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Aiming to become an effective International Player: the European Union´s fragile external policy towards China

Abstract: The European Union looks to become an effective international player by articulating a common vision of its role in international politics and to design a common strategy for the big territorial areas of international relations. In recent years, resulting from its growing relevance in global affairs, Asia and the Asian nations have become the nucleus of a quiet revolution in international economics and international finances that has repositioned Asia as the driver of global growth and progress. Recent data has made this profound drift in international affairs unmistakable and without any serious doubts. It is China´s turn to be, from all angles, the dynamo of the described reconfiguration of regional and global balances of power by using their typical methods of strong power and projecting its influence and aura to neighbours and to the West. The EU developed its relationship with China by handling the panoply of legal and institutional tools that enabled the creation of the internal market and the institution of Economic and Monetary Union (EMU). During this process the EU has been uncomfortable due to the difficulties arising from the lack of statehood in the European development, the absence of a unifying leadership in the continent and the inappropriateness of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) for dealing with contemporary foreign policy challenges. The succession of annual bilateral summits between the Asian powers and the EU that have taken place since the upgrading of the EU-PRC bilateral relationship to a Strategic Partnership (2003), have been acclamatory of their gracious character enhancing their growing relationship. However, these summits have disguised the unfitness of their postures, identities, and visions to work together. In an anarchic world of Great Powers it is difficult to project the weight of a union of nations where the necessary characteristics of a sovereign power are absent: a solid central government, a reliable and solid foreign policy, appropriate professional diplomacy, and a common unified defense policy. This document argues the constructivism and emphasis of ideas, common interests and malleable identities that may bring a new élan to the current process of redrafting the CFSP, in a post-Treaty of Lisbon era.

Keywords: European Union, Common Foreign and Security Policy, China, partnerships, constructivism, identity, ideas, interests, roles.

Some day, following the example of the United States of America, there will be a United States of Europe.
George Washington

Introduction.

The narrative of the European Union and its achievements has framed the imaginary situation of the Europeans assuring peace in the world following the armistice of the Second World War. The history of Europe for more than sixty years is of economic, political and cultural successes, largely benefiting from an environment of continuous peace throughout the European continent[1]. That peace was possible due essentially to the Marshall Plan and the strategic and nuclear umbrella of the United States and NATO. On its way to major economic integration, Europe evolved from a triplex community of nations united over essential resources to a Union where important segments of internal

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[1] A peace broken by a civil war (1991-1992) in the leftovers of the Republic of Yugoslavia.

politics were unified by 'communautarization'[2]. This process was possible by the leadership of an exquisite generation of European leaders and an intertwined action of the European Commission, the European Council and the European Parliament. For reasons entrenched in European history, the EU was never able to design a common foreign policy that enabled it to respond to the challenges of a volatile international situation. The well known joke of Henry Kissinger, recently repeated in a discussion with Poland's Foreign Minister Radek Sikorski is: *Who do I call if I want to call Europe?* (Fox News, 2012), Kissinger has gently declined to be responsible for the joke, but it remains in everybody's mind, as a good description of the European Union systematic lack of international power.

It has been easy to blame the 'usual suspects' for this deficiency but the EU has hardly ever seen itself as a plural state, a federation or a confederation of nations. Its constituents and Member States rarely allow it to be so. The above mentioned utopist vision of George Washington was doomed to be always remote; Bismarck's assessment is much more accurate[3]. However the problem is hardly ideological. Looking at the history of Europe (as a continent) we see many different types of 'multiple states' such as the Helvetica Confederation, Western Germany, the USSR, or the Republic of Yugoslavia to name but a few. Nor is it an issue of a linguistic nature as we can detect in the majority of middle-sized and large European nations numerous communities speaking different languages and living together peacefully. Neither is the issue about the inexistence of a common currency because the EU has succeeded in extending the Euro to fifteen of its Member States. The problem is not even about European defense as NATO provides the basic apparatus to assure peace within Europe. The problem lies on the how the EU sees its "ego", and articulates its identity in comparison with that of its constituents - the twenty-seven Member States that form it. The basic question is: who do we consider ourselves to be when we ask ourselves: "Who are we?" French, British, Portuguese, Polish or European citizens? The answer is quite intuitive. The second question is: "Do we see ourselves at anytime giving up our own individual nationality to become a European?"

For the great majority of Europeans, European Citizenship is not first; it is just

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[2] This neologism means that the *community method* by which the Council makes decisions by majority voting or unanimity (in articulation with the European Parliament and the Commission) was extended to the Third Pillar, due to the Lisbon Treaty.

[3] Bismarck stated that whoever speaks of Europe is wrong: it is a geographical expression.

complements the national dimension of sovereignty, independence, democracy and legitimization of the national leadership. This may be the reason why the development of the economic, political, security and defense integration of Europe has been an 'Impossible Mission' performed by European vanguards and not a following through of Europe's electorates. For the majority of Europeans, strangled by a financial crisis that eliminates their perspectives of a safe and comfortable future, the EU is similar to an old painting, hanging in a museum, that one goes to see on a Sunday morning with the family. It is idealistic and attractive but not what 'we will be fighting for'. Europe is not a political force, and definitely will not be one to survive the expense of being a nation.

A union of states that is not perceived as having a mature personality will not have an autonomous foreign policy or one worthy to be called as such. The EU's voice, if it in fact exists, is mainly the aggregate of 27 voices from the 27 Member States. Of course there is the President of the European Commission and the representative of the United Kingdom in charge of a sort of 'common' foreign policy, but would they speak for all Europeans? According to international law all nations are equal[4]. So the problem remains: how can a union of states act as an individual powerhouse if it lacks the apparel to do it efficiently? The answer is far from easy. It is a twofold problem: the image that the Europeans make of themselves; the image the international community, jurists, commentators, strategists or that the European Law experts presume in the EU's international personality.

The process of European integration has been put on view as an example of the correctness of the so-called neofunctionalist paradigm[5], a utilitarian theoretical doctrine engineered to circumvolve the anarchy of international relations[6] favoured by realists[7] and neorealists[8] to describe an era relentlessly dominated by sovereign, competitive and powerful states. According to Haas (Haas, 1968: xii) the experience of the European Community of Steel and Coal revealed a theory of international integration by 'trial and

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[4] The United Nation's Charter prescribes in Article 2 *the Organization is based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all its Members* (United Nation, 1945).

[5] Neofunctionalists argue that political integration and the growth of authority at a supranational level happen as a long-term effect of coordinated economic integration, as integration in one sector pressures for integration in associated sectors. This is called functional spill-over (Rosamond, 2000: 202).

[6] We name anarchy the decentralized distribution of power in the international system, as there is no leader or authority that monopolizes power and has legitimacy to use it.

[7] Realists see the world in terms of a struggle for power in which strong actors, i.e. states, seek to dominate the others to guarantee their interests and independence.

[8] Neorealists, like Kenneth Waltz, argue that the structure of the international system has a determinative influence in the action of the players conditioning their behavior and options to be beyond their own material capabilities.

error', by miscalculation of key figures, 'manipulation' by elite forces through the intervention of small groups of politicians (and administrators) in the context of a distant but permissive public opinion.

This paper argues that the current difficulties of Europe are of political design and ambition. If the EU wants to be considered as a credible international force it needs to urgently take courageous steps to think as a unit and become a polity. The Union needs, secondly, to improve the weight and coherence of its foreign policy through a decision-making process that, without ostracizing anybody, gives the Union the power to decide and act in time (Youngs, 2011). The residual question is how can Europe achieve a new identity, have a decisive role in international affairs during a time of a euro crisis that threatens not only the EU's internal economic unity but the cogency of its international projection. The EU needs to reflect not only on its immediate management of the euro crisis but also on how this will feed into a changing relationship between Europe and the rest of the world.

The constructivist paradigm[9] may serve for the proposed aims as ideas - over military, economic or hard power capabilities as a direct cooperation and use of power rather than a collaboration in pursuit of power per se and assuming a central role in International affairs. Ideas define values, norms and beliefs that governments, political leaders, and International Organizations maintain to pursue and apply power (Nau, 2008, 44). Ideas[10] define and/or construct the identity[11] of the players which then reveals their capabilities and institutional behaviour. Interests and identities of each state are highly malleable assets that are interlinked with specific historical procedures. The EU has a wealth of experience and is identified as a mediator and pacificator during any international crisis. If correctly projected, the EU is capable of changing the identities of others as a blueprint tailored and geared to the European Union´s own interests. Europe appears now to be concerned primarily with commerce. It is been noted that diplomats have begun to admit, in private, that the EU has not simply engaged Asia as a strategic actor as the US have done (Youngs, 2011). The EU looks to have no strategic perspective

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[9] Constructivists stress that the world is social rather than material, and the actor's interests and identities are not given or fixed. They arise and are transformed in consequence of shared understandings among actors about the world they live in and the roles they perform in it (Rosamond, 2000: 198).

[10] Idea is a mental representation of something.

[11] Identity is, basically, the ideas that shape a person or own self entity through a collective relationship with others or through similarities and differences with other groups. Nationality, West, Christian are well-known identities.

in Asia beyond that of a race for commercial contracts and a reversal of its weakening economic presence. This specific case of relations between the EU and China clearly illustrates how the EU is losing the battle for competitiveness.

The European Union as a Juridical Being.

Different classifications have been offered to define the entity "European Union" from a form of regional and intergovernmental integration to a confederation of states, a Civil Power, or a Normative Power. On one side there are those who see the EU as a potential multiple state; on the other side there are those who see it as a fragmented international participant with a system of regular diplomatic co-ordination between Member States. Between these two visions (or assessments) are those who think of a "presence" marked by tensions between institutionalization and the building of collective identities, limited to specific characteristics and impacts (Elgström & Smith, 2007:1). Jacques Delors, a former president of the European Commission called it a *not identified political object* (Schmitter, 1996: 1). Margaret Thatcher saw a Europe *speaking with one voice* with a clearer sense *of a common purpose but in a way that serves our different traditions, the powers of the Parliaments and the sense of national pride of one ́s own country* (Nelson, Stubb, 2003: 52). Tony Blair saw in Europe a sort of symbiosis *a Europe of free nations, independent and sovereign that choose to direct these sovereignties for their interests and the common good* (Nelson, Stubb, 2003: 80). Angela Merkel held that for Germany, Europe is not only indispensable; it is part and parcel of the German identity. *We've always said German unity, European unity and integration - that's two parts of one and the same coin*, she remarked (White House, 2011).

According to EU policy-makers, the European Union has built an institutional framework directing the Union to a new kind of pan-European political architecture that could transcend the old international order based in nation-states. The idea of a Europe close to its well-informed citizens united by shared cultural values and a sense of belonging to a common European homeland has been part of the moral foundation of the European Union for a number of years (Shore, 2000:16). It is remotely the idea of the West, a set of norms, behaviours and institutions with borders that are blurred in the extreme, as the historian Niall Ferguson reminds us (Ferguson, 2011: 15).

In the process of transformation of the European Communities to a European Union

the EU was reputedly recognized as a subject of international law, a subject that is entitled to rights and obligations and can enter into legal relations with other parties (Miranda, 2004:182). In this perspective the EU is more close to a confederation but is somehow different to the conventional confederations as it has elements of other federation structures. In any federation of states the domestic competences are divided, according to a Constitution, by the authorities of the federation and of the states; the external powers are concentrated by the federal authorities. However, in the case of the confederate states, the members of the confederation have their own sovereign powers limited in certain areas. An international law scholar points out that near to the end of the Second World War the number of associations of states increased and most of them were regional (Shearer, 1994:114-5). The European Union emerged as the more advanced example of economic and political regional integration, coming from a sequence of treaties but as in any association of States, the EU depended always on the will of Member States to pursue its objectives (Shearer, ibid).

Jacquer Vandamme dismisses the idea of a federal Europe noting that the difference between a federal union and a federal state is the fact that the creation of a federal state involves the transfer of all the most important components of national sovereignty with compulsory means of implementation at the central level authority (Vandamme, 1998:153). Any witness to the "painful process" made at Milan, Maastricht and Amsterdam would know just "how idealistic such a prospect remains". Michael Wilkinson names the EU *the most sophisticated context of framework* in the emerging incidences of non-traditional, non-state institutional structures (Wilkinson, 2003:454). Elaborating on fundamental rights in the EU's "constitutional" system, Wilkinson observes that one of the difficulties in checking the legitimacy of the structures of supranational governance (in the EU) is that the conceptual tools which are used are often tainted with this touch of stateness.

Pascal Fontaine remarks that the EU is *an experiment*, an attempt to establish between States rules and codes of behavior that enable primitive societies to become peaceful and civilised (Fontaine, 1993). The rationale was to "build peace" among European nations and create a sort of supranational political order, an aim that is enshrined in the founding treaties of the European Communities as in the Article 1 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU): *By this Treaty, the High Contracting Parties establish among themselves a European Union, hereinafter called 'the Union'. This Treaty marks*

a new stage in the process of creating an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe, in which decisions are taken as closely as possible to the citizen (TEU, 1992).

The same Article specifies that the Union is founded on the European Communities, supplemented by the policies and forms of cooperation established by the Treaty. It is the Union's task to organize, in a manner demonstrating consistency and solidarity, relations between the Member States and between their peoples (ibid). Under international conventional law, the EU is a union of states, a new stage towards the goal of a more citizenry Union, a constituent part of the European Communities and a mechanism to organize relations between Member States. Articles 13 and 15 of the "Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union" detail the institutional construction of the Union by prescribing that it *shall have an institutional framework which shall aim to promote its values, advance its objectives, serve its interests, those of its citizens and those of the Member States, and ensure the consistency, effectiveness and continuity of its policies and actions* (TEU, 2007). Within that system, the European Council has a special task to provide *the Union with the necessary impetus for its development* and to define the general political directions and priorities.

Schmitter suggests that *for better or for worse, the EU is neither a federation nor a confederation, not even a state, but a sui generic entity of multilayered and polycentric governance*, expressing the idea of a mechanism used to dealing with a broad aspect of problems and conflicts in which the players regularly arrive to a mutually satisfactory and binding decision (Schmitter, 2003:72). These decisions are made through negotiation and deliberation within a framework of cooperation. The second idea is that of the multiplicity of politically independent and interdependent players participating in this process, 'a non-asserting stable hierarchy of political authority' at all levels of co-decision involvement. The third idea is that the process of decision-making includes the delegation of authority to dispersed and relatively autonomous agencies that are not controlled by any single institution.

The concept of a 'European civilian power' has somehow made its way through the writings of Francois Duchêne. In a certain sense, he notes, "civil power" means a semi-sovereign power, compared for instance with the United States status. Duchêne centres his notion of the "civilian power" in its internal and external roles of civilizing and domesticating relations between Member States and secondly extending to them civilian and democratic standards. He noted that *this means trying to bring to*

international problems the sense of common responsibility and structures of contractual politics, which have in the past been associated exclusively with "home" and not foreign affairs. (Duchêne, 1973). The European Communities started to become an international entity deprived from any military dimension by focusing itself in drafting a collection of normative rules that anchor their mutual responsibilities. Not being limited to just that, it was able to exercise its influence on other states, on international and regional organizations, on multinational corporations and other transnational entities using a multiple array of diplomatic, economic and legal instruments.

Differently, Ian Manners has presented the idea of Europe as a "normative power" intending by that "that not only is the EU constructed in a normative basis, but more importantly this predisposes it to act in a normative way in world politics" (Manners, 2002). That notion, adds Manners, is built on the observation that the most relevant factor shaping the international role of the EU 'is not what it does or what it says but what it is. In Manners' vision, the identity of the player and the pursuit of foreign policy are strictly interconnected. In a recent paper, Manners argues *the EU is a young normative power, which is slowly transforming itself from an economic community into a post-national political player* (Manners, Lucarelli, 2006:97). Its identity – Manners stresses – is based on universal human rights such as equality in order to overcome the difficulties of diversity found in different national traditions that have a lack of common 'European cultural tradition.
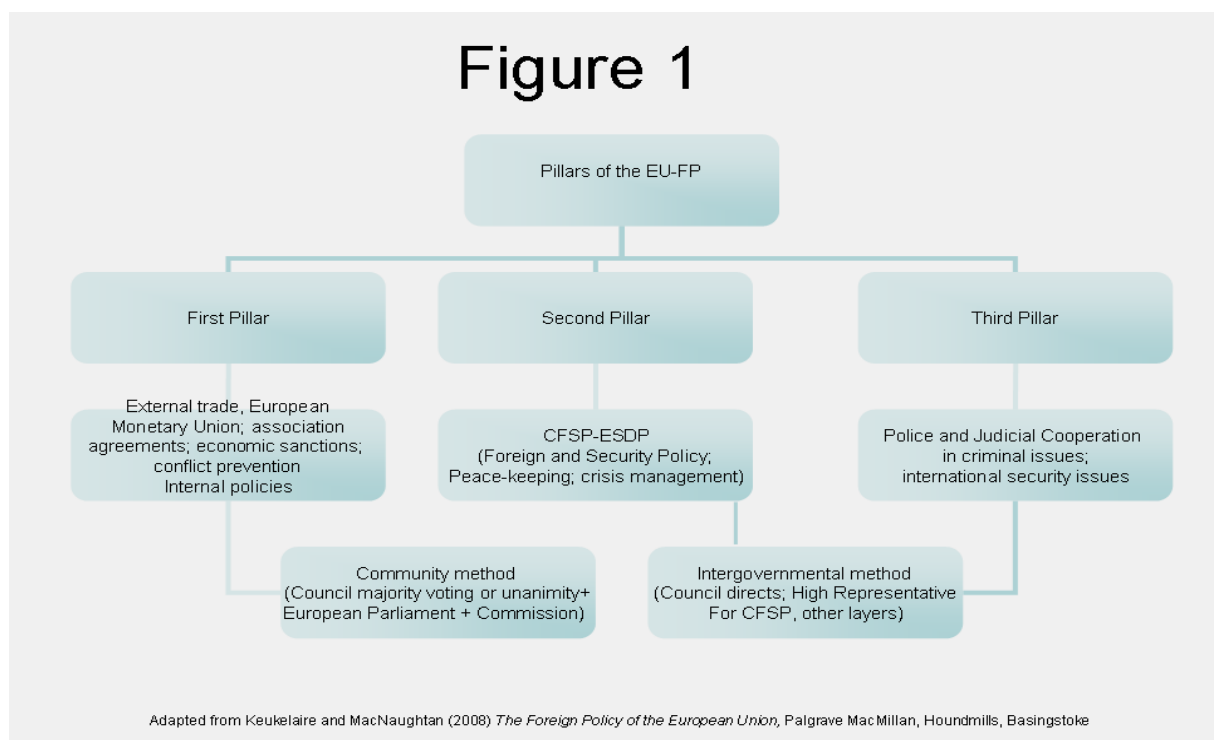
Comparing these perspectives it seems that Schmitter's vision is more accurate and cautious. The EU is still after 60 years a project in progress, an enterprise with stories of success and others of miserable failure. After elaborating on the nature of the European Union we will enter into the issue of Europe as a global power. We will start by exposing the constitutional outline framed in the Treaty on the European Union (TEU), approved in Maastricht and updated in the Intergovernmental Conferences in Nice and Amsterdam. Subsequently we will look at the subject of the EU's controversial foreign policy.

The EU as a Global Player. The European Union Foreign Policy (EU-FP).

The European Union is a sort of non-traditional international territorial player that, according to a vast amount of literature, is becoming a global player (Piening, 1997, Duina, 1999). 'Actorhood' puts the question of the criteria to measure the EU's capability

compared with the traditional nation-state. To what extent has the European Union achieved a satisfactory stage of playerhood in the broad areas of external relations? What kind of political and military capacity is necessary to overcome the current 'Candide' Europe and to allow it to act effectively as a more independent player facing the new global and regional threats (Telò, 2007:303). The fact is that since the end of the Cold War and the agreements of the TEU the connection of the European Union with the rest of the world has changed dramatically. It has put a visible pressure on the way the EU projects its external dimension (Lucarelli, 2006:1).

It is a recurrent theme that there are three perspectives for looking at the EU-FP. One looks preferably to the institutional aspects in the making of it and how the second pillar of the TEU is put into operation. Secondly one looks at the Member States' foreign policy and how this contradicts or blocks the conducting of an autonomous EU-FP. Thirdly one looks at the external relations of the European Communities included in the first pillar of the TEU (see Figure 1). Lucarelli looks to arrive to an integrated concept of foreign policy that includes all these three partial readings envisaging the EU-FP "as the political actions that are regarded by external actors as "EU" actions and that can be considered the output of the Union's multilevel system of governance" (Lucarelli, 2006:9).

Figure 1

Pillars of the EU-FP

First Pillar

External trade, European Monetary Union; association agreements; economic sanctions; conflict prevention Internal policies

Second Pillar

CFSP-ESDP (Foreign and Security Policy; Peace-keeping; crisis management)

Third Pillar

Police and Judicial Cooperation in criminal issues; international security issues

Community method (Council majority voting or unanimity+ European Parliament + Commission)

Intergovernmental method (Council directs; High Representative For CFSP, other layers)

Adapted from Keukelaire and MacNaughtan (2008) *The Foreign Policy of the European Union,* Palgrave MacMillan, Houndmills, Basingstoke

The EU has developed a Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) based on unanimous consensus among Member States and included it as the second pillar of the

EU in Part V of the Maastricht Treaty (see Figure 1). Article 2 of the Treaty on the European Union mentioned that *to assert its identity on the international scene, in particular through the implementation of a common foreign and security policy including the progressive framing of a common defense policy, might lead to a common defence, in accordance with the provisions of Article 17*. Article 11 of the TEU requires that *the Union and its Member States shall define and implement a common foreign and security policy, governed by the provisions of this Title and covering all areas of foreign and security policy*. The same provision articulates the *objectives* of the Common Foreign and Security Policy: *to safeguard the common values, fundamental interests and independence of the Union; to strengthen the security of the Union and its Member States in all ways; to preserve peace and strengthen international security, in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter as well as the principles of the Helsinki Final Act and the objectives of the Paris Charter; to promote international cooperation; to develop and consolidate democracy and the rule of law, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms*(TEU, 1992).

Article 17 enumerates the issues aggregated in CFSP's framework: The common foreign and security policy shall include all questions relating to the security of the Union, including the progressive framing of a common defence policy, which might lead to a common defense, should the European Council so decide. It shall in that case recommend to the Member States the adoption of such a decision in accordance with their respective constitutional requirements (TUE, 1999).

The Article continues: The policy of the Union in accordance with this Article shall not prejudice the specific character of the security and defense policy of certain Member States and shall respect the obligations of certain Member States, which see their common defense realized in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), under the North Atlantic Treaty and be compatible with the common security and defense policy established within that framework (ibid).

The case for European identity is however complex and controversial. As is frequent with most legal or sociological concepts it assumes different meanings according to the theoretical approach applied to it and even the ideological commitment of the interpreter. Shortly we may name three schools of thought looking at the case of the EU's identity[12].

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[12] Still following Lucarelli in the introduction to her book on "values and principles in European Foreign Policy" (Lucarelli, 2006:13).

For the nationalists the possibility of EU's political identity is refused. If identity represents the essence of national and loyalty to the motherland there is no place for a European identity. For the 'culturalists' the idea of a European identity may be found in the common cultural heritage of classicism, humanism, renaissance and Christian heritage that shape European similarities. In their perspective political identity is 'constructed' through shared experiences of 'European-self'. For 'civilisationalists' European identity may be regarded as a sub-group of Western civilization following Huntington's argument of a political identity dictated by the cultural identity. The author of this document takes the position in the crossroads of the second and third perspective considering European identity as civilization-oriented and cultural-based. Although Europe's national diversity is a fact there is a non-disguisable set of principles and values that form Europe's polity and distinguishes it from others. Europe's cosmopolitism is essential to define its distinctiveness, but also a common culture, a shared Judeo-Christian tradition, the idea of a state that is people, territory, legitimate government and rule of law. Identity can be said to be constructed as a consequence of a two-step process. The first is the one by which the player assigns attributes and meanings which then contributes to the perception of the 'self' as an individual distinction from others. The second step is the one in which the collective 'self' is shaped in contact with 'others'. (Johansson-Nogués, 2009:27) So the European identity only truly acquires meaning when they come into contact with 'others' inside a determined social context.

The Union is intended to pursue the aforementioned objectives of the CFSP by: *a) defining the principles and general guidelines for the common foreign and security policy; b) deciding on common strategies; c) adopting joint actions; d) adopting common positions; e) strengthening systematic cooperation between Member States in the conduct of policy* (TUE, 1999:art. 12). To assure these desiderata the Council: a) *shall define the principles of and general guidelines for the common foreign and security policy, including matters with defense implications; b) shall decide on common strategies to be implemented by the Union in areas where the Member States have important interests in common*(TUE, 1999:art. 13).

By conducting consensually its interaction with the outer world, the Union expects the Member States to support the EU's external and security policy actively and unreservedly in a spirit of loyalty and mutual solidarity and shall refrain from any action which is contrary to the interests of the Union or likely to impair its effectiveness as a

cohesive force in international relations.[13] By not blocking the initiatives of the Union, the Member States "*shall inform and consult one another within the Council on any matter of foreign and security policy of general interest in order to ensure that their combined influence is exerted as effectively as possible by means of concerted and convergent action* (TUE, 1992: Article J.2).

So the three basic **instruments of the European foreign policy** are: *common strategies*, *common positions* and *joint actions*. The normative says "*common strategies shall set out their objectives, duration and the means to be made available by the Union and the Member States*". So in a more perceivable way, "common strategies" are presumed to be the policies defined by the institutions of the European Union to specific countries or regions of the world. They are adopted *by unanimity* and are designed to focus on areas where EU Member States have important interests in common, and set out the objectives, duration and means needed to pursue the EU's policy towards those areas. The EU has adopted its own declaratory foreign policy strategy in 2003 (the European Security Strategy, updated in 2008) by highlighting a 'world of[14]: *This is a world of new dangers but also of new opportunities. The European Union has the potential to make a major contribution, both in dealing with the threats and in helping realize opportunities. An active and capable European Union would make an impact on a global scale. In doing so, it would contribute to an effective multilateral system leading to a fairer, safer and more united world. opportunities'* (Council of the European Union, 2003)

The "European Security Strategy" delineate three basic strategic objectives for the EU institutions: a) the EU would take necessary actions to address a list of global challenges and security threats, including regional conflicts, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, state failure, organized crime, diseases and destabilizing poverty; b) the EU would focus on holding regional security in the neighborhood (Balkans, Caucusus, Mediterranean region, Middle East)[15]; c) the EU would seek the construction of a rules-based world order in which international peace and security are ensured by strong regional and global institutions. Conflict prevention and threat

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[13] The Council as representative of the member-states would ensure that these principles are complied with.

[14] This was a document drafted under the supervision of the EU High Representative Javier Solana.

[15] The European Neighborhood Policy developed in 2004 comprises of 16 countries Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Egypt, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Moldova, Morocco, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Syria, Tunisia and Ukraine. See European Commission, "What is the European Neighborhood Policy?" in http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/policy_en.htm

prevention stand on the nucleus of EU's peace-friendly strategy, as the EU seeks to address all these problems by strengthening governance and human rights and by providing assistance through trial and error (ibid.).

There have been more than 1000 'common strategies', 'common positions' and 'joint actions' under Common Foreign and Security Policy since 1993 and more than two thousand foreign policy statements by the EU Council and Presidency between 1995 and the present (Rice, 2012). 'Common positions' relate the definition of a European policy to a number of countries, world regions, sensitive countries in particular (Burma, Cuba, Zimbabwe), crisis situations (Great Lakes, Middle East) and horizontal topics (non-proliferation, conflict prevention in Africa, support for the International Criminal Court, and so on). Common positions are published in the Official Journal of the European Union and are binding on Member States, who must defend them in international organizations and conferences.

Who are the institutions playing the definitive role in defining the CFSP?

The Treaty on the European Union stipulates (TUE, 1992:Art. 13) "the Council shall take the decisions necessary for defining and implementing the common foreign and security policy on the basis of the general guidelines defined by the European Council". The dealings (TUE, 1992:Art. 14) of 'joint action' are somehow intricate: the Council adopts 'joint actions' and "shall address specific situations where operational action by the Union is deemed to be required". The deliberations "shall lay down their objectives, scope, the means to be made available to the Union, if necessary their duration, and the conditions for their implementation". The 'joint actions' shall commit the Member States in the positions they adopt and in the conduct of their activity. In cases of imperative need arising from changes in the situation and failing a Council decision, Member States may take the necessary measures as a matter of urgency having regard to the general objectives of the joint action. The Member State concerned shall inform the Council immediately of any such measures (TUE, 1992). '*Joint actions*' are regularly revised and extended if appropriate. From the beginning of 2006, Council joint actions have renewed the mandates of the EUSRs[16] for Bosnia-Herzegovina, Moldavia, Macedonia, the

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[16] Abbreviation of European Union Special Representatives which are emissaries of the European Union with specific tasks in the world. While the EU's ambassadors are responsible for affairs with a single country, Special Representatives tackle specific issues, conflict areas or regions of countries.

African Great Lakes, the Southern Caucasus, the Middle East peace process and Central Asia. Joint actions have also been engaged in support of the activities of the International Atomic Energy Agency, the International Convention on Biological Weapons and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organisation. Joint actions are also legal acts required for the launch of ESDP operations.

So the President of the European Council is in charge of facilitating consensus, to help to ensure policy continuity, and acts as the spokesman for the institutions. The High Representative (HR) takes part in the works of the European Council and submits proposals for consideration. It is therefore the President of the European Council who is the spokesperson for the CFSP at the heads of state and government level; the HR is the 'day-in-day' spokesperson for the CFSP at the ministerial level. There is a simplified formula of the European Council named Council of Ministers and that is the second forum to develop political consensus. The Foreign Affairs Council sets the course for the EU's external action and ensures coherence of the EU's different efforts in the area. The Council deals with issues concerning common foreign and security policy, the security and defense cooperation and trade and development policy. The Member States are represented by different ministers depending on what is on the agenda. The Council is chaired by the permanent EU High Representative Catherine Ashton[17], and it meets mostly once a month.

The meetings of the Council are prepared by a Committee of Permanent Representatives of the European Union (COREPER) that includes the permanent representatives of the Member States, the secretary-general, his deputies and the deputies of the ambassadors of the countries represented (EU Information Centre, 2013). This committee is divided into two subcommittees (COREPER 1 and 2), the first reuniting the Permanent Representatives deputies and the second reserved for the ambassadors. A Committee of Political Directors, a Unit of Policies and a Committee of Policy and Security complete the organic structure of the European Foreign Policy' decision-making.

The general rule in CFSP is that decisions are adopted unanimously. However, Member States can abstain in a vote. Qualified Majority Voting (QMV) can be used when adopting Joint Actions, Common Positions or any other decision that is taken on

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[17] A position established in May 1999 by the Amsterdam Treaty. Javier Solana was the first person to hold this position

the basis of a 'common strategy', and when adopting any decision that implements a 'joint action' or 'common position'.

The European Commission participates also in the CFSP domain, stipulating Article 18 of the Treaty on the European Union *the Commission shall be fully associated in the tasks referred to in paragraphs 1 and 2, the Presidency shall be assisted in those tasks if need be by the next Member State to hold the Presidency* (TUE, 1992: art. 18). The assistance of the Commission to the Council's conducting of the EU external relations was purely bureaucratic. The Commission then had a department, called DG RELEX (Directorate of External Relations) that assisted the president of the Commission in this mission and articulated its action[18]. In 2009, the DG RELEX gave way to the European External Action Service (EEAS) a department under the direction of the HR of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (and Vice-President of the European Council), Catherine Ashton[19]. The Lisbon Treaty has completed the foreign and security portfolio of the EU including a sort of foreign minister and the EEAS, the diplomatic branch of the Union.

The European Parliament also has the mission of accompanying the policies, decision and actions taken in the field of the CFSP. The Treaty of Nice introduced a clarification on Article 27 of the Treaty on the European Union asserting noticeably a right of audience of the European Parliament in matters of CFSP: without prejudice to the powers of the Presidency or of the Commission, the Secretary-General of the Council, High Representative for the common foreign and security policy, that shall insure that the European Parliament and all members of the Council are kept fully informed of the implementation of enhanced cooperation in the field of the common foreign and security policy.

The EU is presently conducting thirteen operations under the CFSP "umbrella" and the majority of these are civilian operations in areas such as police training and rule of law (Mix, 2011). External policies in technical areas as trade, humanitarian aid, development assistance, enlargement and neighborhood policies are pursued through a "community process" involving different institutions and different layers in the process

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[18] The Maastricht Treaty provided for the integration of the European Policy Cooperation secretariat into the Directorate-General External Relations (DG E) of the Council's *General Secretariat* (Güssgen, 2002). DG E's staff was composed of seconded national diplomats and European administrators. The unit was the organizational nucleus of a European foreign policy administration and was charged to assist in the making of European foreign policy.

[19] See Office of the High Representative for the CFSP at: http://www.eeas.europa.eu/ashton/index_en.htm

of decision-making and monitoring (Mix, 2011).

To conclude this section let us look at the amendments to the legal structure of the CFSP introduced by the Lisbon Treaty. First of all it was clarified that "the Union's aim is to promote peace, its values and the well-being of its peoples" and made explicit that the Union's values are "respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities"[20]. The Treaty made sure that those values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality prevail (Amendments, 2007). Secondly the LT emphasized the equal status of the Union and the Member States as the Union respects the equality of Member States (before the Treaties) as well as their national identities, their essential State functions, namely ensuring the territorial integrity of the State, maintaining law and order and safeguarding national security. The normative framework elucidates particularly *that national security remains the sole responsibility of each member-state* (TUE, 2007:art.4 para. 2). Thirdly the central role of the President of the European Council in the policy was chiefly outlined in as much as he "shall ensure the external representation of the Union on issues concerning its common foreign and security policy, without prejudice to the powers of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy" (TEU, 2007: art. 15).

The election procedure of the High Representative of the Union, a position not completely understood facing the Commissioner of External Relations[21] received a better description *the European Council, acting by a qualified majority, with the agreement of the President of the Commission, shall appoint the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. The European Council may end the term of office by the same procedure* (TEU, 2007:Art. 18). The mission of the HR was subsequently redefined (*The High Representative shall conduct the Union's common foreign and security policy. He shall contribute by his proposals to the development of that policy, which he shall carry out as mandated by the Council. The same shall apply to the common security and defense policy* (TEU, 2007:art. 18 para 2)). The HR was made a member by right of the European Council and Vice-President of the Commission with a dual task: to preside over the Foreign Affairs Council and to participate in the

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[20] New versions of Articles 1 and 2 of the Treaty on the European Union. (Amendments, 2007).
[21] A position that disappeared with the Lisbon Treaty.

works of the Commission. In that position he is, under Article 18 TEU, committed to *ensure the consistency of the Union's external action* and assure, within the Commission, "the responsibilities incumbent on it in external relations and for coordinating other aspects of the Union's external action." In exercising these responsibilities within the Commission, and only for these responsibilities, the High Representative shall be bound by Commission procedures to the extent that this is consistent with paragraphs 2 and 3 of Article 18 TEU. Therefore, the HRFA is doubly responsible to the President of the European Council in conducting the external policy of the Union approved in the large lines by the Council and to the President of the European Commission by conducting the tasks that are competence of the Commission. This makes the CFSP a triplex mechanism depending greatly on the work capacity of Catherine Ashton and her ability to bridge consensus between Van Rompuy, Durão Barroso and the Foreign Ministers (or Ministers of Defence) of the Union. In a certain sense the CFSP aims to be the "lowest common denominator" among the 27 as some counter-argue[22].

The Lisbon Treaty renamed the part of the Treaty on European Union devoted to the CFSP as External Action of the Union and added a couple of articles (Articles 10A and 10B in the original format) aiming to determine the EU's action by principles, by interactions, and with a single voice. The new normative framework stipulates that the Union's action on the international scene will be guided by the principles that presided over its creation, development and enlargement (democracy, rule of law, universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for human dignity, principles of equality and solidarity and respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter and International Law). It also made clear that the "Union shall seek to develop relations and built partnerships with third world countries and international, regional or global organizations which share these same principles" and will "promote multilateral solutions to common problems, particularly in the framework of the United Nations". In order to attain these objectives the Union "shall define and pursue common policies and actions" working for a high degree of cooperation in all fields of international relations to safeguard "its values, fundamental interests, security, independence and integrity". To reach such a high pattern of uniformity the Council and the Commission, assisted by the

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[22] See for a detailed analysis of the challenges and contradictions in the post of the High Representative, House of Commons, Foreign Affairs Committee, "EU Enlargement and Foreign Policy", Oral and Written Evidence, 21 November 20111, Baroness Ashton of Upholland, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Vice-President of the European Commission, HC1642-I, in www.publications.parliament.uk.

High Representative, "shall ensure consistency and shall cooperate to that effect" and "shall identity the strategic interests and objectives of the Union" assuring that they "relate to the common foreign and security policy and other areas of external action of the Union". For that purpose the European Council acts "unanimously on a recommendation from the Council". The High Representative and the Commission have the capacity to submit joint proposals to the Council (Article 22 TEU)[23].

What conclusions can we extract from this assortment of norms and principles? It seems that the changes introduced by the Lisbon Treaty are hardly simplifying the task of having a coherent and systematic EU-FP. We could make conclusions of this for three reasons. Firstly, decisions in the EU foreign policy are still being made unanimously in an intergovernmental manner, with the consensus of the 27 Member States required for all crucial decisions. But even in other fields, EU governance is spread between various European, national and local (regional) levels and its nature and scope varies from field to field (Zielonka, 2008: 71). Some of the difficulties in the compiling of a systematic and coherent external policy come from the complications in reaching a serious consensus amongst the governments of the Member States considering that everything is concentrated in the European Council and all the chiefs of national governments have an equal say. Somehow, the Treaty of Lisbon put an end to the pillar structure that separated trade and economics from foreign and security policy, with pillars subject to two different institutional regimes, one a more communitarian and the other a more intergovernmental look to make things more simple and operational. Secondly, the CFSP became a *hat for three different-sized heads* as it aims to combine Von Rompuy´s, Durao Barroso´s and Catherine Ashton´s own visions on how to pursue EU's external relations. The new articulation of the CFSP places enormous stress on the capacity of co-ordination between these three politicians and their senior teams of advisers, as many will guess, every failure exists a case of quarrels and disagreements. Thirdly, there is a gap between the programmatic rhetoric of the Union as a "civilian power" or "force for good" and the demands of international politics that often prioritizes geostrategic and security interests over human rights and democracy concerns. It is not the case of a hypocritical nature of the EU foreign policy as some insist on arguing (Youngs, 2004; Kronenberger, 2001); but

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[23] "Amendments to the Treaty on European Union and to the Treaty Establishing the European Community", Official Journal of the European Union, C 306/10, 17.12.2007, in http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2007:306:0010:0041:EN:PDF

the fact that a foreign policy in defense of the weak is hardly compatible with raising the necessary economic and military resources to develop a forceful foreign policy (Kagan, 2002: Messner, 2007). There is no world power that defines its external policy as a crusade for human rights and democratic governance.

The EU-FP sounds like a Babel Tower with a myriad of voices speaking different languages, expressing various idiosyncrasies, holding out for contradictory national interests and looking to be "nice in the picture". When the EU speaks as one it can speak with a strong voice but the main challenge of the EU-FP is how to generate a global consensus. The bitter disagreements within Europe over the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the fact that five EU Member States still don't recognize the independence of Kosovo, or the absence of a European consensus about the bloody repression within Syria and how to put an end to it[24] makes this exercise unpredictable. Some analysts assert that the CFSP lacks a comprehensive strategic approach in key areas where some EU members weigh trade and commercial interests against values such as democracy and human rights, also some view engagement as the best way to encourage desired reforms and behaviours when others prefer the use of force in the name of the right to intervene in internal affairs of others for humanitarian reasons (Mix, 2011). One of the most usual criticisms is to advance parallels between the EU's foreign policy and the foreign policies of sovereign nations like the US (Grant, 2009; Kagan, 2002; Spence, 2003). Basically they miss the point as the EU is not a country or a federation but some sort of regional entity. A second criticism is that the EU's foreign policy has evolved slowly because the Member States, namely the Great Powers, hegemonically controlled the action of the EU-FP more than now. The CFSP has significant deficiencies that undermine the Union's capacity to devise a coherent and feasible foreign policy due to the intergovernmental process on decision-making and the resistance of the states within the mechanism of the qualified majority (Glen & Murgo, 2007)

The EU External Policy on China

The external relations of the European Union with China are a consequence of the approval of the European Security Policy in 2003 but in chronological terms it actually dates from before (1978) following the normalization of diplomatic relations in May

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[24] As it was before in the cases of Egypt and Libya.

1975 (see Figure 3). It emerges from the institutionalization of a New Asia Strategy in 1994 seeking to interlink the prosperity of Europe with the enlargement of its economic frontiers to the right border of the Euro-Asia plateau.

The policy was condensed and extended through a collection of five Communications of the European Commission and the European Council that articulate the vision of three Presidents of the Commission: Jacques Delors. Romano Prodi and Durão Barroso. They are A *Long Term Policy for China-Europe Relations* (1995), *Building a Comprehensive Partnership with China* (1998); *Implementation of the 1998 Communication and Future Steps for a more Effective EU-Policy* (2001); *A Maturing Partnership. Shared Interests and Challenges in EU-China Relations* (2003); *EU-China: Closer Relations. Growing Responsibilities* (2006).[25] The progress made along these five Communications is summarized by a *China Strategy Paper 2007-2013* produced by the services of the European Commission[26].

It is important to remember that in 2003 the EU-China relationship developed from a generalist bilateral relationship to a fully-fledged Strategic Partnership which was repositioned on three branches: political dialogue; economic and trade relations; EU-China co-operation programme. The Political dialogue was launched in 1994 and since then has evolved to a series of high-rank meetings, which are the Summits of Heads of Government and the ministerial and official level dialogue (se Figure 3). These meetings have been supported by a regular exchange of High-Level visits. Since the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy took charge of her position the nucleus of the bilateral agenda was enlarged to eight subjects: Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, climate change and energy, illegal immigration, human rights, Market Economy Status, market access, Intellectual Property Rights and arms embargo. In 2006 a new dialogue on Africa was added to the rank of sectoral dialogues to foster a better understanding of the issues involved and reaching a better coordination of

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[25] Europe, Summaries of EU Legislation, External Relations, Relations with Third Countries, Asia, "EU-China: closer partners, growing responsibilities" in http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/external_relations/relations_with_third_countries/asia/r14208_en.htm; "EU-China relations: a maturing partnership", http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/external_relations/relations_with_third_countries/asia/r14207_en.htm, Building a comprehensive partnership with China", http://eur-lex.europa.eu/smartapi/cgi/sga_doc?smartapi!celexplus!prod!DocNumber&lg=en&type_doc=COMfinal&an_doc=1998&nu_doc=181, "EU Strategy towards China: Implementation of the 1998 Communication and Future Steps for a more Effective EU Policy", http://eur-lex.europa.eu/smartapi/cgi/sga_doc?smartapi!celexplus!prod!DocNumber&lg=en&type_doc=COMfinal&an_doc=2001&nu_doc=265

[26] *China Strategy Paper 2007-2013*, available in http://www.eeas.europa.eu/china/csp/07_13_en.pdf

assistance efforts.

China instigated the evolution of its principal bilateral relationships in the form of "partnerships" as looked to maximize leverage by linking economic benefits with bilateral relations. In its formulation, the concept of partnership was open to potential allies and adversaries and not necessarily assuming a cooperative outcome (Wang, 2010: 562). It recognized national dissimilarities in ideology, interests and culture and seeks to put up a mechanism to manage the areas of possible conflicts. These partnerships enabled China to deal with concerns about US predominance without resorting to a more directly confrontational approach to balance American hegemonic power[27].

The sequence of Communications repeat a common denominator in the external relations of the European Union with far-away countries: the concentration on the economic and commercial dimension of the relationship; the availability of Europe to provide assistance to China through the political of cooperation mechanisms, i.e. in technical areas that are central to Europe's preoccupations, the legal system and practices required to be more accountable to the rule of law, and gradually the question of human rights and China's international responsibility. The political and security dimensions of the relationship were for a longtime absent from the bilateral agenda. Scholars and strategic experts attribute this last situation to the inexistence of security concerns between the two world powers as no European country has a military presence in the region and the dimension of military power, defense and associated areas of international security and intelligence were (and are) basically absent from the European agenda.

Europe's external policy responded to the needs of the European exporters, Multinational Corporations and Eurocrats more than to a coherent vision of EU's interests in that side of the world. All these entities are worried with their cotation in the markets, either financial, goods and services and labour. Another relevant cause of this lack of global reach within the bilateral relations is that for a longtime the EU was an economic community and not a true political union, and we may foresee that conclusion over a long period of time beyond the approval of the Maastricht Treaty. What kind of political Union would forego a foreign affairs minister (or top politician) without feeling completely unbalanced?

So when we look the legal statements from the Commission and the Council and try

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[27] Beijing has built numerous partnerships with states and regional organizations, including Russia, the European Union (EU), the United States, Japan, India, and ASEAN.

to perceive the logic beneath the diplomatic jargon we may extract three conclusions: a) China is important to Europe as a destination for exports of goods and services and as a market for European companies looking to become international; b) China is a cooperative partner of the EU interested in the standardized programs of cooperation, aid and technical assistance provided by the EU; Brussels expects China in exchange to create new contracts and allow the EU Multinational Corporations to enter into the closed sectors of the Chinese economy; c) the EU is not doing its best to become more visible in China and that arises from centrifugal forces within the Union and China.

The first conclusion (China is relevant to Europe economically and commercially) is self-evident if we look at the statements that conclude the bilateral summits between the European Union and China. Mutual advantage, development of relations, markets, confidence, a win-win relation, trade balance, the international markets are examples of the lexicon included in these statements that place the accent on the economic dimension of the bilateral relationship. One reason for this is that trade was for a long period of time the only area that the Member States of the Union allowed the European institutions to have a say and effectively coordinate the agenda and interests of the members of the Union. A second reason is that trade and investment is probably the only area within the scope of external relations that is intuitive to show progress and success in the action of the Union making this visible to the European parliament, national parliaments and electorates. The *EU Factsheet* released at the time of the fourteenth EU-China Summit, held in Beijing on the 14 February 2012 is clear on highlighting specially this aspect[28]:

> Since bilateral ties between the EU and China were established thirty-six years ago, trade relations have expanded from €4 billion in 1978 to €395 billion in 2010. Today, the EU is the biggest destination for China's exports and the second supplier to China, after Japan. For the EU, China is the second trading partner, after the United States, and *is close to surpassing the US*. From 2006 to 2010, EU trade with China grew by 11.2%, while EU trade with the world grew by only 3.2%. In 2010, the EU imported €282 billion worth of goods from China, up by 31% from 2009 levels and 18.8% of total EU imports. China thus remains Europe's biggest source of manufactured goods.

This conclusion may be somehow challenged by the political statements of the leaders of the European Union and the People's Republic of China on recent summits. In February 2012, at the fourteenth EU-China Summit in Beijing, leaders agreed that

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[28] European Union – Factsheet -EU-China Summit, Beijing, 14 February 2012, "EU Relations with China" http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/127836.pdf

"deepen understanding and mutual trust between the peoples of the Union and China was determinant to a sustained and stable development of EU-China relations". Both sides concur to establish an "EU-China High Level People-to-People Dialogue" a new mechanism for which the first meeting took place on 18 April, 2012, in Brussels. On that occasion, an assessment of progress was made in areas such as education and training, culture, multilingualism, youth and research. According with the Joint Declaration issued at the end of the meeting the dialogue has result in "the reinforcement of student, teacher and researcher exchanges between China and the EU, high level cultural fora, and the joint organization of events and conferences". This High-Level Dialogue is the third alike complementing the other two, already in place – the High Level Economic and Trade Dialogue and the High Level Strategic Dialogue[29]. It will be too soon to assess results on this sort of "people-to-people" initiative in the day-to-day of the bilateral relationship. Nevertheless it appears mostly ceremonial allowing members of the Chinese government to meet the EU counterparts. China is still far-away from an open society with a strong civil society providing a fair check and balance of the activities and powers of the government. It is a monolithic society with a one-party power system that sees pluralism and diversity as a sort of threat to the survival of the Communist state.

The second conclusion (China is a relevant cooperative partner of Europe) is validated by the interest China puts into "learning from the outside" and adapting what its gets from this venture to its internal development' needs. The China's *EU Policy Paper* (2003), China's strategic policy paper on Europe, hold that "the EU has a developed economy, advanced technologies and strong financial resources while China boasts steady economic growth, a huge market and abundant labour force. There is a broad prospect for bilateral trade and economic and technological cooperation."[30] This policy paper was adopted when the bilateral relationship is raised to the Strategic Partnership level and enumerates fourteen areas of possible bilateral cooperation: trade and economy, finance, agriculture, information and technology, energy, transport, culture, education, health and medical care, employment and immigration, judicial fields, police affairs, public administration, military. This paper was the first of this kind of policy paper adopted by the Chinese Government, spelling out the objectives of China's EU policy and

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[29] European Commission, Education and Training, "EU-China High Level People-to-People Dialogue", in http://ec.europa.eu/education/external-relation-programmes/china_en.htm

[30] Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China (2003). Beijing, available at http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/topics/ceupp/t27708.htm

outlining the benchmarks of the expected cooperation with the EU, in the following years.

Most of Western and Chinese commentators see this "exercise" as essentially rhetorical and programmatic. It relies firstly in the statehood that the EU's doesn't have and second in Brussels' ability to invert the log jam in three dossiers that the Chinese consider vital: lifting the EU 1989 arms embargo, unlocking the Market-Economy Status to China, cutting short the rising protectionism against Chinese exports and companies (Cabestan, 2006: 17-20; Calhahan, 2007: 705-790; Xin, 2007: 61; Berkofsky, 2006: 43, 105; Archick and Grimmet, 2005; Scott, 2007: 228-9). Others regard that the relationship has made its way up in a very smooth way, from constructing a constructive partnership in 1998, to a comprehensive partnership both agreed in 2001, then to a comprehensive strategic partnership in 2003 (Liqun, 2006: 2-6). According with Liqun the development of China and Europe is to be driven not by *ad hoc* considerations or expediency, but it was rebuilt on a sound theoretical background with a long-term strategic point of view and policy guidelines, which are: a) mutual respect and trust; b) equality and mutual benefit; c) seeking common ground while reserving differences; d)) insisting on cooperation to achieve win-win results. A final view argues that while China addresses the EU as a strategic partner, the Union's importance is far less than the relevance of the US in China's foreign policy agenda (Men, 2011: 6). The EU – argues Men - is regarded as a political dwarf in international affairs and does not share the same weight as the US.

The EU's *China Strategy Paper 2007-2013* was the EU's first progress report on the first four years of the EU-PRC Strategic Partnership[31]. It opens remarking that China is the most populous country in the world that has grown economically at constant high levels but PRC's 11th Five Year Plan (2006-2011) introduced a relevant shift in the growth objectives making an emphasis on the social effects of fast growth and prioritising China's international responsibilities. In that context, the document advances that Europe has an "important economic and political interest in supporting China's sustainable development and successful transition to a stable and open country". Following the development of the relations to a global partnership the cooperation program took a special relevance as an element of the bilateral relationship[32]. The policy paper acknowledged that China is moving from an Official Development Assistance

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[31] Europe, European Union External Service, "China Strategy Paper 2007-2013", available in http://www.eeas.europa.eu/china/csp/07_13_en.pdf

[32] Ibidem, "Executive Summary", p. 3.

recipient (ODA) to a relevant source of ODA to developing nations and the Union's response to this dual character (recipient and provider of ODA) is to provide support for China's reform program in areas covered by the most relevant sectoral dialogues[33]. This funding effort is calculated in € 224 million for the seven-year period. In 2006, the Commission produced a "Country-Level Evaluation" where it made a positive assessment of the programme enlightening areas for improvement like making the reduction of poverty (in China) an objective, introducing the climate change issue, making co-ordination among Member States more significant, introducing a better feedback of projects and programmes into the policy dialogues.

The central recommendations of the so-said report were the following: a) develop cooperation but publicize the mutual benefits coming from it; b) generalize the topic of "governance" to all dimensions of the cooperation programme; c) correct delays on the implementation phase of the programmes; d) reinforce the EU's policy of financing technical assistance as way to assure international best practices and European policy models in areas where the EC has "a unique comparative advantage"; e) assure the follow-up to pilot projects; f) include poverty and vulnerable groups in the group targets of the EU's programmes; g) align cooperation on trade issues with the EU's industry needs; h) ensure better concentration of efforts (and resources) in complex problem areas like financial services and information society which may bring a new perspective to a long-term involvement from both sides; i) make environmental issues more visible on trade sector dialogues and trade programmes; j) ensure major resources to the assistance to the EU programmes towards the remote hinterland regions of China; l) guarantee that Europe has a more unified position in the issue of climate change; m) as bilateral cooperation is losing its appeal (as an appropriate means of engagement) because China's GDP per capita grows rapidly, open a dialogue with the (Chinese) government and other partners "on the form of longer-term post-cooperation engagement"[34].

The development of a cooperation policy towards China is based on Article 177 of the Treaty Establishing the European Community and on the new Development Cooperation Instrument adopted in December 2006[35]. It looks to foster the sustainable

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[33] See Europe, European Union External Service, "An overview of the sectoral dialogues between China and the EU" in http://eeas.europa.eu/china/sectoraldialogue_en.htm

[34] Ibidem, "China Strategy Paper 2007-2013", pp. 25-7.

[35] Regulation (EC) No. 1995/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation No 1605/2002 on the Financial Regulation in http://eur-lex.europa.eu/smartapi/cgi/sga_doc?smartapi!celexplus!prod!DocNumber&lg=en&type_doc=Re

economic and social development of developing countries, the smooth and gradual integration into the global economy and fight against poverty[36].

The third conclusion (the EU's has a lack of political visibility in China) has been echoed in every document produced by the Commission and the Council, since 2003. In the Communication "Mature Partnership. Shared Interests and Challenges in EU-China Relations (2003)" the Commission exhibited the will to raise the efficiency of the political dialogue by holding "more frequent *ad hoc* Troika political consultations at working level in Beijing to enhance continuity of our political dialogue with China between formal meetings, while at the same time increasing EU visibility"[37]. The Commission, in its 2003 Communication (on China), accentuated the need (in the dialogue on Human Rights) to "upgrade the level of dialogue to vice-ministerial level, to enhance political impact and visibility". In the same document the Commission assert that "China's geopolitical vision of a multipolar world, and the Chinese perception of the EU as a partner of growing importance, also provide a favourable context for increased EU visibility". In the Communication "EU – China: Closer partners, growing responsibilities" (2006) the Commission encourage both sides "to consolidate and improve the visibility of co-operation" in order to ensure quality and growth to the efforts of cooperation[38].

Various scholars have remarked that the rosy expectations envisioned in 2003 by upgrading the EU-China bilateral relations to the level of a global and strategic partnership were basically unrealistic, as endogenous and exogenous constraints were more significant than both sides were happy to admit (Berkovfsky, 2006: 105; Men, 2008; Cabestan, 2006: 19, Callaham, 2007: 789-790). The author of this paper agrees, globally, with this assessment but counter-argues that it was impossible in 2003 to anticipate what will happen in seven years time, in Europe. The continuity of the Euro crisis is degrading, seriously, the EU's internal economic and social situation. It is also deteriorating the international image of the Union and its attractiveness to other regions (and countries) that are looking to make the transition to an open-market economy or even to a

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gulation&an_doc=2002&nu_doc=2342
[36] See paragraph 3.4.2 of the above-mentioned document, p. 17.
[37] Commission Policy Paper for Transmission to the Council and the European Parliament "EU-China relations: a maturing partnership", http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/external_relations/relations_with_third_countries/asia/r14207_en.htm
[38] Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament "EU-China: closer partners, growing responsibilities" in http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/external_relations/relations_with_third_countries/asia/r14208_en.htm;

democratic regime. All the possible diagnostics of the Euro crisis are already made; the remedies to put an end to the patient's illness are rooted in two measures: a large purchase of government bonds of the countries in difficulties by the European Central Bank and the willingness of that institution to accept some higher rate of inflation in the space of the Union[39]. It is really hard to see how such a policy shift would come about considering the open and large resistance they meet on German politicians. (Krugman, February and July 2012)

Even with the Euro crisis it will be unrealistic to look on China's emergence as major economic and political power as a secondary point of reference to a consistent EU foreign policy. A time will come when the EU policy-makers will look again to the readiness of an integrated and coherent foreign policy for the global space of the European Union.

We will look in the next section how a constructivist remaking of the European Union's image as China relevant partner cam make the difference.

A Constructivist Approach to the EU-China relationship

The falling of the Cold War Era caught all the International Relations scholars that were able to anticipate the consequences of the events coming from the change of leadership in the Soviet Union and the new strategic doctrine adopted by Mikhail Gorbachev by surprise. Whereas realists and neoliberals tend to focus on the material forces implied in any process of political change (power, trade, brutal force) constructivists call the global attention by emphasizing the impact of ideas as agents for the transformation of political attitudes. Ideas define the values, norms and beliefs that people, governments and international institutions hold and for which they pursue and apply power. As a whole, these ideas define or construct (redefine) the identity of the actors like states or world/regional organizations like the United Nations, the European Union, NATO or ASEAN. These identities give meaning to the capacities and behaviour of actors and so interests are not defined by geopolitical constraints, by international institutions or international regulations but are defined by autonomous and collective identities (Nau, 2008: 44; Little & Smith, 2006: 386). Construction of identities means

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[39] See for instance Paul Krugman, "What Ails Europe", *New York Times*, 28 February, 2012, and "Europe's Great Illusion", *New York Times*, 1 July, 2012. Also deserving an attentive reading the following comments addressed by well-known intellectuals in the pages of the *New York Times*: Frank Jacobs, "Where is Europe?", 9 January, 2012, Amartya Sen, "The Crisis of European Democracy", 22 May, 2012, Pascal Lamy, "Europe Needs a Legitimacy Compact", , 8 July, 2012 and David Marquand, "Europe's Mission Union", 8 July, 2012.

that identities are not given or exogenous, as the realists and the neoliberals defend, but are aspects of the reality that need to be assessed and evaluated. Realists and neoliberals spend little time studying how the identity of states are formed and how states develop friendly or foe images about the others, arguing that actors react rationally to conditions of anarchy and balancing of the international environment. Realists take the notions of nation-state, anarchy and sovereignty for granted and fail to understand how change in global politics happen. Constructivists, on the contrary, look preferably to how identities are constructed and developed, how they can change and what kind of stimulus interferes in this process of change. Taking reality into account is one of the virtues of constructivism as it looks both to the material and social worlds to get a clear picture how things happen the way they happen and not otherwise. Identities shape the behaviour of states and may be seen as road-maps or focal points for these states and also others (Ronald, 1996: 298).

Constructivism is not a sole school of thought but is really a combination of different visions and different approaches to this sort of social reengineering. For some identity perspectives, like the one pursued by Alexander Wendt (*social constructivism*) in his leading work *Social Theory of International Relations,* identities emerge from communicative action, by social discourse, by the shared knowledge that the actors in a global context develop by participating in it. Identities and interests of purposive actors are constructed by shared ideas rather than given by nature as argued Wendt in their opening remarks on the first section of his book[40]. Actors proceed by speech acts, which are communications about truth claims that aim to influence, persuade and learn from the other actors. In this process of bi-directional communication the actors shape what Wendt name "shared identities" that define them and their partners. An example: by using a specific sort of discourse the Soviet Union constructed a relationship of similarity with the countries that were to become part of the socialist world; in this process the Soviet Union transformed itself at the same time as it transformed others. That is the reason why Wendt concludes that "anarchy is what states make of it"[41] meaning that the state behaviour is not determined by the position of the actors in the distribution of world

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[40] Wendt, Alexander. (1999). *Social Theory of International Relations.* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge and New York, p. 1.
[41] Title of the article published in 1992. See Wendt, Alexander. (1992). *Anarchy is what States Made of it. The Social Construction of Power Politics,* "International Organizations", 46, 391-425.

power[42] or by the role they have in international institutions[43], but by the shared or external identities they construct. These identities may be then confrontational or cooperative depending on the identity the actors project onto others. Wendt argues that its conception is a "middle-term", a moderate form of constructivism, which is different from the typical idealism that contends that in International Relations only ideas matter and materialism that explains reality just considering the material or substantive factors in the worlds has no answer to the problems of the world.

Wendt says that constructivism is not an easy paradigm to apply to the international system as norms and laws govern domestic politics; self-interest and coercion seem to rule international politics (Wendt, 1999: 2). Although in international law and in international institutions (the United Nations) there does exist the ability of this superstructure to counter the material base of power and interests are limited. On the other hand, although the dependence of the individuals on society makes the assertion that their identities are constructed by the society intuitive, states are much more autonomous from the social system in which they live. The foreign policy attitude is often determined by the domestic politics, rather than by the international system (society) as such. Wendt gives the examples of states like Albania and Myanmar that have interacted so little with others that they have been called "autistic". This reasoning suggests that the international system does not much "constructing" of states and so provides support for individualism (or selfishness) in that field. The issue is, according to Wendt, that the social structure of the international system is not very thick or dense and this makes the constructivist endeavor difficult (Wendt, *ibidem*).

Other constructivist perspectives put special emphasis on *autonomous* and *social identities* implying by it that the identities that derived from the capacities of the state actor (as a human being) to think by himself and shape or reshape the social discourse in which he is involved (Nau, 2008: 45). *Autonomous* identities comprise internal political, cultural or economic ideas that organize the domestic life and the history of special countries and influence their behaviour in external relationships. These identities are distinct from the *shared* or *external identities* because these are more inner-focused. Therein the distribution of identities and not the distribution of power or institutional roles are the criteria by which countries behave as friends, rivals, and enemies toward one

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[42] Great Powers versus minor powers; First World powers versus Third World powers.
[43] Member of the Security Council of the United Nations versus member of the General Assembly; member of the G20 and non-member of this club.

another. Under the constructivist prism, relative and shared identities create an international culture that shapes behaviour more than the balance of power and international institutions; different cultures create different balances of power. An example: China was an ally of the USSR during the time both countries shared a common ideology (socialism) and the same view of international politics founded in the autonomy of socialist countries to pursue their own path of socialism. When the Soviet Union became imperialist and tried to impose its hegemonic vision of socialism to the socialist world, China broke away from the socialist camp and portrayed the USSR as a revisionist country and an enemy. So as Wendt assert identities and interests of political actors are socially constructed and should not be considered as a "given" (Wendt, 1992: 46).

The role of ideas in social life is one of the chief questions that constructivism deals with. This theoretical perspective looks at the way ideas construct (or reconstruct) the real world and how this process happens. Constructivism claims that material things like the meaning of power and the content of interests are largely a function of ideas (Wendt, 1999: 96). Despite the fact that ideas are the real material base of the system and while the effects of the material forces in the system cannot be scorned, the fundamental factor is the distribution of ideas in the international system. Institutions are made of norms and rules, which are an ideational phenomena, "shared mental models", so they are – Wendt remarks – firmly on the idealist side of the equation (Wendt, *ibidem*). Illustrating this assertion we may say that the Organization of the United Nations is what its Charter exhibits rather than who is the Secretary-General or what are the juridical instruments to guarantee peace and security worldwide. Considering the role of ideas on the international system, constructivism is not interested as materialists in the nature or organization of material forces like the effects of power, the interests of actors or the institutions (the hard power forces)[44]. Constructivism is not interested either in the distribution of ideas or knowledge, issues that for the idealists determine the meaning of power and the content of interests. Sometimes the social consciousness (the prevailing order of ideas in the international society) prevails among actors but sometimes not[45]. Constructivism looks to answer a basic question: *how* a certain event was possible? *How*

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[44] For the materialists five material forces determine how society evolves: human nature, natural resources, geography, forces of production and of destruction. These forces act differently or by allowing the manipulation of the world, empowering some states instead of others, by creating threats. The materialists argue that non-material forces are secondary. See Wendt, *Social Theory..., ibid*, pp. 23-4.

[45] If this reasoning prevails no act of war would take place. See the current international crisis in Syria and before in Libya where Basic international norms were violated with the tactical support of world powers as Russia or China.

Gorbachev turned to see the United States as an interlocutor and no more as an enemy? *How* China turned to see the European Union as a partner, a strategic partner, and no more as a colonial power occupying illegitimately parts of its territory? Rather than asking why a temporarily prior X produced an independent existing Y the critical question is: how this or that evolution was possible?

Wendt admits that the natural or social phenomena are constituted in two ways (Wendt, 1999: 83). One is by the *internal structure*, in the case of states "the organizational structures that give them a territorial monopoly on organized violence". Contrary to the atomistic vision advanced by authors like Kenneth Waltz, internal structures do not cause the properties associated with them but rather make these properties possible. The other way is the *external structures* in which states are embedded. Wendt asserts that social kinds often are constituted in important part by external, discursive structures, and these structures repeatedly place social kinds in relationship of conceptual necessity to other social kinds. Wendt gives examples of the master-slave, the professor-student or the patron-client relationship as mutually constitutive. Treaty violations are constructed by a discourse that defines promises; war is defined by a discourse that legitimates violence among states; terrorism is legitimated by a discourse that delegitimizes non-state violence. In all these cases the issue is not that the external structures (or discourses) cause social kinds, being antecedent to them, "but rather what these kinds are as logically dependent on the specific external structure". Insofar the question is not what comes first, the egg or the chicken. It is that the ovum is the condition for the chick to be born. So the discursive formula (or strategy) has a constitutive effect that generates phenomena like properties, powers, dispositions, meanings that are conceptually or logically dependent on those ideas of structures that exist on in virtue of them (Wendt, 1999: 88). The causal powers of the master do not exist apart from the relation to the slave; terrorism does not exists outside a national discourse that defines "terrorism"; a relation of "partnership" does not exists outside a national definition of what is a "close partner". Ordinary language does not consider that "slaves" cause masters or a security discourse causes terrorism. Constructivist theories seek to "account for" these aspects and look to explain them in the periphery of a causal-effect consistency (Wendt, 1999: 88).

Constructivists do not argue that the social facts of power and national interest lose completely their visibility and importance in international affairs. Brute material forces –

remind Wendt – can still have independent effects defining for all actors the limits of feasible activity and the relative costs of pursuing different options that require a sort of physical activity. These effects interact with interests and culture to dispose social action and systems in certain directions and not actions. Material forces are not constituted solely by social meanings and social meanings are not immune to material effects (Wendt, 1999: 88). It is simply because of their interaction with ideas that material forces have the effect they do. The fact that the European Union has major limitations in military (or security) abilities imposes limits on the EU's foreign policy towards China. The same is not true concerning the relationship of China's foreign policy towards the European Union. That is the reason why the bilateral relationship between these two entities is fundamentally economical, commercial and political and does not involve a specific military dimension which has a very embryonic nature in the context of the European Security and Defence Policy[46].

The cultural environments are within the constructivist paradigm considered shared ideas, making-up norms, institutions, threat-systems that form the meaning of the distribution of power rather than constituting the states' perception of that distribution of power or by constituting their identities and interests (Wendt, 1999: 104). These shared ideas play a role, as they are the background of the actors' interaction, but differently than neorealists would assume actors are not marionettes directed by these shared ideas; actors have the decisive "yes" or "no" to these constraints coming from an equally persuasive environment. It is not because China recognizes the world order to be anarchic that it ought to pursue a realistic foreign policy towards the European Union and its Member States. China has chosen, as the white paper *EU Policy Paper* clear demonstrates, to adhere to the EU's reading of a world perceived as a multilateral order, where states are treated as equal, an order based in universal institutions, norms and regulations and an overall goal of peace, trust and mutual understanding; these values construct a "common ground" built between a socialist state and a capitalist-rooted regional organization. So *culture* is not an absolute determinant of the choices that states make by positioning themselves in the international scene; it is just part of a rational

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[46] See EuroPolitics, "Strong differences of view" among EU27, Vimont admits", 27 April, 2012, http://www.europolitics.info and Güssgen, Florian. (2001). *Of Swiss Army Knives and Diplomacy. A Review of the Union's Diplomatic Capabilities.* University of Catania, Department of Political Studies, April 2001, http://www.fscpo.unit.it

decision-making process of their foreign policy[47]. So as Wendt states "we can change the distribution of power by building military capabilities; we can change the composition of power by creating new technologies; with these we can change geographical and resource constraints" (Wendt, 1999: 112). In sum, there are ambitions, fears and hopes that lead the social evolution and not the material forces, that is the material structure and the ideas form a united one. Without perceiving the ideas we cannot comprehend the nature and scope of the interests (either individual or national); without acknowledging the interests we cannot determine the meaning of the material forces; without material forces there is no interaction.

Actors use ideas to build relationships and the world reality, as ideas precede interactions (namely negotiations and the drafting of treaties) and they allow the actors to interpret history to make the relationship either confrontational or cooperative. The history of China-US relations during the Cold War helped China to craft a confrontational vision of its relations with the United States. Mao's *Theory of the Three Worlds* is in itself a confrontational theory of antagonistic identities, of harsh enmity taking to the last consequences; as Deng Xiao Ping's strategy of *Open Door Policy* is precisely the opposite, the embedment of a logic that different countries with different social systems and ideologies can live peacefully, side by side, and cooperate helping each other. The states' identity is mostly collective or shared not autonomous or individual, as states like individuals need to be recognized socially before they may act with autonomy. Sovereignty is more a social construct than a normative construction. States are considered as states because they are recognized as such by other states and international organizations. This is the reason why Taiwan or the Palestinian Authority may contend that they possess all the prerequisites for statehood, but they are not treated as such until a considerable proportion of the international community recognizes them as sovereign states. In this sense, it can be said that states and other actors "constitute one another". It is not the relationship that is decisive but the images – in this case,

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[47] See on this regard Deng, Yong and Moore, Thomas R. (2004). *China Views Globalization: Toward a New Great-Power Politics?*, "The Washington Quarterly", 27, 3, 117-136; Womack, Brantly. (2004). *Asymmetry Theory and China's Concept of Multipolarity,* "Journal of Contemporary China", 13, 39 May 2004, 351-366; Gonçalves, Arnaldo. (2005). *A visão paradigmática da China como grande Potência*, "Relaciones Internacionales", 14, 29, June-November 2005, 81-88; Shih, Chih-Yu. (2005). *Breeding a Reluctant Dragon: can China Rise into Partnership and away from Antagonism?,* "Review of International Studies", 31, 755-774; Shambaugh, David. (2005). *China Engages Asia. Reshaping the Regional Order,* "International Security", 29, 3, Winter 2004-5, 64-99. Rabinovitch, Simon. (2008). *The Rise of an Image-Conscious China,* China Security, 4, 3, Summer 2008, 33-47; Johnston, Ian. (2003). *Is China a Status Quo Power*, "International Security"*,* Vol. 27, No. 4 (Spring 2003), pp. 5–56

sovereignty – that are part of the social discourse and construct history. These elements are the basic glue of the states identity. If individuals see one another as enemies they will act as such; if they see themselves as friends and partners they act otherwise. In sum, international relations are not, by nature, confrontational or cooperative, they depend on how states build and construct their reciprocal images. The real issue here is how states dig out their shared and collective identities; this depends on actions and discourse. Discourse shapes how political actors define themselves and their interests and modify their behaviour. Sovereignty is in constructivism a special tool for determining the limits of "politics as usual" as it acts as a mental and physical shield that keeps the violence outside and allows peace and justice "inside".

A realistic interpretation of the upgrading of the EU-China relationship to the level of a Strategic Partnership would put a special emphasis on the political vision of Hu Jintao in China and Durão Barroso in Brussels to achieve a greater deepness to the bilateral relationship. In 2003, Hu Jintao became the Chinese Communist Party secretary-general and President of the Chinese Republic. It will take him one year to consolidate his power and take the role of Chairman of the powerful Central Military Commission from the hands of the previous chief of the Communist Party (and rival) Jiang Zemin. So China's enhanced cooperation with Europe is to be read domestically as a sign of competence and personal power of Hu. Durão Barroso took the job of President of the European Commission also in 2003. He was a politician coming from a small country (Portugal) where he has been Foreign Minister and later Prime-Minister but he has not got a broad international experience or a clear EU acceptance. So promoting actively the rising of the EU-China relationship to the level of a strategic and global partnership was beneficial to the consolidation of Barroso's leadership of the European Union, namely in a time when the balance between the institutions favored the Commission and not the European Council. Also in realistic terms, the so-said elevation of the partnership was seen by China as a way to counter-balance the United States prestige and hegemony in world affairs. The realist perspective although focused on very important threads of the bilateral relationship, does not explain important things, e.g. why the bilateral relationship cooled down in 2007 and 2008 after Chinese exports were blocked at the EU's borders following China's entrance in the WTO. As it does not explain why after Obama took office China still continued to deposit enormous expectations and energy in the EU-China relationship. If the interests of China were

depreciated in a realistic reading of the balance of power China-EU China would decrease its bet on the partnership.

Applying the constructivist paradigm (see Figure 4) we can view EU-China Partnership through four *levels of analysis*: individual, domestic, foreign policy and systemic. The level of analysis identifies the origin of the cause that makes something happen in the world. An individual level of analysis locates the cause of the events in individual leaders or in the immediate circle of decision-making within a particularly country (Nau, 2008: 59). A domestic level of analysis places the cause of the events in the nature or character of the internal system of specific states. A war may then be caused by aggressive states or promoted by nationalist leaders. (Nau, 2008: 58). A foreign policy level of analysis locates the causes of events in the circle of foreign policy officials that in a certain country take chief decisions. It exists in countries were the policy-making is influenced by two levels: the level of leadership that define the state's main strategies and the hierarchy between allies, enemies and neutral countries; the level of the domestic groups with their own interests and ideas about what the foreign policy should be and which act as a lobby on foreign-policy decision-making. A systemic level of analysis explains events from a system-wide level that includes all states and take in consideration the position of actors in the international system, e.g. the distribution of power between big, middle and small states and the geopolitics, or if the state is a sea or a land power (Nau, 2008: 57).

All these levels are present in the constructivist model that we may apply to the EU-China Strategic Partnership as elucidated in Figure 4. At the individual level of analysis, the partnership is seen as a way to force weight and visibility to the European Union and China and catch applause for the foresight of the leaders (Barroso and Hu). At the domestic level, China and the EU are seen sharing the same cosmopolitan and multilateral world-vision (Kantian-Confucian, we may say) that prioritize ideas like soft power, moderation and cooperation as desirable behaviours in international affairs. At the foreign policy level, both leaderships and the foreign policy *apparatus* want the same thing. On the European side the European Council and the High Representative for the CFSP want to raise the EU's profile in China, turning the Union into a relevant world power, strategy that enhance the position of the EU companies and industrialists. On the Chinese side the Politburo, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the majority of Chinese I.R. scholars come together in the view that China has a fundamental national interest to

counterbalance American unilateralism in world affairs (the US has invaded Iraq and constrained the foreign policies of China's main allies in the Middle East). Finally at the systemic level of analysis the anarchy on international relations that followed the end of the Cold War era favoured multilateral rather than realist postures from world leading powers in the same was as soften the international conflituality and assertiveness. The EU had, since the creation of the European Communities in 1957, a coherent vision of a cooperative and peaceful world order. This vision allowed the EU to be qualified by many as a normative or a civilian power. China as a great power has not reached a full-range power status because it lacked relevant elements of hard power. So by sharing (with the EU and other nations) a multilateral vision of the international order China win time and secure a favourable environment for its ascent to a Global Power status. In a fair international order, a common set of ideas and values between the EU and China emerged and reconstructed the actors' identities: peaceful nations; centrality of the United Nations as the guardian of peace and international security; deterrence; non-hegemonism; rule of law; sovereignty and non-interference; mutual understanding or win-win cooperation. All these values are, a way or another, present in the political discourses, in the policy papers, in the joint communiqués of every annual EU-China Summit, since 2003. Through this communication interaction, as Wendt remarks, the identities of actors were transformed by replicating the archetype projected by others mirrored image. In sum, these are the reasons why the EU-China Relationship was elevated to the Strategic Partnership level and has been considered a success both to the EU and China.

What is, then, the missing link, the failure factor, in this explanation? Why do we claim that the EU-China relationship is even so "fragile"?

The constructivist theoretical perspective, although very complete in the analysis of the "hows" of the causes that lead to some events, misses something very important that is associated with ideas, identities and norms and that is "expectations". An actor when constructing an image, an idea, or defining a norm or principle about something lays down some positive (or negative) expectations about the elected object. Countries perceive others as enemies or friends and pursue this type of relationship with these, hoping to find what they were looking for. If the expectations are too high or unrewarded they become reclusive of deception and failure; actors begin then to doubt the idea they form about others. So as in any interaction there is a margin for adjustment, for

"understanding" that helps the actors to keep the basic expectations about others. But in a certain phase of the process the gap (between reciprocal expectations) becomes too apparent and the relationship freezes. This happens when the actors derive their attention to others or lose interest in a specific relation. This is what is happening in the EU-China relationship: although important is not the relationship China looks to "pay for". China has a long-term vision of a bilateral world order in which it would envision to compete with the US for world primacy. The EU is still facing a myriad of "ifs" to become a world power and this is interlinked to the initial identity issue: is the EU a regional organization of sovereign states and no more then this? Is the EU a union of states with a significant portion of sovereign powers transferred to the Institutions? Is the European Union a reality or just a rhetorical desire?

So the problem resides in the capacity of both actors to manage their expectations by feeding their bilateral relationship with substantive content and exhibiting a continuous interest in it. This requires attention and a skilful monitoring of the problems and deceptions that may be added in the long-run.

Conclusions

The EU-China relationship has developed from a simple bilateral relationship to a strategic partnership that in 2003 was elected by both actors as a global and full-range partnership. This elevation of the relationship served the ambitions of the EU and China's leaders in a time when the North-American hegemony in world affairs was an indisputable fact. The invasion of Iraq, following the 9/11 events, made this primacy questionable from countries that preferred a more fair and balanced world order with the United Nations at the centre and each country with an equal voice. China and the EU helped the other's strategy to ascent to a prominent level in the distribution of power and build in interaction wise mechanisms to monitor their multilevel relations, tools that helped them to learn from each other and go forward. The Euro crisis of 2010-2012 froze the EU's expectations to reach a more mature and autonomous voice in the world affairs as the attention of the national electorates and leaderships become concentrated exclusively on the financial issues of national and European economies and how to manage the debt of the European southern countries, a debt accumulated in the upper level of the growth cycle. China continued to be an important partner to Europe but not

important as the drafters of the 2003 and 2006 policies paper projected. China was lucky in the implementation of its strategy for national modernization and development as statistics confirmed a path of global and per capita' systemic growth. During four continuous decades, China's economy grew at a rhythm of two digits, annually, and that was unique and historical, making China proud.

The successes of pursuing an advanced bilateral relationship may have been better understood if we apply a constructivist paradigm. This theoretical approach leads us to ideas, values, norms and identities that form the international actors' singularity and that are made into shared identities by virtue of a communicational dialogue and an articulated strategy. The problem with this procedure is that needs to present systematic positive outcomes measured in terms of economic gains. Often this "policy of smiles" is perceived as rhetorical and demagogic, a collection of pleasant but empty words. The EU is still an economic and commercial venture and the current Euro crisis made this truer than ever. Global politics and an illuminated foreign policy that upgrade the EU international status are important but for the time being a far-away milestone.

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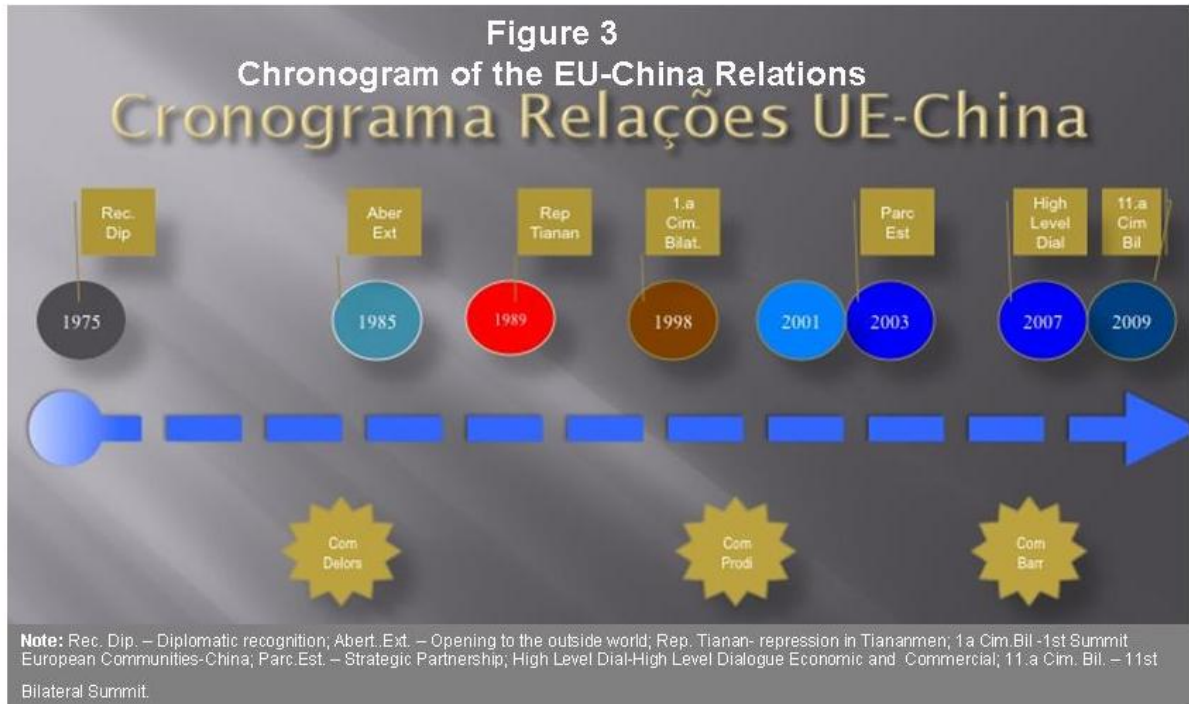Zielonka, J. (2008) How to Exercise Europe's Power. *The International Spectator.* Vol.43 issue 2

Figure 3
Chronogram of the EU-China Relations

Cronograma Relações UE-China

Note: Rec. Dip. – Diplomatic recognition; Abert..Ext. – Opening to the outside world; Rep. Tianan- repression in Tiananmen; 1a Cim.Bil -1st Summit European Communities-China; Parc.Est. – Strategic Partnership; High Level Dial-High Level Dialogue Economic and Commercial; 11.a Cim. Bil. – 11st Bilateral Summit.

Figure 4

Causes of the upgrading of EU-China Relationship to a Strategic Partnership

Level of Analysis	Identity Perspective	
Systemic	Structure	Multilateralism is favoured by the anarchy of International Relations and is the future of the world;
	Process	Alignment of ideas of the EU and China reflected in a common discourse: - Peaceful nations; centrality of the UN; deterrence; non-hegemonism; rule of law; sovereignty and non-interference; mutual understanding; win-win cooperation;
Foreign Policy	- Barroso wanted more protagonism of the European Commission in running the Third Pillar of the EMU; - The France-German axis wanted a European external policy more independent of that of the United States; - China wanted to counterbalance the US unilateralism with a special relation with the EU;	
Domestic	- A Cosmopolitian vision of the world prevailed both in China, in the EU and the in Member States; - Moderation was seen as pre-requisite for China's soft power and global emerging;	
Individual	- Hu Jintao/Wen Jiabao see it as an opportunity to give China international leverage; - The EU leaders aim to use it to give importance to Europe	

Adapted from Henry Nau, *Perspectives on International Relations* (2d edition), CQ Press, Washington, 2009