon Treaty further strengthening the EP, opinions of the European electorate increasingly matter to China. Beijing's hitherto inability to enhance its image abroad must therefore be seen as a major flaw of its foreign policy. Instead, the attractiveness of the EU's internal market seems to induce a diffusion of European norms, e.g. by China trying to adapt to European terminology (and technical standards) – an interesting question that deserves further research in the future.

Image building is a long-term process and China's culture can indeed be seen as a draw-factor in its favour, as seen by the increasing number of foreigners travelling to China for tourism or to study. Beijing's quest for a better image of China in Europe will also enhance EU-China relations, as seen recently at the EU-China High Level People-to-People Dialogue's inaugural meeting in Brussels. China's intention to engage with the world is highly welcome, but to improve its PD results, it has to let go of its tight grip on controlling its own society.

⁴⁹ Leonard, op.cit., 2008, p. 68.

InBev-Baillet Latour Chair of
European Union-China Relations**THE ROLE OF THE EU IN HELPING TO REBUILD LEGITIMACY IN
CHINA**

Thomas Stiegler*

Reminiscent of the late 19th century, China is currently faced with both internal and external threats to its political stability:¹ while a precarious period of decennial leadership transition is underway, provoking infighting at the highest political level,² grimmer (global) economic prospects³ and cultural changes as well as a widening gap of social inequality⁴ are testing the legitimacy structures of the PRC. Despite repeated calls by outgoing Prime Minister Wen Jiabao for "political reforms",⁵ Beijing's record in respecting key civil and political rights (CPRs) enshrined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights has recently deteriorated.⁶

In light of the EU-China human rights discourse's latest agreement on the need for mutual respect of the PRC's key principle of stability, and the EU's track-record of combining CPRs and development in a way that "works",⁷ this paper examines a key source of discord in bilateral relations addressing whether and how CPRs can be turned into tools for sustainable civil stability in the PRC. I will argue that a synergy of stability and CPRs constitutes a desirable and probable mid-term scenario in China in which the EU can play a facilitating role by adopting both a more reflective and modest posture at the level of discourse and offering pragmatic and practical solutions at the policy level.

After the first section assesses how distinct historical backgrounds have led to diverging political anatomies of stability in the PRC and the EU, the second section will make the case for a transformation of the anatomy of political stability before the third section focuses on the practical opportunities and instruments through which the EU can assume a facilitating role in this process.

* Thomas Stiegler is a post-graduate fellow of a sixteen month China language and professional experience programme of the German Academic Exchange Service. He holds an M.A. in EU International Relations and Diplomacy Studies from the College of Europe.

¹ "Timelines of East Asian history: Chinese history", Ohio State University, [Publication date unknown], retrieved 16 August 2012, <http://people.cohums.ohio-state.edu/bender4/eall131/EAHReadings/module02/m02chinese.html>.

² See S. Roach, "China's stability gambit", *Straits Times Global Perspectives*, 27 March 2012.

³ Chinese growth "is expected to fall to 8¼ percent this year (from 9.2 percent in 2011)", See International Monetary Fund, "China Economic Outlook", 06 February 2012, p.1.

⁴ See J. Hays, "Facts and Details: Wukan protest", last updated March 2012, retrieved 16 August 2012, <http://factsanddetails.com/china.php?itemid=2246&catid=8>.

⁵ "Chinese premier urges political reforms", *Huffington Post*, 14 March 2012, retrieved 16 August 2012 <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/huff-wires/20120314/as-china-politics>.

⁶ For a list of human rights violations, See T. Lum, "Human Rights in China and U.S. Policy", *Congressional Research Service*, Washington, D.C., 2011, p. 9.

⁷ "Romano Prodi President of the European Commission 2000 - 2005: Shaping the New Europe European Parliament Strasbourg, 15 February 2000", *Europa Press Releases Rapid*, 15 February 2000.

**InBev-Baillet Latour Chair of
European Union-China Relations*****Diverging anatomies of political stability***

The latest EU-China Summit made *mutual understanding* a central theme of all areas of bilateral relations. On the issue of human rights, a central source of misunderstanding is rooted in diverging interpretations regarding the reconcilability of the policy priorities of political stability (PRC) and the universality of CPRs (EU). To disentangle the convoluted interpretations, it is important to recall the origins of Chinese and European thought on the compatibility of CPRs and stability.

As totalitarianism dominated Chinese history stretching from the beginning of the Qin state (221 BC) until Deng Xiaoping's (1976/1978) cautious steps towards political opening,⁸ CPRs still constitute foreign concepts in China. Prioritising social and cultural rights over civil and political rights is rooted in a strategic choice that represents a lesson learned from the historical failure of the Soviet Union to retain stability after the *Perestroika*.

In the PRC, stability is a function of the identity of one-party rule, state sovereignty, and the survival of the state. In this system, regime and civil stability are synonymous. For their capacity to question this identity, CPRs are seen as a threat to a pre-existing stability. To contain social discontent, the government secures "output" legitimacy by generating a peaceful and stable order, economic development, and sources of national pride. CPRs are seen to complement this stability only at controlled margins.

By contrast, in Western (Enlightenment) thought CPRs have been designed not as a state's tool to ensure top-down stability, but as people's bottom-up weapon against state oppression to claim "human dignity".⁹ However, rather than as a linear, unidirectional narrative of irreversible stability, the history of CPRs in Europe must be told as a contradictory, at times violent, backlash-ridden struggle which saw Immanuel Kant's native country build a highly destabilising political system that led to an unrivalled rupture of human civilisation.

At present, however, the EU has integrated CPRs into the basic fabric of its social and civil stability as these rights function as outlets for political opposition and bestow input legitimacy on the government which can claim to hold a mandate from the people.

The case for compatibility of CPRs and stability in China

Given this conceptual divergence, the Chinese argument that CPRs are a threat to internal stability compels a closer examination.

Empirical studies have helped illuminate the correlation between stability and CPRs: a prominent contribution finds that as political systems, "[c]losed dictatorships" and "liberal democracies" are stable with all political systems falling between these categories¹⁰ being vulnerable to instability in

⁸ W. Ting, "Human rights and EU-China relations", in R. Vogt (ed.), *Europe and China: Strategic Partners or Rivals*, Hong Kong, Hong Kong University Press, 2012, p.133.

⁹ A. Gearey, "Chapter 3 The nature of human rights", cited in A. Gearey, *Subject Guide - International Protection of Human Rights [IPHR]*, London, University of London Press, 2006, p.47.

¹⁰ Nominal democracies with factionalism and dominant executives - not unlike the PRC - are viewed as particularly vulnerable to instability.

**InBev-Baillet Latour Chair of
European Union-China Relations**

the short-term.¹¹ These findings are in line with fears that a rapid introduction of CPRs in China would lead to instability which would manifest as “political turmoil, inner power struggles, huge movements of refugees and a protracted economic crisis”.¹²

However, scholars point to the multidimensionality of the concept of the term “stability”.¹³ Findings show that stability is strong merely within China's governing structures,¹⁴ while the overall regime stability is significantly stronger in democratic states in the EU.¹⁵ Over the long-term it is not stability of one *particular* government but of CPR-guaranteeing *forms* of government that is sustainable.

Besides empirical studies, on-going trends strongly suggest that the Chinese government would be misguided in confusing the denial of CPRs with long-term stability. Indeed, an opposite logic appears more plausible: incorporating CPRs into China's legitimacy structure could help address key future risks to its stability.

This stabilising function of CPRs is evident in the scenario of a projected economic slowdown:¹⁶ if we picture Chinese society as a bicycle that can be stable only as long as its economy steadily accelerates, CPRs could provide for the ‘training wheels’ to keep its balance in spite of weaker economic prospects. CPRs can assume this function by channelling pressures for violent struggles into institutionalised outlets for demands for gradual reform. Giving a voice to a pluralistic and more articulate middle-class, CPRs could also provide for a system to orderly resolve disputes over the direction of travel (e.g. towards redistributive or environmental priorities) further stabilising the ride.

The rise of new technologies further illustrates the stabilising quality of CPRs: presently, a growing number of young internet activists (“netizens”) lead a segment of society that is “shifting public concern from local and economic issues to national, political one”, escaping government control despite an increase in the government's expenses for maintaining stability to 514 billion RMB in 2009.¹⁷ The insufficiency of the existing stability apparatus to contain this evolution points to gaps inherent in the current legitimacy structures. Granting participatory rights to these groups would decrease the risk of an uncontrollable radicalisation, generating instead a sense of involvement and transparency while allowing the party to (re-)gain the support of a troubled new generation.

¹¹ J.A. Goldstone, & J. Ulfelder, “How to Construct Stable Democracies?”, *The Washington Quarterly*, vol.28, no.1, 2004, p.13.

¹² T. Heberer, “How Stable is China Currently?”, Paper based on a speech given to the China Delegation of the European Parliament in Brussels, 7 April 2010, p.12.

¹³ R. Jong-A-Pin, “On the Measurement of Political Instability and its Impact on Economic Growth”, *European Journal of Political Economy*, Elsevier, vol. 25, No.1, 2009, p.1.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

¹⁶ “IMF Sees China Growth Around 8% In 2012”, *IMF Survey Magazine: Countries & Regions*, 8 June 2012, retrieved 19 August 2012, www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/survey/so/2012/CAR060812A.htm.

¹⁷ Y. Liu & D. Chen, “Why China will Democratize”, *The Washington Quarterly*, vol. 35, no.1, 2012, p. 48.

**InBev-Baillet Latour Chair of
European Union-China Relations*****The role of the EU: constructive dialogue and pragmatic solutions for civil stability***

In its dual role as a normative actor and a political stakeholder, how should the EU respond to these findings and trends? In practical terms, constrained by gaps in credibility, internal divisions and structurally diminished political clout in the PRC,¹⁸ the EU is well-advised to be modest in its expectations of facilitating political change within China.

The latest attempt to boost EU coherence and visibility on human rights has seen the appointment of former Greek foreign minister Stavros Lambrinidis to the post of EU Special Representative on human rights. His mandate includes a renewed commitment to “enhanced dialogues with governments in third countries”.¹⁹ What are the stakes to make this mission a success in China?

The EU's posture should be cooperative, principled and understanding. The EU knows stability is no guarantee for CPRs. It should also acknowledge, however, that stability is a prerequisite for their attainment. Accepting the asynchrony of the realisation of CPRs in China as a historical process can go hand-in-hand with sticking to universality as the evaluation scheme to measure progress.

For specific cooperation projects, the EU has allocated €105 million in funding²⁰ supporting Village Governance training²¹ or launching the largest foreign-funded “Legal and Judicial Co-operation Programme”²² accompanied by its human rights dialogues.

However, past assessments of these EU projects have concluded that they suffer from a “limited impact due to their relatively small scale in such a vast country”²³ as well as a “limited” sustainability of their democratic accomplishments as legal professionals “cannot remain really independent from the regime”,²⁴ while EU-China human rights dialogues are characterised as “formulaic.”²⁵

Despite these grim evaluations, an adjusted strategy can draw on existing instruments towards encouraging on-going favourable trends on three practical trajectories:

¹⁸ See M. Mattlin, “A Normative EU policy towards China Mission Impossible?”, *The Finnish Institute of International Affairs Working Papers*, no.67, 2010, pp.16-20.

¹⁹ Council of the European Union, “Council Decision 2012/440/CFSP of 25 July 2012 appointing the European Union Special Representative for Human Rights”, *Official Journal of the European Union*, L200/21, 27 July 2012.

²⁰ See W. Ting, *op.cit.*, pp.135-136.

²¹ “Governance for equitable development”, United Nations Development Programme China, 14 May 2007, retrieved 19 August 2012, <http://www.undp.org.cn/modules.php?op=modload&name=News&file=article&catid=14&topic=5&sid=4126&mode=thread&order=0&thold=0>.

²² “EU-China Human Rights Dialogue”, Delegation of the European Union to China, European Union, 2012, retrieved 19 August 2012, http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/china/eu_china/political_relations/human_rights_dialogue/index_en.htm.

²³ See W. Ting, *op.cit.*, p.124.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.135.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.55.

**InBev-Baillet Latour Chair of
European Union-China Relations**

First, a steady process of introducing CPRs could begin by constructing the most consensual elements of input legitimacy. Part XIII of China's 12th Five Year Plan could map out an agenda for dialogue on the rule of law (China envisages a transformation from having laws to strengthening enforcement of the 'rule of law') and the combating of corruption (including a code of conduct for building a clean and honest government) as central pragmatic areas of cooperation.²⁶ As the government discovers these tools as a means to restore its ability to "persuade and co-opt"²⁷ its population, slowly but steadily these programmes could overcome the propaganda-driven notion that "set[s] [stability and liberty] against each other."²⁸

Second, bilateral talks could tackle the difficult task of facilitating top-down changes. While the upcoming Xi-Li administration will "not radically change the Party's position on human rights and sovereignty",²⁹ the recently levelled asymmetry in human rights cooperation characterised by "equality and mutual respect"³⁰ may provide the necessary political basis for more productive high-level dialogues. As legal dialogues should continue, the EU should offer its help to resolve recent intra-regime conflicts in the PRC's political bureau addressing Chinese leaders' growing susceptibility to embryonic types of "intra-party democracy."³¹ The EU must also stress external gains from democracy including the accomplishment of a political union with Taiwan - another major PRC priority.³²

Third, the EU should continue to show support and protection for individual human rights defenders in the PRC as they strive for universal principles. Rather than joining in their rhetoric of abrupt, radical change, however, policy makers should stick to offering pragmatic solutions to the PRC which allow it to achieve a smooth transformation from oppressive to civil stability.

Conclusion

Changing a country's legitimacy structure represents a deep challenge to its political stability. Introducing CPRs implies not only adding on another pillar of legitimacy, but also detracting a monopoly of control from the existing system. While this should ideally be done through a gentle process, the rate of acceleration towards democratisation in China is remarkable. Only five years ago, Wen Jiabao declared democracy was "100 years away";³³ recent

²⁶ National People's Congress of the PR of China, "12th Five-Year Plan of the People's Republic of China (extracts in English)" trans. European Union Delegation to Beijing, 2011.

²⁷ Y. Liu & D. Chen, *op.cit.*, p. 54.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

²⁹ Z. Wang and A. Vangeli, "China's leadership succession: new faces and new rules of the game", European Union Institute for Security Studies, 02 August 2012, <<http://www.iss.europa.eu/publications/detail/article/chinas-leadership-succession-new-faces-and-new-rules-of-the-game>.

³⁰ Council of the European Union, "Joint Press Communiqué of the 14th EU-China Summit", Beijing, 6474/12, 14 February 2012, cited in J. Men, "China's Date with Two", *EU-China Observer*, Issue 1, 2012, p.3.

³¹ Y. Liu & D. Chen, *op. cit.*, p.52.

³² *Ibid.*, p.58.

³³ "Wen: China Democracy 100 Years Off", *Time magazine*, 27 February 2007.

**InBev-Baillet Latour Chair of
European Union-China Relations**

commentaries predict the beginning of fully fledged democratisation as early as 2020 and its conclusion by 2025.³⁴

In terms of political stability, the trends discussed here situate the PRC on the short-term downward slope on a "J"-shaped path towards political openness and stability.³⁵ One does not have to join in the rhetorical pathos expressed by US President Obama that "prosperity without freedom is just another form of poverty"³⁶ to conclude that the Chinese political leadership will not be able to master on-going trends without broadening its legitimacy basis and using the stabilising force of CPRs.

Reaping their benefits (e.g. providing redistributive legitimacy in times of economic growth and serving as valves for social discontent in times of economic downturns), implies, however, daring more instability in the short-term. Despite a sound case for the introduction of input legitimacy, caution not to hasten preparation for a sustainable transition is in order. To avoid the instability emanating from a Weimar-republic style 'democracy without democrats' CPRs must be seen to grow incrementally.

A modest EU contribution during this (non-linear) transitional process can be maximised, when it effectively facilitates the construction of home-grown CPRs not least to safeguard a mutually shared interest in China's stability.

In the long-term, a virtuous cycle of mutually reinforcing CPRs and economic development could build sustainable stability upon the "consent of the governed"³⁷ (a mandate from the people (rather than heaven)) thereby building a second pillar of input legitimacy into the Chinese fabric of stability. Rather than a new "cultural revolution",³⁸ the Xi-Li administration, taking power forty years after Deng Xiaoping's economic opening, may thus earn its spurs by realising sustainable stability through the writing of the next chapter of China's extraordinary evolution: a smooth period of democratisation.

³⁴ Y. Liu & D. Chen, op.cit., pp. 41-42.

³⁵ See I. Bremmer, *The J Curve: A New Way to Understand Why Nations Rise and Fall*, New York, Simon and Schuster, 2006.

³⁶ The White House Office of the Press Secretary, "Remarks By President Obama to the Australian Parliament", Parliament House Canberra, Australia, 17 November 2012, retrieved 10 August 2012, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/11/17/remarks-president-obama-australian-parliament>.

³⁷ "The Consent of the Governed: Essential Principles", Democracy Web: comparative studies in freedom, United States National Endowment for the Humanities, retrieved 16 August 2012, www.democracyweb.org/consent/principles.php.

³⁸ G. Rachman, "A political crisis will not stop China", *Financial Times*, 19 March 2012, retrieved 16 August 2012, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/8994cfc6-71b5-11e1-b853-00144feab49a.html>.