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EU-CHINA TRADE AND ECONOMIC RELATIONS: A SNAPSHOT

Mauro Petriccione*

It is fair to say that in the past few years most discussions – in Europe at least – on EU-China trade and economic relations have been dominated by two interrelated issues: the growing trade imbalance in favour of China, and whether fast growing EU-China trade overall is more a threat or an opportunity. The arguments in this respect – still raging as little as a year ago – have lately been more subdued thanks to the economic crisis that has dominated everybody's mind, as well as the headlines. However, with the first signs that the crisis may have bottomed out, especially in China, the latter issue is gaining attention again, and the former is sure to follow as soon as international trade settles down again. This is a good time, therefore, to take stock on both.

Regardless of the crisis, China is by now firmly established as the EU's second trade partner, behind – but not that much behind – only the US. It is the EU's first source of imports, way ahead of the US, and its fourth export destination – significantly, behind the US, Russia and Switzerland. And the EU-China trade merchandise deficit has grown in 2008 to almost € 170 bn¹. True, 2008 trade figures are hard to interpret², given the impact of the economic crisis on trade flows (and so will be 2009 figures, in all likelihood), but the stability of China's place in the EU's external trade even in times like these does give at least one clear indication: the economic and trade relationship with China is firmly established on Europe's horizon, in bad times as in good times. Another indicator of this can be found on the investment front. Again, FDI flows were badly affected by the crisis, but European firms still managed to invest € 4,5 bn in China in 2008 (down from € 7 bn in 2007). China seems to be still a good place to invest for Europeans, and if one listens to European investors comparing China to other destinations, a comparatively better one in these troubled times.

Trade imbalances: how to interpret them?

Is it clear and incontestable that China is a tremendous opportunity? What about the trade deficit, then? In 2007 (a year of "stable" trade figures) the deficit was in the region of € 160 bn in favour of China. Yet, this had to be put in the context of Europe's € 190 bn overall trade deficit – but one that included a massive energy bill – and a *surplus* in manufactured products trade close to € 160 bn: hardly evidence that the trade deficit with China is

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¹ EUROSTAT 2008 figures.

² It is even worse so for trade in services.



the harbinger of the demise of European manufacturing. So, is everything fine in the Middle Kingdom for European traders and investors?

Unfortunately, not quite so. That China is a tremendous opportunity for Europeans has been clear for a while and getting clearer. Yet, it is not an opportunity for all Europeans, and it is not an opportunity without costs. Taking care of those who lose out from international trade, including trade with China, is an important part of Europe's challenges today. This, however, is a long debate, and questions as to how and with what instruments and with what resources we in Europe could and should do are outside the scope of this article – though by no means irrelevant to keeping EU-China trade and economic relations on an even keel.

Yet there is another angle to this question, which needs to be discussed here: are all the costs associated with this tremendous opportunity unavoidable, and therefore to be accepted (and maybe compensated for) in the name of the overall greater gain? And what about the “fairness” of it all? Ultimately the answer to these questions is a crucial element of whether the EU-China trade and economic relationship, as it is shaping up, is sustainable in both economic and political terms for Europe.

The High Level Economic and Trade Dialogue

European and Chinese leaders have long been aware of how delicate this issue is, and how potentially destabilising it could be for the strategic economic relationship between Europe and China. The Chinese leadership has always maintained that trade imbalances are not a goal of China's external economic policies, yet there they are. Eventually, the 2007 EU-China Summit declared – at the initiative of Premier Wen Jiabao – that trade imbalances between China and Europe were not sustainable and had to be addressed in a more strategic fashion. The offshoot of this declaration was the establishment of the High Level Economic and Trade Dialogue (HED). The first HED held its inaugural meeting in April 2008 in Beijing, under the chairmanship of the Chinese Vice-Premier Wang Qishan and of then EU Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson, as representatives of Premier Wen Jiabao and of European Commission President José Manuel Durão Barroso, and the second HED took place in May 2009 in Brussels, under the chairmanship of Vice-Premier Wang Qishan and of the current EU Trade Commissioner, Baroness Catherine Ashton, who is President Barroso's new representative for the HED.

In the words of Vice-Premier Wang Qishan, the HED must be “strategic, forward-looking and plan-setting”. The HED should not itself address the specific problems and frictions that arise very frequently in a trade and investment relationship of the size and complexity of that between the EU and China, yet it must ensure that concrete outcomes are achieved that reduce the trade imbalance and bilateral economic frictions. How should the HED do this? The EU and China have established over the years an impressive array of bilateral dialogues and mechanisms at working, Senior Officials, and



Ministerial level: the HED must not replace or substitute for them, but must ensure that they operate in a harmonious and coherent fashion and give them greater political impulsion when needed. The HED is now firmly established, and has allowed Europe and China to take the full measure of the range of issues if the EU-China trade and economic relationship is to develop in a harmonious manner. What are then the concrete challenges for the HED from now on?

Perhaps the biggest challenge facing the world today, and therefore both Europe and China, is that of the "green economy": how to move to a low-carbon economy while preserving economic growth and creating jobs – a challenge all the more urgent for China, giving the combined pressures of population growth, need for development of the country and resulting impact on resources and the environment. It will be hardly possible to win this challenge without the intervention of public authorities, yet the "green economy" will not develop without the key contribution of the private sector, in terms of capital, technology, know-how. Thus, "green business" is also an opportunity for good business *tout court* both for Chinese business and for European business, and it is in the interest of both China and Europe to encourage their enterprises to engage in this field and to support them.

Unsurprisingly, the success factors to achieve a "green economy" are very largely the same that favour a successful economy. Conversely, the absence of these factors would be a drag on both economic growth and environmental protection. Thus, the priorities for both the EU and China remain, *inter alia*:

- A stable, predictable, transparent regulatory environment, both in general, as regards economic activities of firms, and more specifically as regards environmental protection and other public policy goals, the objectives of governments in pursuing these goals and the public support available to ensure that public policy goals and private economic activity develop in a harmonious manner.
- A favourable investment climate, in terms of freedom of investment within a framework of clear, stable, non-discriminatory regulation, achieving legal certainty and removing obstacles to investors that are not absolutely necessary to achieve legitimate public policy goals.
- Effective protection of intellectual property rights, especially patents, without which innovation and the technology transfers that are needed both for economic efficiency and a low-carbon economy will not happen, or at least not at the necessary speed and to the extent necessary.
- Non-discriminatory, open and transparent public procurement policies, to obtain for public projects the best goods, services and technologies available at the best possible price, to the benefit of users and the environment.



More generally, the EU and China will need guidance from the HED on how to avoid unnecessary costs. These costs will reduce opportunities that the growing trade and investment relationship presents. If this is not done, or not done enough, it will be hard to answer the criticism of those who do not benefit from it and advocate therefore a return to economic nationalism in some shape or form, with the inevitable consequence of protectionist policies.

Neither side can afford to believe that domestic investment is somehow better than foreign investment, that jobs with a foreign investor are less good than those with a domestic investor.

Neither side can afford to believe that lesser protection of intellectual property rights is an effective and efficient – let alone fair – means to appropriate new technologies and know-how.

Neither side can afford to believe that local content requirements or preferences for local suppliers will provide the goods, services and technologies that public authorities need to achieve their legitimate public policy objectives.

Moreover, while the need to prop up domestic industries and preserve jobs threatened by the economic crisis has triggered government subsidies on a scale not seen for a very long time, neither side can afford to believe that long-lasting, sustainable economic development can come from massive subsidisation, heedless of the impact on one's trading partners. While governments the world over have shown to a remarkable degree to have learned the lessons of the Great Depression of the 1930s, and even the many examples of protectionist measures that the World Trade Organisation has been cataloguing have not triggered a spate of beggar-thy-neighbour retaliations, the danger is far from over. In fact, the 21st Century equivalent of the retaliatory tariff increases of the 1930s is the danger of protracted subsidy wars, especially when these subsidies create new productive capacity in sectors that are already under pressure (and here steel and chemicals, among others, spring to mind), which then governments will loath to abandon in order to preserve jobs.

Future prospect

It is easy to look at the differences between China and Europe, but it is perhaps more interesting to have a brief look at the parallel, if not quite similar, challenges that they face. Both China and Europe are engaged in long-term processes of transformation that pose formidable economic and political challenges, but also hold the promise of huge rewards for Chinese and Europeans. Both the economic development of China and the process of European integration have already reaped many of those rewards, in terms of increasing people's welfare and ensuring economic and political stability. Both see the economic crisis and the means to overcome it primarily through the prism of these long-term goals. Both China and Europe have put their faith in internationalist and multilateralist external policies – in the



economic and trade field, therefore, primarily their respective membership of the WTO and their joint commitment to the Doha Development Agenda. It is not surprising, therefore, that one of the key questions that need answers from China's and Europe's leaders is how their respective strategies to overcome the economic crisis are going to have impact on European integration and on China's economic transformation.

As far as Europe is concerned, the trend seems clear enough: more Europe, not less, is an essential part of the exit strategy from the crisis – and Iceland's membership application is but the latest manifestation of this trend. As far as China is concerned, the answer is perhaps less clear. A very rough simplification of how the debate on this question in China is seen by many in Europe and in the West runs like this: there are powerful voices in China who argue that China's resilience to the crisis is the product of its policy of opening up its economy, which is nowadays strong enough to withstand even a crisis of these proportions, and that this policy ought to continue, with further liberalisation proceeding gradually, together with the strengthening of the Chinese legal and regulatory system. Yet, there are others who maintain that in fact China could go through these turbulent times only because it retains enough of its "command and control" economy, and should therefore at least pause before opening up further.

Clearly, whether or not – and if so how far and how fast – China's policy of economic reform will have perhaps the greatest impact, both in the short- and in the long-term on EU-China trade and economic relations. In the short-term, trade frictions are easier to manage and to contain when the long-term perspective is one of greater economic integration, of mutual gains and of greater opportunities. In the long-term, Europeans are persuaded that only an open economy is capable of producing the kind of sustained and sustainable economic growth needed to support European integration, prosperity and stability in Europe and elsewhere, and have firmly put their eggs in this basket. Understandably, they are keen to see in which basket Chinese eggs will end up, and strongly wish that China too will pursue the path of an open economy and an open trade and investment regime. Here too, the HED will play a crucial role in helping both sides to clarify and carry forward this debate.



UNDERSTANDING HUMAN RIGHTS: AN ISSUE IN EU-CHINA RELATIONS

Li Junru*

The establishment of a long-term stable partnership between China and the EU is a basic goal in China's EU policy. In the eyes of the Chinese, since the Renaissance and the industrial revolution, Europe has served as a source of knowledge that emanates from its modern civilisation, and as an important model for China to learn in its development towards modernisation.

Today, there is no fundamental conflict of interest between the EU and China. They do not constitute threat towards each other. Since the publication of its EU Policy paper in October 2003, China has taken a series of actions to strengthen comprehensive cooperation with Europe and the EU. In the meantime, due to the differences in historical and cultural tradition, political systems and economic development, China and the EU have diverging views over various issues; nevertheless this is not unusual in the realm of international relations. If both sides solve those specific issues on the precondition of mutual respect and understanding, based on equality, EU-China relations will then have a bright future. Among these issues, human rights remain the catalyst that both sides need to carefully consider and approach.

A contrast of understanding on human rights between the EU and China

In our discussion on human rights, we first need to have a common understanding or find consensus. Between the EU and China, the differences on this issue have resulted from a combination of various factors. One of them is due to the different understandings on the concept of human rights.

First of all, historical experience leads to different understanding. Human rights, understood by the Chinese, do not constitute individual rights, but group rights based on a state or a nation. The concept of human rights was imported from Europe to China. The idea of human rights was promoted in the Renaissance period in Europe, against the privilege of the nobility and the church, in the Middle Ages. Although throughout Ancient China the ideas of "inherent kindness of human nature" or "inherent evilness of human nature" were explored, the modern concept of "human rights" was introduced by the Europeans in the beginning of the 20th century, following the dissemination of Western knowledge to the East.

The concept of "human rights" was spread to China because of China's demand for the latter. This demand had both commonalities and

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differences compared with the situation in Europe when the idea of human rights was in shape. Similar to the Europeans who were opposed to both religious and secular privileges, the Chinese introduced this concept in order to fight against the feudal despotism and its privileges which governed China for several thousand years. As opposed to the Europeans, the Chinese faced invasion, exploitation and suppression from the hands of the Western imperial powers. The Chinese used this concept to oppose the power politics of Western imperialists who did not treat the Chinese as human beings. The New Culture Movement, which occurred after 1915 and reached its climax in 1919, facilitated the import of the concept to China.

When the New Culture Movement was initiated, a group of young Chinese intellectuals, who were educated in the West, advocated the idea of "human rights and science" (later on changed to "democracy and science"), targeting mainly the feudal despotism and its norms. However, in 1919, the Paris Peace Conference, taking place after WWI, not only failed in the return of Germany's concession in China to the Chinese government, but also unconditionally transferred it to Japan. This historical incident exasperated the Chinese people, in particular, the young Chinese intellectuals, who started the far-reaching May 4th Movement in modern Chinese history. The slogans that characterised this movement include: "oppose that might is right", and "struggle for national sovereignty, get rid of the national traitors at home". In practice, the Chinese realised that they needed to not only oppose national feudal privileges, but also foreign powers.

For the Chinese, to oppose national feudal privileges equated to a gain in individual rights and to oppose foreign powers equated to a gain in national sovereignty, i.e. the group right of the people. Having experienced the suffering of the invasion of Western imperialists since 1840, the Chinese people learnt to appreciate the group right more —the right of a state, the right of a nation. In the period which was dominated by the idea "might is right", the Chinese people did not possess any human rights. Only through national independence and liberation could the Chinese gain the rights that every state in the world should enjoy, and only thereafter could the Chinese enjoy individual rights. This is an axiom that the Chinese learnt from the century of misery. As Deng Xiaoping stated, "people support human rights, but they cannot forget state rights". State rights are the collective human rights of a state.

The second major difference on the understanding of human rights between the two parties is closely related to reality. The human rights understood by the Chinese, require beyond doubt the realisation of some basic rights including equality, freedom, democracy, but firstly require the realisation of a more fundamental right: the right to subsistence. Since the idea of human rights was introduced in 1915, China has made a long term effort towards the realisation of these rights. For example, in the democratic revolutionary period, the central task for the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)



was to struggle for democracy and human rights, fighting against imperialism and feudalism in the political field, striving for land ownership for farmers, fundamental welfare and right of association for workers in the economic field. The CCP organised the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) in 1949, and produced "The Common Program of the CPPCC", which reflected and safeguarded the fundamental rights of the Chinese people, founded the People's Republic of China, which made the Chinese people the owner of the state, and realised the liberation of human rights for the first time in Chinese history.

From then on, a series of laws which safeguard human rights, including the PRC Marriage Law, the PRC Trade Union Law, the PRC Land Reform Law, and the PRC Labour Insurance Regulations, were created. In particular, the CCP led its people to build a constitution, to organise general elections, to establish the system of National People's Congress (NPC), to advocate ethnic equality and unity, and to establish an ethnic regional autonomy system, which guarantees the realisation of human rights. Since the founding of the PRC, the human rights of Chinese people have gradually been progressed from demand on paper to reality—this is historical truth.

Nevertheless, due to the fact that China has been for a long time lagging behind in economic development, many people still live a poor life despite improvements in the new China. Furthermore, on the road towards human rights development, due to setbacks and mistakes, the fundamental human rights provided by the Constitution and subsequent laws, have not been fully realised in China. From 1978 onwards, under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping, the CCP determined to focus on economic development, to establish the economic, political, and cultural systems through reform and opening up policy which facilitated national economic development, and the march towards modernisation. In the process of economic development, the Chinese people solved food problem, and strove for personal development after realising the right to subsistence, gained incrementally the fundamental individual rights specified in the Constitution and laws, and promoted the progress of democratic and legal construction. All these reforms and developments have largely improved the development of China's human rights cause. Therefore, it can be said that the thirty years of reform and opening up realised the liberation of human rights for the second time in Chinese history.

China's dual experience in terms of the liberation of human rights highlights an important idea: that the right to subsistence is the most fundamental of human rights. From the 1990s onwards, the Chinese people have been recounting this revelation to the world. This is China's important contribution to human rights theory. It needs to be pointed out that the emphasis of the right to subsistence does not mean that China does not attach great importance to other basic rights including equality, freedom, and democracy. On the contrary, China's goal of focusing on the right to subsistence of its 1.3 billion people, in the previous years, served to better



realise the spread of equality, freedom and democracy. It is irresponsible for someone who does not have enough to eat and wear to talk about equality, freedom and democracy in empty words. The precondition for China to put justice and fairness on the top of its agenda, in recent years, is that the problem of food and clothes has now been solved in reform and development. The right to subsistence for 1.3 billion people has been realised. In other words, in China's process of developing democratic politics, one major feature needed to respect and safeguard human rights is to realise other basic rights of its citizens, such as guarantee of equal participation and equal development according to law, on the basis of realising the right to subsistence and development.

The issue of human rights should not be a barrier in the development of China-EU relations. Generally speaking, China thoroughly understands the EU's stance on human rights, but many Europeans do not understand well enough China's idea on human rights. One explication for this is that many Europeans do not fully appreciate Chinese history and reality, neither do they know much about the Chinese view on human rights. We hope that via an in-depth exchange to improve mutual understanding, those frictions can be reduced, so that the development in China-EU relations can be promoted.

Ideological difference between the EU and China

The dispute in human rights between the EU and China is not simply due to different understandings of the concept itself. Ideology is another and deeper reason which should not be ignored.

The 1.3 billion population of China have a common sense: China does not hold a perfect human rights record, but it has undeniably made historical progress, in particular in the 60 years after the publication of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and in the 30 years of China's reform and opening up, where the Chinese government started by redressing misjudged cases, then realised the production and operation rights for individuals, developed a socialist market economy, promoted a socialist democracy and legal system, improved election and deliberative democracy, put forward the "people-first" principle, provided citizens with the right to learn the truth, the right of participation, the right of expression, and the right of supervision.

Most noticeably in 1997, the 15th Party Congress of the CCP included "respect and safeguard human rights" in its report. In 2004, the 2nd Session of the 10th NPC agreed to add "respect and safeguard human rights" in the Constitution of the PRC. This demonstrates clearly that the CCP takes "respect and safeguard human rights" as a fundamental principle and a vital task of state governance.

Despite the progress achieved in the human rights cause in China, the human rights issue has still remained, in recent years, a controversial issue in international exchanges between China and other countries. Thus, human rights have emerged as an important field that we need to face in



international relations. Why is this the case? This is an important question for us to reflect upon and to consider carefully.

We have never denied that in its process of development, China has made mistakes which have been damaging in terms of its democracy and human rights record. We have neither denied that China has still a lot of problems in the human rights field that need to be solved. Among some of the Chinese officials, bureaucracy is still prevalent. They do not respect and safeguard human rights, but seriously violate human rights. In the meantime, we all know that no single country in the world, including the Western developed countries, has a perfect record in the history of human rights development. We also know that no single country in the world is perfectly positioned when faced with the human rights issue. To accuse China's mistakes in its process of development or its problems in terms of human rights, and to negate the efforts that we have made in the human rights issue, is not sensible. It only indicates that some people have deep prejudice against China.

What needs to be studied is why certain individuals have so much prejudice against China. An important reason can be found is the Cold War thinking, which appeared after the end of the WWII. The Cold War ended after dramatic changes occurred in the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries. As victim of the Cold War, the Chinese, led by Deng Xiaoping, discarded the Cold War thinking, followed the road of peaceful development, and advocated the idea of promoting the construction of a harmonious world, in collaboration with the people of all other countries. However, some people in the West, as winner of the Cold War, not only failed to disentangle themselves from the outdated Cold War thinking, but also continued to criticise our human rights cause, on the basis of the Cold War thinking and the prejudice against the Communist Party and socialism, formed in the Cold War era.

What is Cold War thinking? What are its features? The Cold War thinking was formed in the period of the Cold War, characterised by the rigid use of ideology as a criterion to define friends or foes, and continuing ideological confrontation in an extreme way. The Cold War thinking led to rigid thinking, stubbornness, superciliousness and arrogance. At present, the Cold War is over, and the Cold War thinking becomes outdated and getting more unpopular. Experienced in the harsh reality of the Cold War, we are well aware of the harm that Cold War thinking can lead to. Affected by it, we had for a long time ignored human rights, always criticising the so-called capitalist human rights viewpoint, which had a negative impact on our human rights development. Therefore, since reform and opening up, we no longer stringently define our friends or enemies based on ideology, neither do we engage in ideological confrontation when dealing in international relations. Instead, we steadfastly defend our national interest and adhere to our beliefs. We have noticed, however, that the Cold War thinking has not disappeared in the international society in the wake of the Cold War. Those voices which



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viciously attacked and blackened China's human rights cause whilst disregarding the overall facts remind us that it will take long and assiduous efforts for people to say farewell to the Cold War mindset.

The history of China's human rights development is rather complex. Affected by the prejudice resulted from the Cold War thinking, China's human rights issue is not only turned into a problem, but also turned into a complicated problem. We must take this into consideration when we discuss and study human rights. Currently, a new situation appeared in China's development of human rights, that is, China not only needs to fight against those opposed to human rights, democracy and the rule of law inside the country, but also against the offensive Cold War thinking in the international society. This is the objective reality we have to face. We firmly believe that respect for and safeguard of human rights is a just cause—no one can stop such a just cause. The prejudice, due to the Cold War thinking, cannot stand the test of facts, neither can it write off the historical progress and achievements made by China in its human rights cause.

An important task in the process of constructing a long-term stable partnership between the EU and China is to reach further consensus on the human rights issue. In order to reach consensus, we need to say farewell to the Cold War thinking.



EU-CHINA DISCUSSIONS ON HUMAN RIGHTS: THE PARLIAMENTARY DIMENSION

Geoffrey Harris*

The European Parliament has, for many years, been committed to the development of the closest possible relations with China. As the then President of the European Parliament, Hans-Gert Pöttering stated on 17 December 2008

We in this house value highly our relations with China. We express ourselves on human rights issues as friends of the Chinese people, knowing very well how much we can do together for world peace and prosperity. Human rights should never be seen as a threat to any nation but as a right of every people and of all people, individually, collectively and universally.¹

This succinct summary of how Parliament approaches this issue is worth bearing in mind. Indeed contrary to what some Chinese officials often state, there is nothing “special” in Parliament’s approach to human rights issues in China as compared with other countries.

Any cursory examination of the range of European Parliamentary activities confirms that the institution is extremely outspoken on human rights throughout the world. Moreover, the Parliament has also not hesitated to look into allegations of human rights violations by major allies and even by member states of the EU itself. Issues of xenophobia, discrimination on the grounds of race and gender, minority rights within Europe are regularly debated in Brussels and Strasbourg. Allegations that European states cooperated in illegal renditions and torture undertaken by the United States as part of what is, controversially, described as the “war on terror” have been carefully examined in public hearings at the EP in which alleged victims of rendition, representatives of EU institutions and the US Administration have taken part. Each year Parliament adopts an Annual report on “Human rights in the world and the EU’s policy on the matter”. The text adopted this year (7/5/09)² reiterates concerns about developments in China but in one paragraph of a 134 paragraph text.

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¹ Award of the Sakharov Prize - 20th Anniversary, Audiovisual link to the European Parliament plenary sitting of 17 December 2008, retrieved 6 August 2009, www.europarl.europa.eu/wps-europarl-internet/frd/vod/player?date=20081217.

² EP resolution of 7 May 2009 on the Annual Report on Human Rights in the world 2008 and the EU's policy on the matter (2008/2336(INI)), Rapporteur: Raimon Obiols i Germà, retrieved 7 August 2009,



Cooperation between European Parliament and China on human rights

There can be no doubt that the European Parliament is very much in favour of developing the strategic partnership between the EU and China, and the fact that the European Parliament expresses its views on human rights issues in a most transparent manner should not be seen as in contradiction with this shared goal. Criticism of a government using the excuse of the terrorist threat to undermine basic human rights is no more likely to be overlooked by the European Parliament when it happens in China than if it occurs for example in the United States, Israel, or Turkey. This can be confirmed by examination of EP statements, resolutions and activities in relation to these countries.

Members of the European Parliament are, undoubtedly, well aware of and profoundly impressed by, the enormous social and economic progress China has achieved since the 1970s. EU-China relations were established in 1975 and have evolved into a strategic partnership. The 1985 EU-China Trade and Cooperation Agreement provides the current framework for this relationship. In 2007 negotiations began in order to upgrade this into a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) which will reflect the depth and extent of the relationship encompassing over 24 sectoral dialogues and agreements, ranging from environmental protection to education and culture. This evolution will be closely monitored and supported by the European Parliament which will be called upon to give its assent to the PCA before it can enter into force. The place of human rights in this agreement will be of great importance as it is in most agreements between the EU and third countries.

The most significant events each year are the EU-China summits, which normally take place annually, however the meeting scheduled for December 2008 in France was postponed by the Chinese because of their displeasure about the meeting in Poland between President Sarkozy and the Dalai Lama (who addressed the EP in December 2008). The European Parliament follows closely the work of the Summits and these are often the occasion for a debate in plenary session enabling the EP to express its views on all issues, including by definition human rights.

The EU is China's largest trade partner and China is the EU's second largest partner. In 2008 imports to the EU from China were € 248 billion compared to € 75 billion in 2000. Exports to China increased from € 26 billion to € 78 billion over the same period. This trade deficit is a significant factor in the relationship and the cause of much concern and is also an issue of intense discussion between Euro MPs and NPC Members and indeed specific visits to China by relevant EP Committee members. Indeed, the agendas of the inter parliamentary meetings (IPMs) confirm that the EP is not exclusively concerned with human rights issues, indeed to suggest that it is would be profoundly misleading.



The European Parliament and the National People's Congress (NPC) have a long established and often intense relationship. The IPMs between the European Parliament and the National People's Congress of China have been taking place for nearly 30 years and it is certainly no coincidence that this very important working relationship was initiated just after the major economic reforms of initiated by Deng Xiao Ping in 1979.

It is worth noting that the European Parliament's delegation for relations with China is the second largest inter parliamentary delegation. In the 2004-9 legislature it had 39 full members and an equal number of substitutes. Three quarters of these members are indeed eligible to travel to China every year. Visits are made outside of Beijing, for example to Tibet in 2007.

Since 2007 it has been standard practice for two IPMs to take place every year - one in Europe and one in China. The Bureau of the European Parliament delegation makes an additional annual visit to China. The importance of the European Parliament in the development of the EU-China relationship is widely recognised, for example, in the Commission Communication of October 2006 which stated that "the European Parliament plays a central role and should expand co-operation with the Chinese National People's Congress."³

The members of the Chinese delegation on their visits to Europe generally hold meetings in Brussels or Strasbourg as well as a day-long visit to a nearby region. This is followed by a visit lasting two to three days to another EU member state.

The focal point of the visits in both China and Europe is the formal inter parliamentary meeting between the members of the European Parliament and their counterparts in the NPC. These follow an agreed agenda and are normally made up of two sessions of three hours (totalling six hours). Regular themes on the agenda have been the state of EU-China relations, global politics, climate change, market access, intellectual property rights, social and economic issues, human rights, and recently the global financial and economic downturn. These mirror the discussions held between and China and the Commission and Council.

For 10 years the European Union has held regular Human Rights Dialogue meetings with China, these were initiated at the suggestion of China. The European Parliament has analysed the work of these meetings and considers that in view of their profound political importance the level of the meetings at official level should be upgraded. The EP sub-committee on human rights regularly receives "*in camera*" briefings from the Presidency and the Commission on developments within the dialogue. An EP official is regularly invited to the Legal Seminar organised prior to each dialogue session. The current review of this dialogue initiated by the Council Working Group on Human Rights (COHOM) will be of great interest to parliamentarians

³ Commission of the European Communities, 'EU - China: Closer partners, growing responsibilities', COM(2006) 632 final, Brussels, 24 October 2006, p. 9.



looking for signs of measurable progress achieved through the dialogue framework.

A positive sign was the invitation addressed to the sub-committee to visit China in 2008 at the initiative of the China Society for Human Rights Studies (CSHRS). Unfortunately the Chinese authorities were unable to confirm a date for the visit and were quite clearly upset by the Parliament's unanimous decision to award the 2008 Sakharov Prize to Hu Jia. In the course of 2008 EP resolutions on Tibet and on the human rights aspects of the preparations for the Olympic Games were regularly the subject of strong reactions by the Chinese Ambassador to the EU. In spite of these deep differences of opinion the working relationship between the EP and the NPC was not affected, even if sometimes the discussions were quite tense and confrontational. Hopefully now that the EP has begun its new term of office the CSSHR invitation to the Human Rights sub-committee will be reiterated.

The European Parliament monitoring human rights in China

The European Parliament, therefore, monitors closely, supports and indirectly contributes to the Human Rights Dialogue between the EU and China but is not in favour of dialogue without specific goals and checks on progress achieved towards them. Its debates on these issues are held in public and indeed there is often a lively debate on tactical issues between those who prefer a more discreet approach and those who wish to address China in very blunt, undiplomatic terms. The latter tend to be in the majority taking the view that parliamentarians have a totally different function from that of diplomats and feel the obligation to publicly raise issues of concern to their citizens.

Examination of the statements on human rights issues by the Commission and the Council also confirms that there is not, in fact, anything special about the general approach adopted by the European Parliament. When for example, the Parliament awarded the 2008 Sakharov Prize to Hu Jia "on behalf of the silenced voices in China and Tibet" it received public congratulations from the French Presidency of the EU. When in November 2008 Wo Weihan was executed, whilst the EU-China Human Rights Dialogue was going on, this was in spite of public and private calls to save his life by all the EU institutions. The debate in the European Parliament on the Xinjiang crisis on 15 July 2009⁴ was opened by Swedish Foreign Minister Bildt and Commissioner Ashton, both of whom underlined the shared goal of a stable, open and transparent system developing in China. Of course, in such a debate different views were expressed with some MEPs talking openly about East Turkistan and others denouncing Uyghur terrorism.

It should also be noted that there is nothing "special" about Parliament's approach to human rights as compared with the legislatures

⁴ Audiovisual link to the European Parliament plenary sitting of 15 July 2009, China (debate), retrieved 7 August 2009, www.europarl.europa.eu/wps-europarl-internet/frd/vod/player?date=20090715.



around the world. When in July 2009 the US Congress Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission wrote to the Chinese Ambassador in Washington concerning the case of Gao Zhisheng⁵, its co-chairs expressed themselves precisely in the same way as the President of the European Parliament⁶ had done some months earlier in relation to this extremely disturbing case concerning one of China's most respected lawyers. Like Hu Jia in relation to the European Parliament, Gao Zhisheng had shared his views with the US Congress. He disappeared from his home on 4 February 2009 - nobody knows even where he is.

The issue of the death penalty provides another concrete confirmation that Parliament is not "obsessed" with attacking China. The EU is firmly in the "abolitionist" camp: this leads it into direct confrontation with the US, not just on individual cases but also as the basic principle which is regularly debated in the United Nations. The UN General Assembly in 2008 voted, in fact, for a moratorium on the use of the death penalty. Over the years the European Parliament has spoken out on this issue in relation to China, expressing deep concern at the number of executions and the range of crimes punished by a death sentence. Hopefully, the recent announcement that the range of crimes subject to the death penalty in China could be significantly reduced is a welcome development even if it stops far short of the views of the UN and the EU.

Similarly the publication in April 2009 of China's National Human Rights Action Plan⁷ could indeed mean that "a new chapter has opened in the history of the development of the cause of human rights in China". For this to really be the case China's authorities will be obliged to follow the spirit not just the letter of the international texts to which it has committed itself. The recognition of prisoners' rights and the commitment to eradicate torture as set out in this programme represent very big steps that observers would be unwise to overlook.

Equally necessary is to reiterate the disappointment and indeed the perplexity of the EU in face of China's continued lack of progress towards ratification of the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights. Moreover, it is hard for those who accept China's genuine commitment to human rights to understand the enormity of the repressive apparatus brought to bear down on those seeking peacefully to exercise their constitutional rights. The arrest of many of the signatories of the Charter 2008, a group of academics and lawyers with ideas for the legal and political reform, sends a very negative signal that China's authorities do not accept the views that active citizens having their basic rights are actually a force in society for social

⁵ Copy of the original letter to Ambassador Zhou, retrieved 7 August 2009, www.chinaaid.org/downloads/sb_chinaaid/LetterReGaoZhisheng.pdf.

⁶ Letter from the President of the European Parliament concerning Gao Zhisheng (EP-PE_LTD(2009)307436 and EP-PE_LTD(2009)307438), retrieved 8 August 2009, www.europarl.europa.eu/RegWeb/application/registre/searchResult.faces.

⁷ *National Human Rights Action Plan of China (2009-2010)*, retrieved 8 August 2009, www.china.org.cn/archive/2009-04/13/content_17595407.htm.



harmony and peaceful progress. The criminal charges brought against those seeking to assist victims of the Chengdu earthquake are, not surprisingly, the subject of consternation in all EU institutions and harm profoundly the image of China as a modernising, harmonious society.

A similarly disturbing and problematic event took place in July 2009 when police took away Xu Zhiyong, the leader of a non-governmental organisation "Open Constitution Initiative" which had recently been banned. The fact that the person concerned was an elected member of the People's National Congress did not prevent his "disappearance". Only some days later did it emerge where he was being detained. This was extraordinarily rough treatment for someone supposedly being accused of tax evasion. Observers will find it hard to believe that his role in following up cases in relation to the Sanlu tainted milk scandal or in supporting the movement in favour of democratic election of lawyers' representatives was unrelated to his imprisonment.

The European Parliament takes the view that China's "legal system remains vulnerable to arbitrary and after publicly motivated interferences" and regrets all measures "preventing the transparency necessary for the development of good governance and a system in which the rule of law prevails".⁸

These incidents confirm that the EP's concerns reflect concrete concerns about the violation of certain principles which China has committed itself to respecting. The well established relationship between China and the European parliament also underlines the fact that the expression of these deeply felt concerns does not at all reflect any hostility to the Chinese people or a failure to recognise their enormous achievements in recent decades.

⁸ EP resolution of 7 May 2009 on the Annual Report on Human Rights in the world 2008 and the EU's policy on the matter (2008/2336(INI)), Rapporteur: Raimon Obiols i Germà, paragraph 89, retrieved 8 August 2009, www.europarl.europa.eu/document/activities/cont/200905/20090519ATT56124/20090519ATT56124EN.pdf.



THE EU AND CHINA: ENGAGING THE NEWS MEDIA TO PROMOTE MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING

Li Zhang*

The EU and China, two of the world's fast growing powers, have become closer to each other since the middle of the 1990s, moving from a constructive partnership to a comprehensive and strategic partnership. Their relations are regarded as increasingly mature, healthy and stable.¹ They share similar outlooks on the world order; they both embrace multilateralism in dealing with international affairs; they have complementary economic and trade relations; and they do not currently have any conflicting security interests in the Asian region. These areas form a solid foundation for EU-China cooperation. However, there are still some differences and disagreements on issues such as human rights, the Dalai Lama and Tibet, the arms embargo, as well as trade disputes and deficit, which remain as challenges and obstacles to the further development of their relationship. The differences between the EU and China are unlikely to be solved in the short term and they need more mutual understanding.²

This article intends to discuss specifically the ways in which both sides work together to improve communications and stress the role played by the news media in promoting mutual understanding between the EU and China. Although much research has been conducted in the aspects of political, economic and trade relations between the two powers, little attention has been given to the news media in their relationship by either the academics or the politicians. Therefore, this article, it is hoped, will contribute to the meagre research on the role of news media in EU-China relations.

Communicating between the EU and China

One significant method to bring mutual understanding is to improve effective communication between the two sides. This can be implemented at two levels, namely, the governmental and the public level.

At the governmental level, first, the EU and China set up the mechanism of an annual Summit Meeting in 1998; second, they have on-going bilateral dialogues in more than 20 areas, including human rights, agricultural dialogue, civil aviation, consumer product safety, environment,

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¹ Bingran Dai, 'Marching towards Mature, Healthy, and Stable Sino-EU Relations' [Zouxiang chengshu jiankang wending de ZhongOu guanxi], *European Studies [Ouzhou yanjiu]*, No.2, 2005, p.73.

² Jing Men, 'EU-China relations need more mutual understanding', *EU-China Observer*, Issue 1, 2009.



and maritime transport and so on;³ third, they have also built up a series of consultation mechanism based on the principle of equality; and fourth, the number of high level officials' visit between the EU and China increases every year. These communications at governmental level have played a significant role for the two sides in solving many disputes and contradictions and have greatly contributed to the fast development of EU-China relations during the last decade. Despite differences in political systems and economic models, and disagreements on the concepts and principles of human rights and democracy are hard to overcome, there is no doubt that frank discussions have helped to enhance mutual understanding.

However, communication between the EU and China only at governmental level is far from enough, more communications are needed at the public level, such as in public diplomacy and people-to-people exchanges.

The EU's public diplomacy in a third country deals with the influence of public attitudes. It seeks to promote EU interests by understanding, informing and influencing. It means clearly explaining the EU's goals, policies and activities and fostering understanding of these goals through dialogue with individual citizens, groups, institutions and the media.⁴ In 2005, when the EU and China celebrated the 30-year anniversary of their diplomatic relations, the European Commission's Delegation in Beijing initiated one painting competition and one essay competition targeted at Chinese young people. In 2007, the EU's 50th anniversary, the EU carried out a "Happy Birthday Europe" campaign, trying to shape the EU concept and develop its identities among the Chinese.⁵ The Delegation in China did a great deal of work. It developed a series of activities, such as festivals, exhibitions, conferences and events, trying to increase understanding of EU policies, to inform the general public and to broaden dialogue.

In the meantime, China also projects its soft power through its public diplomacy strategy. From the establishment of Confucius Institutes all over the world to the plans to spend 45 billion Yuan Renminbi on the overseas expansion of its three main media organisations, China is making great efforts to get its message out. More than 80 Confucius Institutes have been built up in more than 20 Member States of the European Union by 2008 and this number is increasing.⁶ Together with a series of cultural activities, for instance, various Chinese Culture Festivals were held in Bulgaria in 2003 and 2004, in France in 2004, in Netherland in 2005, in Norway in 2004 and 2007, in the UK in 2006 and

³ An overview of the sectoral dialogues between China and the EU, retrieved on 2 July 2009, http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/china/sectoraldialogue_en.htm.

⁴ European Commission, 'The EU's 50th Anniversary Celebrations around the World: A Glance at EU Public Diplomacy at Work', 2007, Brussels.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ List of Confucius Institutes Around the World, published by Hanban (Confucius Institute Headquarters), retrieved on 15 July 2009, http://www.hanban.org/e21sqlimg//file/200906/fff20090601181134_562609772.pdf.



2008, in Italy in 2008, and so on, Chinese civilization has become more approachable to the Europeans.

The people-to-people exchanges between the two sides have intensively increased through various programmes, such as the EU Visitors' Programme, the EU-China Higher Education Programme, and their co-operation programmes. Those who have benefited from the exchange programmes include individuals within business, government, academia, NGOs, the media and other groups. The Approved Destination Status Agreement in 2004 also facilitates organised group tourism from China to the Schengen Area. According to official statistics, each year about 1 million Chinese travel to Europe and more than 6 million European citizens visit China for tourism, business, study or work.⁷

In the communication between the EU and China, the news media has become an important element that cannot be ignored at both the government and public levels. The following two sections are devoted to analysing the news media as a communicative tool and as a vital information source respectively in EU-China relations.

News media as a communicative tool in EU-China relations

The end of the Cold War made it possible for the media to play a role in the relationship between the EU and China. During the Cold War period, EU-China relations had been regarded as derived from their relations with the two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union.⁸ It was after the end of the Cold War that EU-China relations started to develop independently. This gave space for other factors, such as the national governments of Member States, other foreign governments, interest groups, and the news media and so on, to have a potential impact on policy-making. In the meantime, the end of the Cold War also increased the independence and autonomy of the news media. The demise of the Cold War created a void which had been occupied by moral evaluation provided by communism and its threat to the US or generally to the West. It was media, as Entman indicates, which filled the vacuum, and as a result, the power of media has grown since the Cold War.⁹

Therefore, the news media can be an important, even though informal, channel of communication in EU-China relations. The governments of both sides have realized this. They build up good relationships with media to send diplomatic messages to each other, particularly in bilateral negotiations and on special occasions.

⁷ Song Zhe, 'Achievements and future of China-EU relations', *EU-China Observer*, Issue 2, 2009, p. 8.

⁸ David Shambaugh, *China and Europe: 1949-95*, London, SOAS, Contemporary China Institute, 1995.

⁹ Robert M. Entman, 'Declarations of Independence: The Growth of Media Power after the Cold War', in Brigitte L. Nacos, Robert Y. Shapiro and Pierangelo Isernia, (Eds.) *Decisionmaking in a Glass House: Mass Media, Public Opinion, and American and European Foreign Policy in the 21st Century*, Lanham, Boulder, New York and Oxford, Rowman & Littlefield, 2000, pp.11-26.



The European Commission's DG-External Relations has an Information and Communication Unit which deals with Delegations from third countries and there are officials working on China in particular. When EU-China Summits are taking place either in Europe or in Beijing, a press package is issued for journalists in Brussels, in Beijing and in the country where the Summit is taking place. The Delegation of the Commission in Beijing also has a Media Office, containing two officers, one Chinese and one European. It has a very good relationship with many newspaper journalists and the media officers actively doing their jobs. When EU officials are travelling on a mission to China, they try to give a speech via media or to students at universities.¹⁰ In this way, the EU's views on China's development, on their cooperation and on some issues or its concerns are expressed to the media and the public.

The Chinese Mission to the EU now pays more attention than ever before to journalists' requests, either from European journalists or from Chinese journalists, hoping that more voices from China's side on Sino-European relations can be heard by wider audiences.¹¹ On the other hand, the media, in particular the Chinese mainstream media, are a channel for the Chinese government to express its opinion and stance on issues which China regards as key to its territorial integrity, sovereignty and national interests. For instance, when the EU and other western countries sponsored a China resolution in the annual meetings of the United Nation's Commission of Human Rights, China expressed its view on human rights, which is different from the western concept, in the *Beijing Review*, China's only national English weekly news magazine; the news media have heavily covered China's request to lift the EU's arms embargo against China and the negotiation progress between the EU and China on this issue, particularly during 2003 to 2005; and when French President Sarkozy announced his meeting with the Dalai Lama in 2008, the Chinese Foreign Ministry convened a press conference immediately to express China's firm stance on the Tibet issue and decided to postpone the 11th China-EU Summit Meeting, and so on.¹²

Although there are always formal diplomatic channels for communication available, sending diplomatic messages via the news media has become much faster owing to the revolution of modern communication technologies. More importantly, "there is a real difference in the outcome of the communication exposed to the public and that not exposed", as media can take the secret negotiation out of *purdah* by heralding the event, putting pressure on governments and bringing into focus the success of the

¹⁰ Personal interview with an EU official on China policy, 4 July 2007, Brussels.

¹¹ Personal interview with an official in the Chinese Mission to the EU, 4 July 2007, Brussels.

¹² Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Qin Gang's Remarks on Sarkozy's Announcement to Meet with Dalai, 14 November 2008, retrieved on 5 July 2009, <http://ipc.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/fyrth/t522231.htm>; Foreign Spokesperson Qing Gang's Remarks on Postponing the 11th China-EU Summit Meeting, 27 November 2008, retrieved on 5 July 2009, <http://ipc.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/fyrth/t524029.htm>.



negotiation.¹³ In this sense, using the news media as a communicative tool between the EU and China can sometimes achieve better communication outcomes through influencing public opinion or/and expressing governments' stance and intention to promote mutual understanding on confronted and disagreed issues.

News media as a vital source of information in EU-China relations

The second role of the news media is to provide information about the EU, China and their relations for both the policy-makers and the general public.

Studies have shown that politicians rely largely on the news media for information.¹⁴ This is also the case for EU officials, including Commissioners and officials in all EU institutions. A typical phenomenon when colleagues meet in the morning at 8 o'clock is that they can see each other reading a bunch of newspapers. The officials working on China policy usually start the day by reading a long media clipping concerning China, invariably in English.¹⁵ The major newspapers, such as the *Financial Times*, the *International Herald Tribune*, the *Wall Street Journal* and the *South China Morning Post* and so on, cover many issues about China on a daily basis. Some of the media clippings are provided by the Delegation in China of the Commission. Whenever there is an important article or issue, media officers in the Delegation translate it and sometimes also contribute an analysis.

Through consuming the news media, the EU's China policy-makers keep track of the events happening in China. Although official visits, meetings and other methods are also sources of information on China, policy-makers get to know more about the changes and the transformation of China on a daily basis via the news media. How the news media covers China influences their perceptions of China, which eventually feeds into the processes of policy-making. Publishing policy papers toward China by the European Commission at different stages is based on the need to redefine EU-China relations. The rapid development and changes in China is one of the main reasons forcing the EU to make and update its policy-papers toward China. It is the news media that provide good information about a fast developing and changing China for EU decision-makers. Those news media form a public sphere within which the European elites communicate and magnify positive and/or negative aspects of Chinese issues from time to time.

On the other hand, China also pays attention to its national image abroad. Even though there are still many negative stories concerning China, the coverage of China in European countries has become more balanced

¹³ Yoel Cohen, *Media Diplomacy: The Foreign Office in the Mass Communications Age*, London, Frank Cass, 1986, p. 68.

¹⁴ Bernard C. Cohen, *The Press and Foreign Policy*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1963; W. Phillips Davison, 'News Media and International Negotiation', *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 38, No.2, 1974, pp.174-191; Cohen, *Media Diplomacy*, 1986; Patrick O'Heffernan, *Mass Media and American Foreign Policy: Insider Perspectives on Global Journalism and the Foreign Policy Process*, Norwood, Ablex, 1991.

¹⁵ Personal interview with an EU official on China policy, 5 July 2007, Brussels.



than ever before.¹⁶ In 2003, China responded to the EU and published its first ever foreign policy, China's EU Policy Paper, for the further development of EU-China relations.

For the general public, the mass media is the major source of information about foreign affairs, as unlike other information, foreign news is hard to get from other channels, for instance, interpersonal communications. It is the news media that brings events and crises occurred in one corner of the world directly to another. A study on the EU perceptions in China asked its survey participants about the frequency of their access to the news media for news on foreign affairs, and this shows that 84% of respondents regularly access media for foreign news. Hence, the author suggests that if the EU wants to raise its profile in China, it is very important to increase its exposure in the media.¹⁷ Moreover, press conferences and news stories of public diplomatic activities and cultural festivals also play a role in informing the public of events; so that it can increase people's interest and encourage more people participate in the activities.

Engaging the news media for better mutual understanding and raising profiles

To conclude, the news media in this modern society is an effective communicative tool and a vital information source in the development of EU-China relations. Engaging the news media can improve mutual communications between the two partners and therefore bring better mutual understanding. To further achieve this, both the EU and China intend to improve their profiles in each other's countries and get their messages across.

The policy paper "Building a Comprehensive Partnership with China" published in 1998 by the Commission mentioned clearly that one of its goals is to raise its profile in China,¹⁸ and the EU restated this point in its 2001 and 2003 policy papers toward China.¹⁹ Among the series of action plans the EU listed for this purpose, the news media and their journalists have been mentioned many times.

¹⁶ Personal interview with a senior journalist in Xinhua News Agency based in Europe, 1 July 2007, Brussels.

¹⁷ Martin Holland, Peter Ryan, Alojzy Nowak, and Natalia Chaban (Eds.), *The EU through the Eyes of Asia: Media, public and elites perceptions in China, Japan, Korea, Singapore and Thailand*, Singapore-Warsaw, University of Warsaw, 2007, p.55.

¹⁸ The proposals of the first communication of the Commission "A Long Term Policy for China-Europe Relations" already mentioned that cooperation should be "central to objective of raising the profile of the EU in China, and of China in the EU." See Commission of the European Communities, 'A Long Term Policy for China-Europe Relations', COM (1995) 279 final, 1995, pp. 15-16.

¹⁹ Commission of the European Communities, 'Building a Comprehensive Partnership with China', COM (1998) 181 final, 25 March 1998, Brussels; Commission of the European Communities, 'EU Strategy towards China: Implementation of the 1998 Communication and Future Steps for a more Effective EU Policy', COM (2001) 265, Brussels, 15 May 2001; Commission of the European Communities, 'A Maturing Partnership - Shared Interests and Challenges in EU-China Relations', COM (2003) 533 fin, Brussels, 10 September 2003.



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On China's side, the second national English newspaper, the *Global Times*, was launched by the *People's Daily* on 20th April 2009. The CCTV has plans to launch Arabic and Russian channels in 2009 as a complement to its four international channels which already broadcast in Chinese, English, French and Spanish.²⁰ The Xinhua News Agency also plans to create a 24-hour English-language news network, possibly based in Singapore or elsewhere outside China.²¹ These actions indicate that China would not only improve its international image but also represent world affairs from China's point of view. The news media is an effective means to achieve this.

The technologically mediated information society highlights the role of the news media in international politics. In order to develop further the relationship between the EU and China, the role of the news media cannot be ignored. Engaging the news media for communicating between the two partners and raising their profiles can be an effective way to promote mutual understanding.

²⁰ Vivian Wu and Adam Chen, 'Beijing in 45b yuan global media drive; State giants to lead image campaign', *South China Morning Post*, 13 January 2009, p.1.

²¹ Calum MacLeod, 'China envisions media power: Government wants to improve image with Western countries', *USA Today*, retrieved on 5 July 2009, http://www.usatoday.com/printedition/news/20090219/chinamedia19_st.art.htm.