"EXCHANGING IDEAS ON EU-CHINA RELATIONS: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH"
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**COLOPHON**

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The EU-China Observer publishes scholarly articles based on theoretical reasoning and advanced empirical research, practical policy-oriented contributions from all fields of EU-China relations, and conference reports on the annual conferences organised by the Baillet Latour Chair and the EU-China Research Centre. The journal targets academic audiences as well as policy practitioners, members of the business community, NGO representatives, journalists and other interested persons.

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Introduction

China’s interests in the Middle East (Mideast) continue to grow while the region remains mired in a dramatic political transition and escalating tension. The Paris attacks and ISIS execution of a kidnapped Chinese national in November 2015 highlight China’s emerging challenge of protecting citizens and confronting terrorism as it expands its global footprint. According to China National Tourism Administration (CNTA), more than two million Chinese were expected to visit France in 2015, and around 1,300 Chinese tourists were in Paris on the day of the attack. 1

The continued internationalization of China’s interests, expanding operations of Chinese companies, especially National Oil Companies (NOCs), in conflict zones in the Middle East and Africa, increasing attacks and kidnappings of Chinese overseas workers and citizens over the past decade, underlined the limits of Beijing’s traditional foreign policy approach. 2 Together, these incidents are transforming China’s traditional non-intervention principle, and prompting Beijing to take a more proactive stance in combating the threat of ISIS and Islamic extremism both at home and abroad.

In the face of China’s new pro-activism in the Middle East, Beijing will become an increasingly important partner for Brussels in international efforts to combat terrorism and address other non-traditional security challenges. Rather than viewing the Middle Kingdom’s rise from a Cold War mentality as a zero-sum game challenging or supplanting western role in the region, Beijing’s “One Belt, One Road” (OBOR) initiative could provide a timely platform for China and EU to engage in cooperative security to counter terrorism, reduce ungoverned spaces via economic development, and help promote stability and security in Europe’s eastern and southern neighbourhood.

China’s rise in the Mideast and security challenges on the OBOR

While there has been much focus on the U.S. Asia pivot and tensions in the South China Sea, China’s Mideast interests have been rising.

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In May 2015 China became the world’s largest crude oil importer, with half of its imports coming from the Middle East. The Mideast is also a key hub unto trade and market access in the Euro-Mediterranean region, where the EU is China’s largest export market, while Africa is an important destination for Chinese investments in energy, strategic resources and infrastructure projects.

**Security Challenge to Maritime Silk “Road”**

However, the maritime “Road” is threatened by ISIS and Al Qaeda groups in the Levant and in North Africa that could disrupt China’s energy supply as well as its trade and market access via the Suez Canal. In 2013 China surpassed the U.S. to become the world’s largest trading state, and with over 95 percent of trade still being seaborne, Beijing is heavily dependent on the Canal to reach its largest export market in Europe.

Also in 2013, Al Qaeda affiliate Al Furqun Brigade attacked China’s COSCO Asia in the Suez Canal by firing rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs) at the large container ship en route to northern Europe. Faced with increased military activity and ship inspections in the Canal, maritime insurance company Lloyd’s List actually recommended ships take the 6,000-mile (almost 9,700 kilometres) longer route around the Cape of Good Hope instead. These shipping delays and increased risk premiums are thus costly for China’s maritime trade and economic growth.

Although China is building overland networks of railroad and highways across Eurasia as part of its Silk Road Economic Belt, including the Med-Red Railway through Israel to connect the Red Sea to the Mediterranean Sea and bypass the Suez, this is a form of diversification, not replacement, of maritime transport corridors given most trade is still seaborne.

**Security Challenge to Silk Road Economic “Belt”**

Moreover, ISIS and Al Qaeda groups also pose a security challenge to the overland economic “Belt.” In July 2014, ISIS leader al-Baghdadi called for jihad against countries that “seized Muslim rights,” named China first in a list of 20 countries around the world, and threatened to occupy parts of western China Xinjiang that appeared on ISIS’ caliphate map.

This is also a threat for China-led Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) since the aspirant caliphate includes large portions of SCO member states’ territories.

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The SCO is China’s key counter-terrorism tool, encompassing China, Russia, four Central Asian republics excluding Turkmenistan, and recently admitted India and Pakistan. In December 2014 when Premier Li Keqiang visited Kazakhstan, he said SCO should become the guardian of Eurasia and serve as a security cover for the OBOR. In fact, at the July 2015 SCO summit, the two core issues discussed were admitting India and Pakistan, and how to combat ISIS and Islamic extremism. Thus, this threat looms large in SCO members’ consciousness.

With the admission of New Delhi and Islamabad underway, the aspirant caliphate now includes SCO territories of Central Asia, AfPak, Kashmir, Russia’s Chechnya and China’s Xinjiang with ongoing extremist activities. There are an estimated 1,000 Chinese fighters affiliated with Al Qaeda in Syria and more than 300 Chinese fighters in ISIS, as well as fighters from Central Asia and Russia in Syria. Thus SCO member states face the risk of their fighters taking Syrian jihad back home and radicalising their large Sunni Muslim population—China for one has over 20 million Sunni Muslims. This poses a threat to OBOR within China because Xinjiang serves as the centrepiece and bridgehead for the economic “Belt” across SCO territories in Eurasia. It also threatens China’s territorial integrity, and since the Xinjiang uprising in 2009, China’s internal state security budget has surpassed its defence budget every year, suggesting Beijing may view terrorism and instability as a greater security threat than military conflict in the South China Sea.
Evolving Non-Intervention Policy

Admittedly some sceptics may view Beijing’s non-intervention policy as an obstacle to a more proactive military stance, but this needs to be placed within context. From the Chinese perspective, this is more in reference to intervening in other countries’ domestic politics such as western-sponsored democracy-promotion and colour revolutions. Non-interference policy does not mean inaction when China’s core security and interests are threatened.

At a July 2015 International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) conference in Washington D.C., Stimson Centre China Fellow Yun Sun further clarified that when it comes to protecting Chinese citizens, non-interference policy does not apply, and China will exhaust all means possible to protect them when they are threatened. Sun explained that due to a lack of domestic elections, the Communist regime derives its legitimacy by its credibility and capability to protect Chinese citizens. As such, protection of its citizens is vital for regime survival, and China will increasingly be compelled to intervene abroad to safeguard its expanding interest and workers.

This view is supported by increasing Chinese writings for the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) to protect overseas interests on the OBOR, calls by the PLA to establish legal support for operations overseas, the recent passing of the anti-terrorism law to allow the Chinese military to operate abroad, plans to establish overseas logistics bases in addition to the Djibouti base, and increasing deployment of PLA troops abroad under a UN banner.

Military pro-activism to protect citizens overseas

Currently, Beijing lacks a large military footprint overseas, but it is increasing its resources and capabilities for peacekeeping as well as evacuation operations. It has signalled willingness for burden sharing in underwriting regional security via UN peacekeeping missions for example. In Lebanon there are over 300 Chinese troops in United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), down from the original 1,000 after the 2006 Lebanon War. At that time the Israelis approached China to contribute UN troops, as they did not want Arab or Muslim troops, but preferred Asian troops from China, South Korea, India, Malaysia, etc. that were deemed as more neutral in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

China is also reinforcing security for its citizens in conflict zones such as South Sudan by deploying Chinese combat troops under UN banner, and until 2014 a Chinese general commanded the Cyprus UN mission. In September 2015, China committed 8,000 UN troops on permanent standby for worldwide deployment including, for example, to Syria, as well as offered $1 billion over 10 years for a UN ‘Peace and Development Fund’.

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Security Challenge of Protecting Citizens Abroad

Indeed in 2011, China was shocked by the conflict in Libya – a security threat to its citizens overseas. Chinese companies lost about $20 billion over night and had to evacuate 36,000 Chinese nationals. China has an estimated five million workers overseas with two million in Africa and the Middle East, and in 2014 Chinese tourists abroad reached 109 million.

Moreover, according to IHS Jane’s counter terrorism expert Anthony Davis, China has over 1,000 fighters from Western China in ISIS and the al-Qaeda affiliate Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP). If the fighters try to return and face difficulty entering China, security analyst Jacob Zenn from Jamestown Foundation assessed “the TIP will move to attacking Chinese abroad.”

This has alarmed Beijing especially after the August 2015 Erawan Shrine bombing in Bangkok that killed Chinese tourists. To make the incident worse, a February 2016 Reuters article reported that at the time of the Shrine attack, the terrorists also planted a bomb that failed to go off at a pier packed with hundreds of Chinese tourists. In the face of additional threats to Chinese citizens overseas—the November killing of Chinese citizens by al-Qaeda in Mali, the ISIS execution of a Chinese national, the Bangkok bombing, and the evacuation of Chinese citizens from Libya and Yemen—Beijing is adopting a more proactive diplomatic and military posture in the Mideast.

China’s response to counter terrorism

Military pro-activism to protect citizens overseas

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Where it lacks such UN forces, China would conduct evacuation operations similar to the one in Libya in 2011, thus Djibouti and other future logistics and replenishment bases could augment China’s peacekeeping operations in Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean, as well as address other non-traditional security challenges on humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, escort missions, anti-piracy and maritime security. In fact, China expressed interest in establishing a base in Djibouti one month after China’s navy had to evacuate its citizens in Yemen. According to Xinhua, 629 Chinese citizens along with 279 foreign nationals were evacuated to Djibouti.

In the face of its expanding global footprint and need to protect overseas citizens, China is slowly emerging as a partial regional security provider.

EU-China Non-traditional security cooperation on the OBOR

As China’s interests are expanding west across Eurasia, this provides an opportunity for the EU to engage China in non-traditional security cooperation. Because ungoverned space and weak governments provide a base for foreign terrorists to grow, economic development and Eurasian connectivity via the OBOR is one solution to this issue. As such, the EU can leverage the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) as a tool to engage China in security issues on the OBOR.

China-EU Engagement via OSCE Partnership Programme

OSCE could be a timely avenue in which to engage China in the Mideast. Unlike NATO and CSTO that are collective defence alliances, OSCE is a multilateral cooperative security platform for confidence building and crisis management. Unlike the EU, the OSCE includes the U.S. as a member, ensuring a continued transatlantic approach towards China. With China’s forays in Syria and the Eastern Mediterranean, Berlin wants to use its 2016 OSCE chairmanship to engage China through its partnership programme, as it has done with Asian partners such as Japan and South Korea and Mediterranean partners in the Levant and North Africa.

In the past China had participated in OSCE Mediterranean partners programme on an SCO ticket, and Asian partners programme on an ASEAN ticket. If it becomes an OSCE partner, it can attend on its own ticket and perhaps have more flexibility for cooperation.

China-EU Engagement via ENP and EUMSS with OBOR

As regards EU-China cooperation, Brussels could also use the EU-China strategic partnership framework to align with OBOR. The Silk Road Economic Belt dovetails with European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), and the Maritime Silk Road with the European Maritime Security Strategy (EUMSS) adopted by the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) in 2014. A recent Clingendael report also recommended that the new “EU Global Strategy on Foreign Policy and Security” address the OBOR project, which encompasses 4.4 billion people in 62 countries. If EU does not address OBOR as a EU wide policy, OBOR may risk dividing the EU in the rich western countries and the Central and East European Countries (CEE) that are in urgent need of Chinese FDI.

Also, by coordinating the EU Maritime Security Strategy with China’s Maritime Silk Road, EUMSS can contribute safeguarding the OBOR supply line especially in the Indian Ocean and Mediterranean, and promote the long-term role of the EU as a security provider and involvement in non-tra-

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CHINA IS ALREADY ENGAGED IN COOPERATIVE SECURITY WITH THE EU.
ditional security in Central Asia and the Middle East. Thus, the EU could use existing regional initiatives and Sino-European strategic partnership framework to engage OBOR not just on the European mainland, but also in its greater neighbourhood.

In fact China is already engaged in cooperative security with the EU—in March 2014 China and EUNAVFOR conducted joint counter-piracy exercises in the Gulf of Aden. As such, PLA Navy (PLAN) anti-piracy cooperation with the EU, and other navies in the Gulf of Aden is a good cooperative template that could be applied to maritime security in the Suez Canal and the Eastern Mediterranean, and perhaps establish joint naval patrol similar to China’s model of joint patrol with Laos, Thailand and Myanmar in the Mekong Delta.

Another recourse for China-EU cooperation is using EU’s Juncker Plan of €315 billion infrastructure investment plan (contingent on market financing), to leverage China’s capital export drive for European growth. In late September China announced it would contribute and estimated €5 to €10 billion to the Juncker Plan, the first non-EU member to do so. China has also committed $100 billion to its own infrastructure funds—consisting of $40 billion Silk Road Fund focused on Central Asia, $50 billion with matching contribution to AIIB and $10 billion to BRICS-led New Development Bank—so there exists ample room for East-West coordination on infrastructure investment and development across Eurasia.

Conclusion

Finally, cooperative security and economic partnership with China via the OBOR platform dovetails well with EU Commission’s “EU 4seas” project—involving sub-regional multilateralism with a view towards EU enlargement. This was a project from 2009-2011 on integrating the regions of Caspian, Black, Baltic and Mediterranean Seas, similar to the current three seas project integrating the Caspian, Black and Adriatic Seas at the Aspen Institute in Bucharest. By coordinating with China’s OBOR initiatives and infrastructure funds, the three seas project can be extended to integration of the four seas including the Mediterranean, especially with China using Greece’s Piraeus port as a main hub to link to Central Europe via railroads. As such this Russian ‘Matryoshka doll’ model of integration—whereby a set of dolls of decreasing sizes placed one inside another, akin to EU macro-region as a sum of different smaller regions—may be a good model of east-west integration.

As we enter an increasingly multi-polar world, this could also mean a multi-partner world. Countering terrorism and ISIS may serve as an example. No one country can address this global challenge alone—not the EU, not China. This is where various world powers need to work together. In the aftermath of the Paris and Brussels bombings, it is all the more important that the EU cooperates with China, and rather than viewing how China is supplanting the West, consider how China can supplement Western efforts to address these emerging global challenges.

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BIO

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THE EU’S STAKE IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA
Annika LINCK

Introduction
The South China Sea has been the site and origin of regional disputes between China, Vietnam, The Philippines, Malaysia and Brunei for the last 30 to 40 years. With different national perspectives and narratives regarding the ownership of islands, rocks and waters, the views of regional claimants vary regarding the sovereignty over the waters and its resources. While there has not been a major violent clash over the issue in recent years, several incidents have occurred, out of which some have escalated and impacted negatively on China’s relations with its neighbouring countries. In 2016, China has finalised its third airstrip in the waters, thus leaving the impression of growing military assertion and giving rise to concern among other claimants and stakeholders to the South China Sea. Even though the South China Sea is very distant from Europe in geographical terms, the European Union (EU) and its member states are closely linked with the region by trade. This paper is going to examine the EU’s stake in the South China Sea issue. It is going to shed light on the importance of the South China Sea for EU trade with the region and the general EU engagement in the area. The paper will examine the EU’s approach to alleviate tensions in the South China Sea by supporting ASEAN-centred multilateral fora of discussion and propagating a rule-based solution. Furthermore, the paper is going to discuss the different position of ASEAN members in the dispute. The paper is going to argue that, despite international efforts to convince China to respect international law and to engage multilaterally, China has continued to push its own agenda bilaterally towards individual ASEAN members. This can be seen by Chinese initiatives for bilateral statements with Brunei, Cambodia, Laos and Arabic states in recent months. Finally, the paper will look at recent EU and G-7 statements on the issue and try to draw conclusions for the EU’s approach and strategy in the South China Sea.

The origins of the dispute and the current situation
In 1947 China issued a map outlining the ‘nine-dash line’, which is the basis for Chinese claims of 80 percent of the South China Sea. China considers its sovereignty and jurisdiction in the South China Sea to be supported by “abundant historical and legal evidence”. The dispute concerns the Paracel and Spratley island chains: Vietnam claims rights over both the Paracels and the Spratleys, while The Philippines, Malaysia and Brunei also claim parts of both. In addition, the Philippines claim the Scarborough

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1 The paper will focus on the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and ASEAN members as a potential partner for Europe, thus including ASEAN-centred initiatives such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP) in which the EU is involved, without going into detail about the activities in the different formats.  
4 Hellendorff, op. cit.  
6 Ibid.  
Shoal which is located at a distance of approximately 160 km and would thus also fall within the respective 200 nautical mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) along its shores. Violent clashes over the Paracels between China and Vietnam occurred in 1974, leading to over 50 deaths, and again in the 1988.

As some argue, Chinese claims to these waters are firmly rooted and supported in the Chinese population and form part of China’s national identity, which is why any attempt by the Chinese government to take a step back on their firm claim will be undermined by these nationalist tendencies. Motivations for the countries involved to claim the islands are manifold. For China, the mentioned nationalist tendencies may be a reason, while strategic motivations such as access to resources (oil and gas underwater reserves), the control over shipping routes and military capabilities play a major role.

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Map of 9-dash line and UNCLOS 200 nautical mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)

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In recent years, China has been artificially expanding some of the islands in order to build military outposts. China started construction of an airstrip on Fiery Cross Reef in late 2014, which has been finalised in 2016 and measures 3,000 meters. Other neighbouring countries have started establishing airstrips on the islands much earlier on: Vietnam began constructing an airstrip in 1976, the Philippines in 1978, Malaysia in 1983 and Taiwan finished construction of an airstrip in 2008. However, the newly built Chinese airstrip is the longest one and the only one that can host cargo planes, surveillance planes, fighter jets and bombers. Mischief Reef and Subi Reef have been the site of construction of another two airstrips bringing China’s total to three airstrips.

12 Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative and The Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2016, Airpower in the South China Sea, retrieved 16 June 2016, http://amti.csis.org/airstrips-scs/ 13 Ibid. 14 D. Watkins, op. cit. 15 Vietnam and the Philippines defend their own, overlapping claims based on the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), a convention to which all regional countries are parties. Malaysia and Brunei also lay claim to parts of the Spratleys, under their Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). 16 Hellendorff, op. cit. 17 Hellendorff, op. cit. 18 P. Parameswaran, “Playing It Safe: Malaysia’s Approach to the South China Sea and Implications for the United States”, Centre for a new American Security, February 2015 Maritime Strategy Series, February 2015. 19 Sense and sensibility – Addressing the South China Sea disputes”, EUISS Report No. 28, 1 June 2016, p. 5, retrieved 16 June 2016, http://www.iss.europa.eu/publications/detail/article/sense-and-sensibility-addressing-the-south-china-sea-disputes/ 20 Even though China is a signatory of UNCLOS, it does not recognise jurisdiction of the Permanent Court of Arbitration regarding the issue. The case itself is very technical, since it has to establish whether or not the islands/rocks in the Scarborough Shoal are to be considered rocks or islands. This technical or nominal differentiation has implications regarding the establishment of an EEZ (islands leading to claims in the Scarborough Shoal are to be considered rocks or islands. This technical or nominal differentiation has implications regarding the establishment of an EEZ (islands leading to claims

### Overview of claims over Paracels, Spratleys and Scarborough Shoal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Paracels</th>
<th>Spratleys</th>
<th>Scarborough Shoal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>Holds all (factually) Claims all under 9-dash line</td>
<td>8 (factually) Claims all due to history 15</td>
<td>Claims all under 9-dash line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>Claims all due to history 15</td>
<td>29 (factually) Claims all due to history</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8 (factually) Claim parts under EEZ (UNCLOS)</td>
<td>All under EEZ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8 (factually) Claim 11 under EEZ (UNCLOS)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brunei</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2 (factually) Claim parts under EEZ (UNCLOS)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>Mirrors 9-dash line</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While the situation in the South China Sea had been relatively calm until 2009, tensions have been building up since the international community became aware that China has been extending artificial islands in 2014. Moreover, tension is particularly high at the moment (late June 2016) due to the awaited ruling of the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague. Whereas hard security issues and territorial claims mainly concern the regional stakeholders, the South China Sea has also been the site of US military presence and interests. In 2010, former Foreign Ministry Hillary Clinton stated that the US has a “national interest” in freedom of navigation in the South China Sea. Moreover, the US has five bilateral security alliances in the region (including the ASEAN members Thailand and The Philippines) and strong military ties with Singapore and Taiwan. The activities are seen by China as “serious provocation.” For the EU, which does not have a military presence in the region, non-traditional security concerns, such as the safety of trade routes and the respect for international law are among the main concerns. In the following, the EU’s stake in the South China Sea will be examined in more detail.


26 Ibid.


28 Ibid.


30 Ibid.


38 See website of the CSCAP: http://www.cscap.org/index.php?page=./about-us
In addition, the EU is engaged bilaterally with the ASEAN member states. A Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with Indonesia entered into force in 2014, while others are being negotiated. A free trade agreement has been signed with Singapore, even though it is currently being reviewed by the European Court of Justice. A bilateral ASEAN-EU FTA has been under discussions since 2007, but negotiations have been recently put on hold.

As a normative and rule-based actor, the EU prefers a regional forum to discuss security issues over power politics and bilateral negotiations, which might leave behind the interest of smaller member states. One might also argue that, due to the similar EU set-up, the EU is naturally inclined to favour regional integration and a comparable partner over involvement on a bilateral basis. Besides its natural inclination to favour ASEAN as a partner, the EU may also be interested in creating a balance in the region by supporting a group of countries with joined interests towards a much larger player such as China. ASEAN countries make up a population of 625 million people and have much more leverage together against larger countries such as China then they would have individually. The largest ASEAN member, Indonesia, has a population of 255 million people and a GDP of 872 billion US dollars. In comparison with China, none of those countries would have the economic or military weight to counterbalance Chinese interests when bargaining on a bilateral level. Jointly, however, they have a much larger bargaining power.

As regards the South China Sea issue, the EU has been a supporter of the establishment of a Code of Conduct (COC), which has been negotiated since the 1990s. Up until now, negotiations have not led to fruitful results. In 2002, a Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) was signed, which set out a roadmap for a COC. The EU keeps emphasising a COC in its statements, even though many observers on the issue seem to believe that this is a lost cause. The largest ASEAN member, Indonesia, has a population of 255 million people and a GDP of 872 billion US dollars.

Against this background, China as recently issued a number of joint statements with some of the regional stakeholders. For instance, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said during a visit to Laos in April 2016 that China has reached a consensus with Brunei, Cambodia and Laos on the South China Sea issue. As published by Xinhua, the countries reached a “four-point consensus”: “The four countries agreed that the territorial disputes over some islands, rocks and shoals in the South China Sea are not an issue between China and ASEAN as a whole which should not affect the development of China-ASEAN relations [...] They agreed that the right enjoyed by sovereign states to choose on their own ways to solve disputes under the international law should be respected.”

Whereas the consensus with Cambodia and Laos is not very surprising, since both countries do not have a direct stake in the South China Sea, Brunei is directly concerned and has nonetheless decided to support China’s stance. Myanmar, which also does not have a direct stake in the sea, has remained neutral, possibly due to its economic dependence on China.

**ASEAN in the South China Sea issue – united or ruled?**

China is often reproached to divide EU member states along the interests of individual countries. Similarly, one could argue that this is the case for ASEAN. China is pursuing initiatives to get individual ASEAN members to issue joint statements with China supporting their vow for bilateral solutions and stating that it is “not an issue between China and ASEAN as a whole”. However, the situation is not directly comparable, since cohesion among the member states and integration of ASEAN is much weaker. Only four ASEAN member states have a direct stake in the South China Sea, whereas many of the other ASEAN members are not particularly interested in the issue.

In the following we will take a look at Chinese attempts to gain support for its stance for bilateral solutions.

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In comparison to Vietnam or The Philippines, Malaysia has been affected less by China’s assertiveness and has been trying to pursue a more diplomatic approach to China, while at the same time pronouncing their support for a common ASEAN position.\textsuperscript{49} Thailand’s position can be described as neutral, since the country has low stakes in the South China Sea and has at the same time not issued any joint statements with China on the issue.\textsuperscript{50} Singapore has also claimed neutrality.\textsuperscript{51}

The Philippines, while having pursued a cooperative strategy with China for a while, have taken China to the UN permanent court of arbitration on the basis of UNCLOS to clarify the claims over the Scarborough Shoal. It will be interesting to see whether the position of Indonesia and The Philippines will change with their recent changes of government. The Philippines have had a history of closer cooperation with China, but then referred China to the arbitration court when a conflict escalated in 2014. The incoming Secretary of Foreign Affairs Perfecto Yasay has however expressed willingness for closer cooperation with China and a potential shift of position on the South China Sea issue. As quoted in the Manila Bulletin “The Philippines is willing to pursue bilateral talks with China to resolve a dispute over the Scarborough Shoal, but will stick to multilateral discussions for the Spratly islands, because there are other claimant states.”\textsuperscript{52} Equally, it remains to see how the new Indonesian President will position himself.\textsuperscript{53}

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Furthermore, China has been seeking outside support from countries not directly involved in the South China Sea issue. At the Ministerial Meeting of the China-Arab Co-operation Forum in May 2016, “the participating Arab countries said they support China’s efforts to peacefully resolve territorial and maritime differences with certain nations through friendly dialogues and negotiations.”

Furthermore, they supported China’s stance for bilateral solutions stating that “the rights of sovereign nations as well as the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea signatories to choose how they solve their disputes should be respected.” Even if China is not dividing and ruling, it is successful in driving the countries away from a solution where ASEAN is united and speaking with a single voice vis-à-vis China. The lack of a common joint statement after the ASEAN-China special meeting in Kunming on 14 June 2016 could be interpreted as another illustration of ASEAN disunity with respect to China.

International reaction to Chinese growing assertion

These recent Chinese initiatives to gain more support from other stakeholders should probably be considered in the light of the upcoming ruling in the arbitration court on the conflict between China and the Philippines. Also, they could be seen as a reaction to international pressure on China to keep a lower profile in the maritime dispute. The G-7 summit of 11 April 2016 featured a statement on the South China Sea, whereas Chinese lobbying efforts to avoid such a statement had been substantial. The statement did not explicitly refer to China, but stated that the G-7 states “express […] strong opposition to any statement that the G-7 states “express […] strong opposition to any statement did not explicitly refer to China, but stated that the G-7 states “express […] strong opposition to any statement had been substantial.”

The use or threat of force, and to abstain from unilateral actions as land reclamations could alter the status quo and increase tensions, and urge territorial and maritime differences with certain nations through friendly dialogues and negotiations. Furthermore, they supported China’s stance for bilateral solutions stating that “the rights of sovereign nations as well as the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea signatories to choose how they solve their disputes should be respected.” Even if China is not dividing and ruling, it is successful in driving the countries away from a solution where ASEAN is united and speaking with a single voice vis-à-vis China. The lack of a common joint statement after the ASEAN-China special meeting in Kunming on 14 June 2016 could be interpreted as another illustration of ASEAN disunity with respect to China.

Reaction of the EU to Chinese growing assertion

In March 2016, the EU High Representative issued a rather strong statement of principle — without naming and shaming a certain country directly or linking it to a certain incident: “While not taking a position on claims to land territory and maritime space in the South China Sea, the EU urges all claimants to resolve disputes through peaceful means, to clarify the basis of their claims, and to pursue them in accordance with international law including UNCLOS and its arbitration procedures.” Furthermore, the EU pointed and expressed its concern about the deployment of missiles on islands in the South China Sea and called on “all claimants to refrain from militarisation in the region, from the use or threat of force, and to abstain from unilateral actions.” Even though no country was mentioned in particular, the statement could have been aimed at the recent increase of China’s military capabilities in the region.

EU, or at least one of its member states has chosen the Shangri-la Dialogue to propose stronger EU military presence in the South China Sea. As quoted in “The Diplomat”, France’s Defence Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said that France would encourage the EU to undertake “regular and visible” patrols in the area. Moreover, the French Minister called upon the EU to defend the freedom of the seas, somehow mirroring an US statement on this topic. The statement by the Minister seems to reflect the assessment that the South China Sea is of core interest to the EU and that it also has implications of our close neighbourhood: “The erosion of this norm there could lead to deleterious outcomes in the Arctic and the Mediterranean, areas more proximal to French shores.” The EU and its member states seem willing to defend their interests and international law principles by increased presence in the region.

**Conclusion**

While the EU is not directly involved in the dispute, it does have stakes in the issue due to its close trade links and bilateral ties with the region. The recent statement by the French Defence Minister to increase military presence in these waters could be a way to support EU verbal statements to respect international law and UNCLOS. However, it remains to be seen whether such action would actually be conductive to alleviate tensions in the region and would be able to deter China. It seems like a genuine and honest dialogue between all concerned parties is needed, instead of stepping up activities and rhetoric on all sides. The EU should be careful to defend its own interests and principles such as the rule of law in international affairs and not to get caught in a position where it will be seen by China as a defender of US interests. Ideally, this could be pursued by supporting ASEAN unity and establishing ASEAN as a counterbalance to China. However, as has been shown in the article, China has been successful in dividing ASEAN members. Even though a military presence in the region could be helpful to counterbalance China and to defend international principles, such action is risky for two reasons: (1) The EU may not be able to maintain such a presence due to growing difficulties in its near neighbourhood and domestically. (2) Such action may have the effect of deteriorating the situation instead of alleviating tensions, since China may see this as direct threat to their core interests in the South China Sea. This would be the worst-case scenario for the EU, since it would lose credibility vis-à-vis China but also vis-à-vis other regional stakeholders as an honest broker and normative actor in the region.

**BIO**

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**Introduction**

In the era of climate change, the challenges facing Chinese energy security are not merely supply and demand but extend to a wide range of non-geopolitics aspects including low carbon and sustainable development. This evolution has broadened Chinese energy cooperation with countries with advanced clean energy technology, paving the way for EU-China energy cooperation\(^1\). Due to the necessity for low carbon transition, EU-China clean energy cooperation is playing a growing role in Chinese energy security. Both government- and company-level mechanisms have been established to facilitate this cooperation. However, this article points out that the progress of EU-China energy cooperation is hindered by trade friction, ineffective cooperation mechanisms and a lack of mutual trust.

**An overview of Chinese energy security**

China needs a stable and sufficient supply of energy to support its rapid economic development, socio-political stability and sovereignty. In order to maintain its power, the Chinese authority needs to meet people’s economic and nationalistic expectations.\(^2\) Energy security therefore has had different meaning for China in different periods, ranging from geopolitical concerns to low carbon development.

Chinese energy security has long been traditionally associated with strategic and geopolitical considerations. It has also essentially been equated to oil security because of its increasing reliance on “foreign oil” and the rationale of self-sufficiency.\(^3\) However, since increasing domestic production failed to stop the growing dependence on foreign oil, China continued to import oil – becoming a net oil importer in 1993. The Chinese authorities put forward a goal to ensure a stable long-term oil supply; \(^4\) they were particularly anxious about supply interruptions, such as oil trade embargoes, sudden supply cuts or price fluctuation.\(^5\) In alignment with China’s going-out strategy in the late 1990s, Chinese energy companies also invested massively overseas to ensure long term energy supply. In short, until the mid-2000s, increasing energy imports and diversifying supply sources and transportation routes had been the key means for China to enhance its energy security.

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\(^1\) Note that in the term “China-EU energy cooperation” in this article, “EU” refers to a group of diversified stakeholders including the EU as a whole, the central government or local governments of each Member State, or companies and academic institutes whose headquarters are situated in Member States.

\(^2\) As Breslin argues, “it is an unwritten social contract between the party and the people whereby the people do not compete with the party for political power as long as the party looks after their economic fortunes.” See Breslin, S. 2005. *Power and production: rethinking China’s global economic role*, Review of International Studies, 31 (04), 735.


In the 2000s, Chinese energy security was expanded to include elements such as strategic oil reserves, energy efficiency, and environmentally friendly considerations, indicating that the Chinese authorities were adopting a more comprehensive understanding of energy security. Climate change has further driven the Chinese government to advance its understanding of energy security by including ideas for a low carbon economy, sustainable development and the use of renewable energy. Although oil supply security still plays a very important role in Chinese energy security, the Chinese authorities have started to look for other means such as improving energy efficiency, increasing the use of renewable energy and promoting technology transfer.

A common characteristic throughout the above periods is that international energy cooperation was adopted as a key mechanism to enhance energy security. Meeting the above objectives inevitably relies on international cooperation. Therefore, it is addressed as a key means to enhance Chinese energy security. Meeting the above objectives inevitably relies on international cooperation. Therefore, it is addressed as a key means to enhance Chinese energy security. In the energy cooperation with China, different countries and regions could have different roles, ranging from resource supplier to technology transferor. In other words, in order to enhance its energy security, China cannot isolate itself from the outside world.

**EU-China energy cooperation in Chinese energy security**

In contrast to other major oil and gas suppliers, the EU has a unique role in Chinese energy security due to its leading experience in clean energy. EU-China energy cooperation has a strong focus on clean energy related aspects. While the EU is leading the way in clean energy technologies, China's demand for these technologies, particularly renewable energy and energy saving, is high. Their cooperation has become an important means to enhance Chinese energy security with a focus on low carbon development and climate issues.

The incentive for China's energy cooperation with the EU is multilevel. On the policy level, China had published a series of supporting policies to promote the development of clean energy in order to tackle issues like climate change and sustainable development. China, in its Energy Policy (2012) White Paper and 13th Five Year Plan asserts its attempt to increase its reliance on renewable energy to replace fossil fuels. Under government promotion, China has achieved relatively rapid developments in the fields of wind power and solar power generation. Yet, the expansion of the use of renewable energy is facing severe challenges in terms of power market reform and grid technology. As a result, the share of renewable energy in China's total energy mix is still low, having made a limited contribution to China's energy supply security. The current contribution of renewable energy is focused on maintaining the capability of the renewable energy sector for future energy security.

Energy cooperation with the EU, particularly in the form of technology transfer, could help China develop its renewable energy industry. Economically, the EU is one of China's key partners, and the energy business could play an important role. While the EU is the pioneer in clean energy experience and technology, from which China can learn, China offers a huge market in which European companies can expand their businesses. Due to the lack of advanced technology in clean energy and energy efficiency, China needs a partner that has mastered the necessary technologies and, more importantly, is willing to cooperate with a rising power. For instance, the US and Japan have the technological capability but hesitate to enter into technology exchange with China because of strategic concerns. The EU, by contrast, is understood to be more open to technology cooperation with China. Therefore, although China and the EU do not have a direct supply-and-demand relationship for oil and gas, there is still a solid foundation for an EU-China energy relationship in clean energy.

**Mechanism of EU-China energy cooperation**

Key policy instruments of the above policy goals include official energy channels and joint project initiatives. The former includes platforms like the China-EU Energy Conference, the China-Europe High-Level Energy Working Group, the China-Europe Energy Dialogue, and the EU-China Sum-
mit. Over the past two decades, official energy dialogues between China and the EU have covered a wide range of energy issues, particularly sustainable development. They have also increased in terms of government level, number of actors, and variety of issues involved. Among them, the annual China-EU Energy Dialogue is the only ongoing process. Although most of these communication platforms are organised on an ad hoc basis, China and the EU have promoted their energy cooperation by signing cooperation agreements on renewable energy and energy efficiency. To facilitate the plans agreed to in these meetings, China and the EU have preliminarily established a structured cooperation mechanism with official promotion, involving personnel exchange and training, technology transfer, and joint R&D and financial investment in the energy industry.

Energy cooperation between China and the EU, agreed in the above official energy channels, had activated another policy instrument: joint project initiatives. There were over 100 events and projects jointly carried out under the framework of the EU by China and EU member states from 1990 to 2010. While there have been energy programmes and exchanges between China and the EU since the 1980s, a number of joint initiatives, including the China-EU Energy Training Programme, the Joint Energy and Environment Program, the Europe-China Clean Energy Centre (EC2), the Near-Zero Emission Coal project, and the China-EU Institute for Clean and Renewable Energy, were launched to facilitate technology transfer and clean energy development in the mid-2000s. These cooperative projects have concentrated on areas related to clean energy, energy efficiency, and sustainable energy development and are mainly carried out in three categories: personnel exchange and training, technology transfer and joint R&D, and financial investment in the energy industry. These projects established a physical platform for China’s governmental departments, companies, and institutes to cooperate with the EU as an integrated entity or government of each Member State, or companies and academic institutes.

The above factors have galvanised both European and Chinese interests in technology transfer, the improvement of energy efficiency, the reduction of CO₂ emissions and a shift to low-carbon economies. Actively promoted by the official channels, China’s and the EU’s clean energy industries have undergone long-term development. Thus, certain policy, industrial and technical conditions have been provided for China-EU cooperation in both the public and private sectors.

**Challenges in EU-China energy cooperation**

The EU and China have demonstrated efforts to advance the cooperation in clean energy. However, implementation of these initiatives has been limited for three reasons.

1) **Lack of mutual trust in technology cooperation**

Numerous interviewees mentioned the misunderstandings and misperceptions in the context of business culture between European and Chinese companies. These misunderstandings and misperceptions are generated because of a lack of trust between the two parties reflected in technology transfer and business ideology. Since both sides established energy technology cooperation, technology transfer from the EU to China is greater than vice versa. Although China asserts that it understands the importance of R&D, both Chinese energy companies and governmental departments are reluctant to take action. Instead, China seems to expect a ‘magic button’ that can solve the problem promptly.

Moreover, Chinese companies tend to have a weak mentality regarding contracts and intellectual property rights (IPR) in general. Therefore, due to a lack of trust, Europeans are not always willing to transfer their high technology to China. The energy technology companies, especially small energy companies who rely on one or two unique technologies, feared the weak IPR regulation because the disclosure of their intellectual property means losing their trump card. It is notable that leading suppliers of energy technology do not express such fears, and this is because of the large contrast between their innovative capability in R&D and the incapability of China to fully master a transferred technol-
Energy cooperation is essentially due to the conflict of interest between each side, which not only refers to the economic conflict of interest but also contains a deeper meaning, namely the strategic conflict. The EU sides tend to see Chinese enterprises as competitors. In recent years, China has sprung up as a new force in solar energy, wind energy and other clean energy sectors, and there has also been a rapid increase in the output of Chinese wind power equipment and photovoltaic products, which occupy an important position in the international market. This will undoubtedly pose a threat to the interests of EU enterprises, who have a traditional advantage in the clean energy sector.

In a sense, China's clean energy products squeeze the survival space of EU clean energy enterprises and reduce their profit margins. Chinese low-end and high-end products entering Europe could lead to sharper competition between China and Europe. As David Kerr argues, "EU enlargement expresses different aspirations... but in the economic sphere it clearly reveals a concern with the rising pressures of globalism, and perhaps especially those emanating from Asian industrialization... in both Europe and East Asia, a process of reducing competitive tensions intra-regionally may have the effect of increasing competitive pressures inter-regionally."^22

3) Low effectiveness of the China-EU energy cooperation mechanism

The effectiveness of the China-EU energy cooperative platform is limited. There is no clear long-term plan for the above China-EU energy initiatives. Most of the energy initiatives have a short mandate or limited funding, and there are no extension plans. Some Chinese officers afflicted with these projects consider the initiatives as voluntary proposals of the EU, and therefore the Chinese side has no responsibility to maintain them. This reflects the fact that Chinese authorities do not have an urgent need to work with EU Member States via the multilateral platforms set up under the EU.

CHINA’S CLEAN ENERGY PRODUCTS SQUEEZE THE SURVIVAL SPACE OF EU CLEAN ENERGY ENTERPRISES AND REDUCE THEIR PROFIT MARGINS.

Moreover, clean energy is closely associated with environmental issues, which implies that the coordination and approval of China-EU clean energy initiatives involves different governmental departments. As a result, an administrative burden is created. China has a fragmented energy governance structure with overlapping roles among different energy-related departments. Embedding energy with climate change and science tends to cause confusion in China’s governmental management. As a result, most of the cooperative initiatives in China-EU energy cooperation come and go and they are merely sustained by official meetings at different time intervals.

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15 Interview with the research director at a leading oil service company, Beijing, June 18, 2013. 16 The R&D of an original grid system could take decades; hence, China, with low research capability, needs to import technology to upgrade its system. Meanwhile, advanced technology providers tend to sell older technologies before selling the newer technologies, and China’s technology is always lagging behind given that they lack the determination to invest in their own R&D.

China has a clear view of the exact partners that are suitable for particular projects. China prefers bilateral agreements with EU Member States due to their flexibility and effectiveness. In state-to-state deals, China finds it easier to proceed with concrete actions. China can also maximise its advantages by switching between multilateral China-EU cooperation and bilateral China-EU Member State cooperation. Such a pragmatic approach hinders the level of Chinese participation in multilateral channels.

Conclusion
China’s transformation into the world’s biggest energy consumer and greenhouse gas emitter has boosted the market for clean energy technology transfer and negotiation addressing climate change. Since the EU has become a key partner of China in enhancing its new energy security with a focus on low carbon development, EU-China energy cooperation has grown in both scale and formality. China and the EU support their energy cooperation bilaterally and multilaterally via platforms like the China-EU Energy Conference, the China-Europe High-Level Energy Working Group, the China-Europe Energy Dialogue, and the EU-China Summit. On the other hand, to facilitate the plans agreed to in these meetings, the EU and China have preliminarily established a number of joint initiatives for personnel exchange and training, technology transfer, and joint R&D and financial investment in the energy industry. The two sides have demonstrated efforts to advance the mechanisms of promoting energy cooperation. However, China has limited energy cooperation with the EU because of trade friction, ineffective cooperation mechanisms and the lack of mutual trust. If these obstacles remain unresolved, they will hinder future EU-China clean energy cooperation.

25 Interview with a senior officer at EC2, Beijing, August 22, 2013; Interview with an analyst from Chinese Ministry of Commerce, Beijing, July 18, 2013; Interview with a project coordinator at a Shanghai-based energy fund, Shanghai, March 20, 2013.
26 Ibid.

BIO
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