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**Documento de Trabajo**  
**Serie Unión Europea**  
Número 45 / 2011

## **Multilateralism and Soft Diplomacy in EU-China Relations**

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**Juliet Lodge**  
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**Juliet Lodge and Angela Carpenter**

El Instituto Universitario de Estudios Europeos de la Universidad CEU San Pablo, Centro Europeo de Excelencia Jean Monnet, es un centro de investigación especializado en la integración europea y otros aspectos de las relaciones internacionales.

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### **Multilateralism and Soft Diplomacy in EU-China Relations**

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CEU Ediciones

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[www.ceuediciones.es](http://www.ceuediciones.es)

Instituto Universitario de Estudios Europeos

Avda. del Valle 21, 28003 Madrid

[www.idee.ceu.es](http://www.idee.ceu.es)

ISBN: 978-84-92989-71-3

Depósito legal: M-17817-2011

Maquetación: Servicios Gráficos Kenaf s.l.

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The concept of multilateralism can mean different things. In practice, it is synonymous with complexity. Multilateralism is a tool for organising complexity and making it amenable to negotiation, by working towards a single negotiating text and goal. Many different theories have been developed to explain the internal dynamics of multilateral negotiations. These range from different international and integration theories to systems theory, decision theory, game theory, coalition theory, organisation theory, agenda setting, globalisation and new institutionalism, and so on. This multiplicity of theoretical approaches illustrates how diverse multilateral negotiation in practice relies on dynamic pluralised inputs and how different approaches identify the interplay between strategies and functionally linked management of power.

## 1. Why Multilateralism?

Multilateralism refers to negotiations and relations based on one-to-many states rather than one-to-one state interaction. In the case of relations between China and the EU, this has an internal and external dimension for the EU. Internally, EU member states, through their institutions and internal processes and practices of collaboration and integration, try and overcome or reconcile any differences, rivalries or disagreements they may have regarding all manner of relations with China. The advantage of this is that it allows them externally to develop a common position among themselves that can be presented to China. This benefits China because it means that China does not have to repeat negotiations with every EU member state. Instead, it can explore how each of the EU 27 goes about implementing commonly agreed goals –for example on boosting green industry– and see how this matches best with its own priorities in international multilateral negotiations.

For the EU27, multilateral negotiation and multilateral international diplomacy inevitably means that member states have to negotiate internally to reconcile their own positions. They try to create unity between negotiation at the actual and symbolic levels which means that, despite differences of opinion and disagreement, there is always a high probability of convergence and agreement. Generally, the EU seeks to apply the same principle of high commitment to achieving a constructive outcome in its international multilateral diplomacy. This is one of the reasons why the EU's new External Action Service is expected to reduce complexity and engineer greater consensus and uniformity in the presentation of the EU's position to third states and organisations<sup>1</sup>.

This is seen as desirable for three key reasons. First, multilateral negotiations are seen as a means of settling differences, not escalating them. Second, international multilateral negotiations are viewed as a tool to contribute to global order. Third, international multilateral negotiations allow participants to structure interaction, procedures and systems for managing both mundane, routine issues, learn from that experience,

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<sup>1</sup> See spokesman of the High Representative Catherine Ashton's statement on Hong Kong Brussels, 25 June 2010 A 113/10, [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/115504.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/115504.pdf)

and institutionalise constructive interaction. This has the potential to lead to productive relations that can be sustained over the longer term, and to channel disagreements over sensitive issues or crises through processes designed to lead to constructive outcomes.

A strong organisational basis for international multilateral negotiation helps to ensure that existing, unproductive antagonisms do not derail progress even if they appear to be sharper within the relatively protected confines of the multilateral negotiations. In short, multilateral negotiations provide a framework for pursuing common interests and insulating them, where possible, from deeper, problematic conflicts among the parties and in the wider international environment. This has been illustrated many times in GATT negotiations and within the EU<sup>2</sup>. Success is not guaranteed, nor can it be predicted. However, a constructive approach to resolving disputes is in-built to a greater or lesser degree: a greater degree in the case of integrated organisations like the EU, a lesser degree in the case of GATT. International multilateral negotiation provides an interface for structures, procedures, cultures and negotiation processes to be used to build consensus through group processes, coalition building, mediation and informal collaboration with associated institutions (like the European Parliament, in the EU's case), and adopting different leadership styles imaginatively to capitalise on the plurality of actors and stakeholders involved in different issues. This means that successful outcomes neither need nor respond to a powerful hegemon but depend upon high commitment to achieving shared goals.

Multilateralism is a term that has been applied to trade relations between states, especially state-to-international organisation relations during a transition phase from moving from bilateral state-to-state relations to a more comprehensive relationship based on common criteria. The reasons for doing so often related to the way in which multilateralism would simplify relations by developing a set of common criteria for a deepening relationship. Typically, this is associated with closer political links between the partners, even at times of disagreement and conflict.

A major benefit of multilateralism is that it permits all manner of relations to develop to mutual benefit at many different levels. Multilateralism allows for the emergence of relations between and among states in non-threatening, positive ways. Multilateralism in these senses relies on the tools of soft diplomacy to foster mutual understanding. It therefore creates an environment where sport, cultural, and educational exchanges and links can take place and be led by the sporting bodies themselves. This makes them less dependent on government-to-government diplomacy. It offers greater scope for development and initiatives and allows the partners themselves to improve mutual understanding in creative and innovative ways that extend beyond the usual diplomatic elites to commercial partners and other actors. This can be especially useful to governments wishing to focus on high diplomacy issues, such as international relations and foreign policy and human rights.

Multilateralism has two dimensions: a vertical one, and a horizontal one. The vertical dimension rests on the tools of soft diplomacy to create the basis for preparing, creating and sustaining mutual understanding and sound relations across varied aspects of modern activity, often separate from and independent of government intervention, direction and control. The horizontal dimension rests on exploiting the capacity building of the horizontal dimensions in order to develop strong state-to-state relations controlled and managed by governments.

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<sup>2</sup> See chapters by Sjostedt and Lodge in W. Zartman(ed)(1994) *International Multilateral Negotiation: Approaches to the Management of Complexity*, San Francisco, Jossey-Bass.

In the case of the EU and GATT, for example, multilateralism has provided a framework for comparing and overcoming different rules and regulations that disadvantage or benefit certain members over others. The aim is to create common ground and equal opportunities based on accepted principles of fairness. While efforts may fall short of the objective, the attempt is made to reconcile differences in constructive ways. At the same time, it must be recognised that multilateralism can be problematic if third parties seek to undermine multilateral arrangements. For example, states can try and gain competitive advantage vis-a-vis the EU's member states by trying to negotiate bilateral agreements with each member and setting each member state against the other in order to strike a hard bargain. This is one of the reasons why the EU's founding treaties gave competence for specific areas of 'external relations' (that is trade and commerce) to the EU Commission and reserved foreign policy to the foreign offices of the member states. However, trade and commerce are no longer seen as soft diplomacy but are recognised as part of the strategy of states' international and foreign policies. That is not to say that the trade and commerce are managed by governments in the EU. It is to recognise the importance they have to prosperity and economic wellbeing and to ensuring that the diplomatic environment is conducive to allowing independent trade and commercial relations to flourish.

The EU itself, as well as member states, have various programmes designed to help bodies develop relationships based on mutual interest between themselves and China. For example, in 2009-10, the UK Sustainable Development Dialogues Programme led by DEFRA resulted in the UK cities of Glasgow and Sheffield working with Nanjing and Wuhan to exchange experiences on urban regeneration and affordable housing. Mutually beneficial lessons were shared about improving transport planning, integrating it with land-use and promoting development through public sector investment<sup>3</sup>. As will be shown below, these are crucial elements in realising wider green energy and economic goals. First, however, an example of a new EU policy area is presented because this offers scope for developing future soft diplomacy interaction and because it is relatively new is open to initiatives and influence. It is another policy area that can be linked to the strategic agenda in EU – China relations. Following this brief overview, two strategic areas of China-EU relations are presented.

## 2. Multilateralism and EU soft diplomacy: the example of sport

Sport is seen as a tool of diplomacy that readily transcends linguistic and cultural divisions, and that helps to cut poverty and foster development. The EU Commission supports this positions and joined with FIFA to promote football as a means of boosting the development of the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries. Its 2007 White Paper on Sport introduced a more general use of sport as a tool in the EU development policy. In May 2010, the International Olympic Committee opened the first joint forum between the IOC and the United Nations (UN). At it, the importance of partnership was discussed by sporting officials and UN representatives in order to leverage the IOC's recently obtained UN observer status and strengthen cooperation in the field of development through sport<sup>4</sup>.

The Lisbon Treaty came into force on 1 December 2010. Article 165 provides the EU with a competence for sport. It opens the door to new areas of multilateral cooperation by granting the EU Commission with a formal

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<sup>3</sup> See Local Government association news at [www.lga.gov.uk](http://www.lga.gov.uk) accessed February 2010.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.olympic.org/en/content/The-IOC/?articleNewsGroup=-1&articleId=90146>

competence for aspects of sport. The first step was to launch a wide stakeholder consultation to prepare a sports programme due in 2012. This was based on informal intra-EU multilateralism among EU sports ministers who discussed issues raised in the 2004 'Rolling Agenda for Sport'. These covered doping, education, health and volunteering in the sport sector. In addition, and significantly, the economic and social functions of sport were discussed. Gender and disability also feature in subsequent discussions and informed the EU Commission's 2007 White Paper on Sport<sup>5</sup> and the implementation of 53 measures outlined in the 'Pierre de Coubertin' Action Plan<sup>6</sup>.

These included recommendations on sport in the Union's external relations, promoting the use of sport as a tool in the EU's development policy; including sport-related issues in policy dialogue and cooperation with partner countries, promoting sport as an element in the EU's public diplomacy and when implementing the 2007 Communication on circular migration and mobility partnerships with third countries, and harmonised schemes for the admission of various categories of third country nationals for economic purposes on the basis of the 2005 Policy Plan on Legal Migration. In short, sport is a soft tool of diplomacy to ease progress on some of the trickier and more sensitive policies regarding migration, combating international fraud and crime, international cooperation among police, customs, migration, border and law enforcement agencies.

Sport is often a local or a regional activity that can be fostered on a village to village, region to region basis or national team to national team basis but these low level links are vital building bricks in creating capacity for high level sustainable relations among states, and for helping to address problems of modern society from delinquency to gender discrimination, disability and human rights, health, international sport event management and understanding the economic impact and potential of sport for realising wider socio-economic and political objectives such as fostering political dialogue by combating discrimination based on nationality in all sports. In addition, multilateral exchanges and discussions on sport can help to establish minimum standards and exchange of best practices, and assist in promoting cooperation in other sensitive fields such as those involved in identifying and combating money-laundering and other financial crimes and corruption in the sports sector. It is interesting that the EU started with football to organise a conference with UEFA, EPFL, Fifpro, national associations and national leagues on existing licensing systems and best practices in this field.

In its resolution on the White Paper on Sport of 14 April 2008, the European Parliament called on the Commission to propose an EU sport programme as well as Preparatory Actions in the field of sport as of 2009. The Parliament approved a budget for the first Preparatory Action in December 2008.

Engagement in international sports competitions is an important signal and a sign of a state's recognition on the world stage. While the EU is not a state, it does have EU teams in some areas of sport that foster multilateral relations among the EU's member themselves, such as in yachting for example. This mirrors other intra-EU cultural multilateralism such as the EU's Youth orchestra which brings musicians from different EU states together to form an EU orchestra as an expression of EU understanding both within the individual member states and on the international stage.

The promotion of greater European visibility at sporting events is important to the EU which provides financial support to two events: (i) the Mediterranean Games, held every four years under the auspices of the

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<sup>5</sup> Commission of the European Communities, White Paper on Sport, COM(2007)391 of 11 July 2007 available at [http://ec.europa.eu/sport/white-paper/doc/wp\\_on\\_sport\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/sport/white-paper/doc/wp_on_sport_en.pdf) accessed 14 July 2010.

<sup>6</sup> Commission Staff Working Document, COM(2007)934 of 11 July 2007. ACTION PLAN "PIERRE DE COUBERTIN" Accompanying document to the White Paper on Sport at [http://ec.europa.eu/sport/white-paper/doc/sec934\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/sport/white-paper/doc/sec934_en.pdf)

International Olympic Committee, mainly for nations bordering the Mediterranean Sea, where Europe, Africa and Asia meet. In July 2009 6,000 sports people participated<sup>7</sup>. (ii) The EYOF takes place every two years for young athletes from the 49 member countries of the association of European Olympic Committees. The X European Youth Olympic Festival took place in Tampere, Finland in July 2009<sup>8</sup>. 3,500 team members participated in the event. The EU contribution to the financing of the event was € 1.5 million.

Sport is therefore an important part of soft diplomacy and a key element of multilateral diplomacy involving a plurality of horizontal and vertical actors cutting across many policy dimensions from education and culture to environmental policy, competition law, the media, internal market and external relations in general. It is a means of increasing the EU's ability to speak with a single voice in international bodies and vis-a-vis third countries. It also means that EU sports ministers now meet in official EU meetings. This does not mean that there is a heavy governmental direction, rather that the plurality of actors and sporting, voluntary, educational and social associations is recognised and encouraged. At the same time, the EU Commission sees it as a means of illustrating externally and promoting internally, European values, and encouraging cooperation with international organisations and third countries. Clearly, multilateral interaction at the horizontal and vertical levels and international multilateral diplomacy in this soft area of policy has led to progress in respect of several core shared policy goals. The IOC and its partners underline the advantages of using sport to implement actions around the world concerning humanitarian assistance, peace-building, education, gender equality, combating HIV/AIDS, and protecting the environment and realising the UN's Millennium Goals.

Sport is likely to grow as a tool for soothing more difficult relations between actors in the EU and China, notably in respect of trade, commerce and investment (covered elsewhere in this book) and the environment.

### 3. EU-China multilateralism in the areas of energy security and climate change

The idea of the EU and China working together was designed to improve relations between the two parties, particularly in light of the ever-closer trading partnership between the two and increasing investment by European companies into China and increasing foreign direct investment by China into the EU. The EU is now China's largest trading partner and China is becoming the EU's first source of imports for goods, and also its first source of foreign trade deficit: 131 billion euro in 2006<sup>9</sup>. Relations between the EU and the People's Republic of China began in 1975 with the establishment of diplomatic relations, and then a trade agreement in 1978. A Trade and Cooperation Agreement in 1985 led to the EEC and China granting each other most-favoured nation status. The relationship has evolved from a system of one-to-one state bilateral relationships to cooperation based on multilateral negotiation. In 1994 and 2002 the Agreement was supplemented by exchanges of letters establishing a broader political dialogue. Now there are institutionalised annual summits and other high-level meetings held alternately in China and Europe. In October 2006 the EU Commission published a communication "EU-China: Closer Partners, Growing Responsibilities" setting out the EU's aspirations for the relationship. In 2007, negotiations began on a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) to replace the 1985 Agreement. A High Level Economic and Trade Dialogue Mechanism (HLM) was

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<sup>7</sup> For details of the 2009 games see <http://www.pescara2009.it/>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.tampere.fi/english/2009/index.html>

<sup>9</sup> Godemont, F (2008). *The EU and China: a necessary partnership*, p.59. In "Partnerships for effective multilateralism: EU relations with Brazil, China, India and Russia", Chapter 4. Chaillot Paper No. 109, EU Institute for Security Studies, Paris, May 2008

launched in April 2008 to enhance cooperation on trade and economic issues, with the participation of eight Commissioners and 10 Chinese Ministers<sup>10</sup>. The EU and China engage in regular trade, political and economic dialogue meetings, and have over 24 sectoral dialogues that span issues of mutual interest including environmental protection, industrial policy, space, agriculture, satellite systems, civil aviation, information society, transport, sanitary and phytosanitary issues, education and culture<sup>11</sup>.

As multilateral negotiations proceed among different players at different levels, multilateralism is reflected in different level EU-China meetings ranging from the Annual EU-China summits of Prime Ministers, to meetings of Foreign ministers, meetings between Political Directors and Geographic Directors, meetings at expert level. They will continue as the EU new External Action Service develops. Government level meetings cover high diplomacy issues such as foreign policy, illegal migration and human rights. There is also a Human Rights Dialogue and Seminar. Progress has also been made on related problematic interpretations of international instruments. For example, the rights of the child in China and Europe were discussed for the first time at the July 2010 China-EU Civil Society Round Table. China and the EU have ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Poverty and poor education were recognised as a common issue that hampers child protection. Full enforcement of laws to protect children is a further barrier and remains a sensitive area of divergence between China and the EU<sup>12</sup>.

A High Level Economic and Trade Dialogue was set up in 2007 and high level exchanges –known as ‘dialogues’– take place on exchange rate issues and macro economic matters. The sectoral dialogues are especially important when conflicts arise, as for example, in 2010 over the Chinese regulatory environment for foreign companies and differences over intellectual property rights, their regulation and appropriate legislative mechanisms and enforcement<sup>13</sup>. These are areas where multilateral diplomacy would offer plenty of scope for going beyond the initial and necessary exploration of positions and interests to trying to elaborate common understandings and processes that would support the enforcement of commonly agreed legislative codes and regulations. Intellectual property rights and the associated issues of counterfeiting are sensitive issues in EU-China relations. The EU Commission’s annual report on customs detentions suggested that China is the main source of fake goods entering the EU27, even allowing for a reduction owing to the recession<sup>14</sup>.

In 2003 an EU Commission Policy Paper<sup>15</sup> noted that the EU and China had ‘an ever-greater interest to work together as strategic partners to safeguard and promote sustainable development, peace and stability’. Since 1998, the EU’s main aims vis-a-vis China have been to:

- engage China through upgraded political dialogue;
- support China’s transition to an open society (including respect for human rights);

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200910/ldselect/ldeucom/76/7604.htm#a8>

<sup>11</sup> [http://eeas.europa.eu/china/dialogue\\_en.htm](http://eeas.europa.eu/china/dialogue_en.htm)

<sup>12</sup> Press release, CES/10/93 Date: 23/07/2010, <http://europa.eu/rapid/presReleasesAction.do?reference=CES/10/93&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

<sup>13</sup> *EU China Dialogue on Intellectual Property*. On 30 October 2003 both sides reached agreement on a structured dialogue between the Ministry of Commerce which is coordinator from the Chinese side and DG Trade which is the coordinator from the EU side. [http://eeas.europa.eu/china/docs/ipr\\_291003.pdf](http://eeas.europa.eu/china/docs/ipr_291003.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.understandingchina.eu/Default.aspx?tabid=883&guid=c265acf24771d85df4b82daaa5d0951e> accessed July 24 2010. See <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/committees/europe/inquiries/scotgovchinaplan/documents/GlasgowCityCouncil.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> European Union (2003). Commission of the European Communities (2003) Brussels, 10.9.2003. COM(2003) 533 final. *Commission Policy Paper for transmission to the Council and the European Parliament. “A maturing partnership – shared interests and challenges in EU-China Relations”*.

- integrate China into the world economy through economic and social reform – within the context of Sustainable Development;
- make better use of existing European resources; and
- raise the EU's profile in China.

China has recognised its diverse interests with the EU, but also warned the EU against interfering in its domestic affairs<sup>16</sup>. In a speech by Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao to the eleventh EU-China Summit in Prague, May 2009, Premier Wen stated that 'In conducting strategic cooperation between China and the EU, the most important thing is to stick to the principles of mutual respect and not interfere with each other's internal affairs'. The most tense area remains deep differences between the EU and China in respect of human rights and what the EU regards as their breach in China. Growing uncertainty in the EU during the recession regarding the uncertain regulatory environment in China and differential application of rules for firms is likely to make for continuing problems and tension. Beyond that, two areas of concern and interest to both the EU and China are energy security and climate change, both of which are flashpoints as well as areas where tension can be defused to mutual advantage through comprehensive soft tools of multilateral diplomacy. It is important to remember that for all the EU member states, in international relations the EU multiplies their individual and collective interests and that at times the image of division conceals this deeply entrenched interest to common outcomes.

## 4. Energy Security

A dialogue on energy and the environment began in 1994. Since 2004, a joint Energy Development Programme has resulted in action plans on clean coal, energy and renewable resources, with the EU also committing itself to a zero-energy generation project with China. Energy security and access to energy markets are areas of common concern to the EU and China. The burning of fossil fuels such as coal and oil for energy generation, transport and other activities are major sources of CO<sub>2</sub> and other greenhouse gases (GHGs) which directly threaten the environment.

In 2006 the EU Commission set out EU policy towards China in a Communication<sup>17</sup> which recognised that China is the world's second largest, and growing, raw materials and energy consumer. The Commission noted that as Chinese prosperity increases, China has sought to find its place in the world 'commensurate with its political and economic power', so the EU has to respond effectively 'to tackle the key challenges facing Europe today – including climate change, employment, migration and security'. The EU has also recognised its heavy dependence on imported gas from Russia and the Persian Gulf and the possibility of competition between China and the EU for oil from those regions<sup>18</sup>.

China has plentiful coal reserves, particularly in the north<sup>19</sup> and coal-based [electricity] generation remains China's primary source of energy. According to the International Energy Agency (IEA, 2009)<sup>20</sup> report,

<sup>16</sup> EU Observer, 21.05.2009. Article by Andrew Willis "China warns EU not to meddle in internal affairs". Available online at <http://euobserver.com/884/28167>

<sup>17</sup> European Union (2006). Commission of the European Communities, COM (2006) 631 final. *Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament: EU-China: Closer partners, growing responsibilities*, Brussels, 24.10.2006, p.2.

<sup>18</sup> Correlje, A and van der Linde, C (2006). "Energy supply security and geopolitics: A European Perspective". Energy Policy, Vol. 34, pp 532-543. Pub: Elsevier, 2006

<sup>19</sup> Austin, A (2005). "Energy and Power in China: Domestic Regulation and Foreign Policy". Pub: The Foreign Policy Centre, London, 2005

<sup>20</sup> International Energy Agency (2009). "Key World energy Statistics 2009". Pub. International Energy Agency, Paris (2009).

production of hard coal as a percentage of global production rose from 18.7% in 1973 (approximately 42 million tonnes) to 47.4% in 2008 (approximately 2,770 million tonnes). The IEA (2009) report noted that China consumed 7.9% of global production of all fuels (which includes coal, oil, gas, geothermal, solar, wind and others) in 1973 (approximately 369 million tonnes of oil equivalent) increasing to 15.2% (approximately 1,259 Million tonnes of oil equivalent) in 2007. Despite its huge coal reserves, China is becoming increasingly dependent on imported crude oil and fuel oil in order to maintain its own energy security, in addition to its domestic coal reserves. The increase in consumption of both coal and oil is expected to increase increase competition with other countries for oil in particular, while also having significant climate change impacts as a result of China's continued growth and economic prosperity.

The EU is very sensitive to changes in the world markets for oil, food and raw materials, where significant changes and in costs can affect the EU's economic security<sup>21</sup>). China's exports of goods and services make up 39.7% of its GDP. Among its major exports are: office machines, data processing and telecommunications equipment, electrical machinery and textiles. China imports mainly commodities: iron and steel, oil and mineral fuels; machinery and equipment, plastics, optical and medical equipment and organic chemicals<sup>22</sup>. There are very strong economic links between the EU and China, and friction over trade is long-standing<sup>23</sup>. Since 2004 China has become the EU's second biggest trading partner with EU-China trade almost doubling between 2000 and 2004 and with EU exports to China growing from €25.8 billion to €48 billion while imports from China grew from €74.4 billion to €126.7 billion. As a result of these strong links and on the growing dependence of both the EU and China on imported oil in particular, any lack of cooperation between the two in the area of energy may have severe impacts for the energy security of both parties. In this area it is vital that strong cooperation is maintained and where activities such as EU support of the development of clean coal technology in China could be vital to potentially reduce competition for declining oil resources. Moreover, Chinese interest in the EU's ACP partners' raw materials is another area where friction is possible and where the need for astute multilateral diplomacy is growing. Congo's Finance Minister Matata Ponyo visited China in July 2010 to discuss energy and infrastructure deals, following the cancellation of debt worth \$8 billion by multilateral institutions including the World Bank this month<sup>24</sup>. Exim Bank of China has promised to finance major infrastructure, including electricity and water supplies. China has become the majority stakeholder in its joint mining venture with Congolese miners for copper, coltan and cassiterite needed by high tech industry<sup>25</sup>.

## 5. Environment and Climate Change Policy

Strong cooperation between the EU and China could be very important regarding action on Climate Change. The risk of environmental damage resulting from climate change is seen by both the EU and China as a matter of global concern. This is despite failure of the 2009 Copenhagen Climate Change Summit to reach agreement on a successor to the 1997 Kyoto Protocol<sup>26</sup>. The Kyoto Protocol is the 'international agreement linked to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change' and this Protocol is due to end in 2012. The EU

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<sup>21</sup> Casarini, N (2006). Occasional Paper No. 64 "The evolution of the EU-China relationship: from constructive engagement to strategic partnership". Pub: European Union Institute for Communication Studies, Paris, October 2006

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/Economics/Balance-of-Trade.aspx?Symbol=CNY>

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.neurope.eu/articles/101937.php>. See too the ECIPE report *Redesigning the European Union's trade policy strategy towards China*, Brussels 14 May 2009 at <http://www.understandingchina.eu/Chinaideascommunity/Chinaideascommunityposts/tabid/887/PostID/409/RedesigningtheEuropeanUnionstradepolicystrategytowardsChina.aspx>

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.theafricareport.com/last-business-news/3293554-Congo%20says%20talking%20to%20China%20on%20land%20and%20for%20palm%20oil.html>

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.bornblackmag.com/congo-chinese-deal.html>

<sup>26</sup> See "Kyoto Principle". Available online at [http://unfccc.int/kyoto\\_protocol/items/2830.php](http://unfccc.int/kyoto_protocol/items/2830.php)

and China's targets and methods often differ in the area of climate change with China adopting 'aggressive policy goals ... to become a leader in tackling GHG emissions ... driven by domestic concerns and formulated with regard to China's own context'<sup>27</sup>. One of the highest costs of economic development in China has been to the environment through air, water and land pollution. While China produces fairly low levels of CO<sub>2</sub>, it produces very large amounts of GHGs in relation to its outputs spawned by rapid growth in export industries (particularly electronics) which accounted for one third of China's emissions in 2005.

China, in its National Climate Change Programme<sup>28</sup> (Part 1, Section 2, 2007) indicates that in 1994 its total GHG emissions were 4,060 million tonnes CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent, increasing to around 6,100 million tonnes CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent. In that document (Section 2, parts 2 and 3) it identifies the dominance of coal as an energy source (69.8% of China's primary energy consumption being coal in 2005) and the lack of modern technologies as being significant challenges for China to reduce its GHG emissions in the future. On 4 March 2005, the Commission's Directorate General for Transport and Energy (TREN) and the Chinese Ministry for Science and Technology (MOST) signed an Action Plan on Clean Coal and terms of reference for an Action Plan on Industrial Cooperation on Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energies. This was the basis of further cooperation in respect of energy security and research with European researchers gaining experience of future nuclear energy use at the sites of newer Chinese reactors<sup>29</sup>. Moreover, China wants its own nuclear industry to export and build nuclear reactors in partnership with firms outside China. As the world's second largest energy consumer, China's authorities revised the 2020 target to meet rising demand for clean energy. 28 more nuclear reactors are to be built. Its nuclear capacity is expected to make it the world leader in terms of technology and forward planning. This would increase competition for Korea and others<sup>30</sup> and the President of the China National Nuclear Corporation, Sun Qin, has promised a break big through in expansion overseas<sup>31</sup>. This complements its China's investment in biotech research institutes, partnerships with foreign pharmaceutical companies in building R&D laboratories, and the growth of contract research industries in Beijing and Shanghai<sup>32</sup>. In addition, China is likely to overtake India for IT outsourcing and off-shoring. While the EU and China continue to have different approaches regarding ethical issues in biotechnology, medical science and genetic engineering, it is clear that China is building capacity rapidly to address and number of core issues central to global change. All are strategically crucial to realising green goals.

The issues of climate change, global warming and GHG emissions are vital to both the EU and China<sup>33</sup>. This was stressed at the 12<sup>th</sup> EU China summit in 2009<sup>34</sup>. China welcomed the EU Commission's provision of up 57 million euros for a joint near-zero emissions coal (NZEC) project<sup>35</sup>. In light of the failure to reach agreement at Copenhagen, China Daily (April 2010<sup>36</sup>) reported that the EU and China have established a ministerial level dialogue mechanism on climate change, in advance of a new Climate Change Summit to be held in Cancun in December 2010. *China Daily* (April 2010) report on the setting up of a climate change mechanism between the EU and China included a statement by Gunther Oettinger, EU Commissioner for Energy, who noted that he thought China and the EU 'have close contacts, ... we are at the beginning of a real partnership'. Maintaining

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<sup>27</sup> Freeman, D and Holslag, J (2009:3-6). *Climate Change, China and the EU: Different Policies, Same Ends?* Asia Paper for Brussels Institute of Contemporary China Studies. Available online at: <http://www.understandingchina.eu/Chinaideascommunity/Chinaideascommunityposts/tabid/887/PostID/763/ClimateChangeChinaandtheEUDifferentPoliciesSameEnd.aspx>

<sup>28</sup> China National Climate Change Program, Pub: China.Org.Cn, June 2007. Available online at: <http://www.china.org.cn/english/environment/213624.htm#12>

<sup>29</sup> [http://eeas.europa.eu/china/sectoraldialogue\\_en.htm](http://eeas.europa.eu/china/sectoraldialogue_en.htm)

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.businessweek.com/news/2010-03-23/china-to-build-28-more-nuclear-power-reactors-by-2020-update1-.html>

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.businessweek.com/news/2010-03-04/china-urges-nuclear-power-companies-to-build-reactors-overseas.html>

<sup>32</sup> <http://bx.businessweek.com/china-biotechnology/>

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.euractiv.com/en/foreign-affairs/climate-change-trade-top-agenda-eu-china-summit/article-182507>

<sup>34</sup> China Daily, <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/6828250.html>

<sup>35</sup> <http://comm.stanford.edu/newsandinclusion/>

<sup>36</sup> China Daily, April 2010. "Climate change mechanism set up". Available online at: [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2010-04/30/content\\_9794726.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2010-04/30/content_9794726.htm)

a high level dialogue and strong cooperation on the issue of climate change may have a significant future role in negotiations on the successor to the Kyoto Agreement. With the strong trade and economic links between the EU and China, there is potential for any multilateral actions taken by them on climate change to heavily influence what happens elsewhere and hopefully lead to a more successful outcome than the Copenhagen Summit of 2009 on this issue.

In light of the increasing interdependence of the EU and China in terms of trade and the strong influence China holds over world markets for oil, food and raw materials, multilateral agreement on areas such as energy and the environment are vital. The EU and United States accused China of restricting the export of key raw materials used in the production of steel and other industrial products in a complaint filed in July with the World Trade Organisation<sup>37</sup>. Keeping the door open by using the tools of soft diplomacy is crucial. Trade-offs are possible for both parties. It has been suggested that in return for receiving technology transfers on 'energy-efficient and renewable technologies' from the EU, China should set specific domestic targets on emissions post 2012 and also 'commit to the accelerated development of clean coal ... and carbon capture and storage technologies<sup>38</sup>'. China's primary goal is to ensure that the EU's position on climate change supports rather than hinders [its] economic development. It has sought EU funding for Chinese regions likely to be 'hardest hit by climate change<sup>39</sup>'. Among EU member states, France has a particular interest in the development potential of the nuclear industry and seeks greater engagement on that issue in China, as does Russia<sup>40</sup>. In April 2009, China and France renewed their agreement on cooperation in the peaceful use of nuclear energy. The first Franco-Chinese protocol was signed in 1982. The three year protocol, the tenth of its kind, includes efforts in radioactive waste treatment, controllable nuclear fusion and personnel training. In November 2009, China Guangdong Nuclear Power Group and Areva of France signed an eight-billion-euro nuclear energy deal, the biggest commercial contract ever signed by France's nuclear energy industry. The two sides will work together to establish two European pressurized water reactors at Taishan in Guangdong<sup>41</sup>.

In July 2010, the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the setting up of relations between the EU and China, the productive result and potential of multilateral diplomacy in the chronically difficult field of climate change was illustrated following a meeting of the EU-China Civil Society Round Table in Chongqing, when a seminar on Trade and Development took place in Shanghai from 22 to 24 July 2010. This illustrated the way in which multilateralism at horizontal sectoral and vertical levels provides opportunities to continue crucial dialogues in different yet linked forums. The seminar was linked to EU Trade Days and focused on: Trade and Development, Trade and Climate Change and Investment and Cooperation. It included representatives from non-state actors, academics and public authorities who agreed on the need for further cooperation to combat climate change and using trade as an instrument to promote green growth, trade in environmental goods and services – notably wind and hydroelectric turbines, solar-powered boilers, solar panels, seawater desalination plants and waste water reuse and treatment. The potential for extending multilateral cooperation within other multilateral organisations was exemplified by the EU and China indicating a need to cooperate in order to deal with issues hindering agreement on lower tariff barriers in the context of World Trade Organisation deliberations, focusing on reducing obstacles to investment and non tariff barriers which continue to seriously hamper the spread of environmentally friendly products<sup>42</sup>.

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<sup>37</sup> <http://edition.cnn.com/2009/BUSINESS/06/24/china.wto.us/index.html>

<sup>38</sup> Fox, J and Godement, F (2009:15). "A Power Audit of EU-China Relations" Pub: European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR), London, April 2009

<sup>39</sup> Fox and Godement(2009:43)

<sup>40</sup> On possible cooperation to build fourth-generation nuclear reactors as global demand for clean energy rises. <http://www.businessweek.com/news/2010-05-19/china-in-talks-with-russia-france-on-4g-reactors-update2-.html>; [http://ec.europa.eu/development/icenter/repository/COMM\\_PDF\\_COM\\_2008\\_0654\\_F\\_COMMUNICATION\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/development/icenter/repository/COMM_PDF_COM_2008_0654_F_COMMUNICATION_en.pdf)

<sup>41</sup> <http://www.caea.gov.cn/n602670/n621894/index.html>

<sup>42</sup> Press release, EU and China should increase cooperation to fight climate change CES/10/94 Date: 26/07/2010 <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=CES/10/94&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

At the Shanghai World Expo in July 2010, the EU and China clearly linked climate change, trade and green energy and the projects presented illustrated again how multilateral action at different levels is helping to forge deeper cooperation. On 5 July, at the *EU-China Smart City Forum*, Günther H. Oettinger, EU Commissioner for Energy, delivered a keynote speech on 'The EU and China: working together for better cities and for better lives' referring to the overall theme of the World Expo 2010<sup>43</sup>. China announced that it would host an extra round of negotiations in Yianjin in October 2010 designed to promote agreement over a new climate treaty before the next ministerial meeting in Cancun, Mexico from 29 November to 10 December 2010. Achim Steiner, UN under-secretary general and director of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), told the *China Daily* that the aim was to introduce new ideas to lead to a binding treaty which officials expect to be concluded at the end of 2011. China's position on the control of emissions is seen to be critical especially after the fraught negotiations in Copenhagen. EU Climate Action Commissioner Hedegaard, stated after a meeting of the Major Economies Forum on energy and climate in Rome on 1 July 2010 that discussions were proceeding multilaterally to 'see if some kind of messages ... can be channelled into the formal negotiations, for instance on MRV (monitoring, reporting and verification<sup>44</sup>)'. Progress on MRV is seen to be the key to getting agreement. Against this, there is growing criticism of carbon-offsetting practices which benefit EU competitors, such as India and China. In July 2010 an NGO Sandbag report presented data on how European industries subsidise direct competitors in Chinese and Indian steel by buying international credits to offset their carbon dioxide emissions. Under the Kyoto Protocol, industrialised countries are able to use this practice (the Clean Development Mechanism, CDM) as a way of partly meeting their climate targets by investing in carbon reduction projects in developing countries. This is designed to function in a way that shows that the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions could not have been secured without foreign investment. The system is open to abuse and urgent reform is vital<sup>45</sup>.

These examples illustrate the constructive and productive outcome of a process of multilateral negotiation and exchange that has enabled EU-Chinese relations to develop at all levels even though some very tough, intractable and difficult problems remain both in respect of that drawing the highest criticism – human rights in China – and those where interests clash on matters of trade, intellectual property, dumping<sup>46</sup>, global warming and economic prosperity.

## 6. Conclusion

From this brief overview it is clear that the EU and China are becoming ever more closely inter-linked in terms of the importance each play as trading partners and the economic stability which can arise from this. However, they are also competitors in the world market for oil, food and raw materials. There are continuing areas of tension where progress beyond symbolic levels is best achieved via quiet, multilateral diplomacy. A good example of this relates to the symbolic 'arms embargo' imposed to indicate EU concern at the repression of human rights at the pro-democracy demonstrations in Tiananmen Square in June 1989. The British House of Lords noted that this was not an arms embargo in the traditional sense as it excluded a list of proscribed technologies or weapons which would normally form part of a serious embargo but was basically an

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<sup>43</sup> <http://www.euatshanghai2010.eu/news/green-energy-smart-cities>

<sup>44</sup> [http://www.euractiv.com/en/china-host-climate-talks-mexico-meeting-news-495992?utm\\_source=EurActiv+Newsletter&utm\\_campaign=dfc66a8a12-my\\_google\\_analytics\\_key&utm\\_medium=email](http://www.euractiv.com/en/china-host-climate-talks-mexico-meeting-news-495992?utm_source=EurActiv+Newsletter&utm_campaign=dfc66a8a12-my_google_analytics_key&utm_medium=email)

<sup>45</sup> <http://www.euractiv.com/en/climate-environment/carbon-offset-auditors-get-poor-grade-news-495715>

<sup>46</sup> See Press Release, 2996<sup>th</sup> Council meeting, Foreign Affairs, Brussels, 22 February 2010, *TRADE POLICY Anti-dumping - Tungsten electrodes - Ring binder mechanisms - China* The Council adopted two regulations:– terminating the partial interim review of the anti-dumping measures applicable to imports of certain tungsten electrodes originating in China; and– imposing a definitive anti-dumping duty on imports of certain ring binder mechanisms Originating in China following an expiry review pursuant to regulation 384/96.

interruption of military cooperation and arms trade with China subject to non-binding differential approaches of each EU member state<sup>47</sup>. It was limited to goods that might be used by the Chinese for internal repression, and it has not stopped arms sales by EU Member States. The Lords report noted that: 'The embargo is an acutely sensitive and symbolic issue for the Chinese and a constant irritant in EU-China relations. The Chinese feel humiliated to be treated in the same way as Sudan or Zimbabwe. They do not understand why the EU refuses to lift the embargo and regularly raise the issue...While lifting the embargo would be politically symbolic, the EU has more effective legislation in a Common Position on arms exports, which is legally binding on all Member States. It applies to exports to third countries and does not therefore single out China. The EU also has a Dual-Use Regulation which controls the export of sensitive technologies to China and other countries' which is potentially significant if difficult to implement<sup>48</sup>. The House of Lords concluded that:

The EU should be prepared to lift the arms embargo only when the international conditions above have been fulfilled and if the Chinese government makes progress on human rights and regional security. Specific conditions should include ratification of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, greater transparency on military modernisation and the removal of the military threat to Taiwan. [para 162]

There is scope for increased cooperation to ensure that they maximise their opportunities to develop, through the tools of multilateral diplomacy at all levels, their potential for influence on the world stage and regionally and for trying to develop standards across the range of activities and policy areas. They share an interest in working on trade and customs issues to combat organised international crime, fraud, piracy and counterfeiting and both are well-positioned to play important roles in regional settings to help shape future policies and maximise opportunities for promoting cooperation with regional organisations on matters of common interest<sup>49</sup>. Regional engagement allows for misunderstandings to be explored and compared to overcome preconceptions, including perceptions of Chinese reticence to sign up to international accords, WTO and UN agreements valued by the EU<sup>50</sup>. The EU continues to fund many region-to-region capacity building and region-to-region cooperative initiatives of which China is a beneficiary<sup>51</sup>. The emphasis in these programmes mirrors some of the issues that China and the EU are priorities : climate change and energy. Others include health, migration, education and culture and cooperation and policy reform in the area of security. Cooperation with China has shifted from emphasis on infrastructural capacitybuilding and rural development programmes to support for socio-economic reform, sustainable development, good governance and the rule of law. EU funding has gone to non-profit making bodies in education, trade and investment, human rights and the environment<sup>52</sup>.

Similarly, cultural region-to-region vertical and horizontal multilateral diplomacy helps to foster and exchange experience. This was done in 2009 through the Forum on China-Europe Cultural Industries - a high-level international summit forum - jointly hosted by China's Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Commerce , State Administration of Radio, Film and Television, General Administration of Press and Publication, the China

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[http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/112999.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/112999.pdf)

<sup>47</sup> House of Lords\148ff

<sup>48</sup> House of Lords, European Union Committee - Seventh Report *Stars and Dragons: The EU and China*, Session 2009-2010, HMSO:London March 2010 at <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200910/ldselect/lducom/76/7602.htm>

<sup>49</sup> [http://www.eurochine.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=12%3Acollectivites-locales-de-la-france-et-les-regions-en-chine&catid=31%3Ageneral&Itemid=44&lang=fr](http://www.eurochine.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=12%3Acollectivites-locales-de-la-france-et-les-regions-en-chine&catid=31%3Ageneral&Itemid=44&lang=fr) and <http://www.eurochine.org/>

<sup>50</sup> <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200910/ldselect/lducom/76/7608.htm#a35>. [http://ec.europa.eu/trade/creating-opportunities/bilateral-relations/countries/china/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/trade/creating-opportunities/bilateral-relations/countries/china/index_en.htm)

<sup>51</sup> See *EU Regional Programming for Asia, Strategy Document 2007-2013*, Brussels, 31 May 2007. Eligible countries in Asia are: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Laos, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar/Burma, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Vietnam (There was no official development cooperation with DPRK; the launch of any such cooperation would be subject to DPRK's proven commitment with regard to respecting its international obligations) [http://eeas.europa.eu/asia/rsp/07\\_13\\_en.pdf](http://eeas.europa.eu/asia/rsp/07_13_en.pdf)

<sup>52</sup> Commission Working Document, Country Strategy Paper: China, [http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/asia/country-cooperation/china/china\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/asia/country-cooperation/china/china_en.htm)

Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT, Guangdong Provincial People's Government, Shenzhen Municipal People's Government and General Division of Education and Culture of European Commission. It was organized by the Organizing Committee of China (Shenzhen) International Cultural Industries Fair and Shenzhen International Cultural Industry Fair Co., Ltd<sup>53</sup>.

This shows that using multilateral diplomacy and forums in which multilateral negotiation and dialogue can be expanded and developed is a productive way of promoting cooperation and understanding<sup>54</sup>.

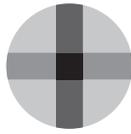
Moreover, the EU provides a useful example of how the strategy of multilateralism can be developed to realise internal domestic goals. The example of EU integration, and the gradual processes of harmonisation that the supranational approach to policymaking and regulation initiated, could be helpful in enabling China to develop an approach to overcoming its highly fragmented internal market. This would benefit China's economic development and would also enable the EU and China together to surmount increasing difficulties for EU business and commercial interests in China confronted by fragmentation which leads to confusion and misunderstanding. Following the European model is something that yields mutual advantages both in this area and in that regarding consumer goods and product safety. Similarly, exploiting the opportunities to promote greater mutual understanding through formal programmes on cultural and educational exchanges (such as Erasmus mundus), and initiating dialogue on social and economic affairs, employment, labour regimes and practices through memorandum of understanding on social protection (again influenced by the European experience) provides a rich source of collaboration in future.

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<sup>53</sup> [www.cnci.gov.cn](http://www.cnci.gov.cn).

<sup>54</sup> Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament - EU – China: Closer partners, growing responsibilities (COM(2006) 632 final) /\* COM/2006/0631 final;





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**Resumen:** La diplomacia multilateral y los foros multilaterales en los que se fomenta la negociación y el diálogo son instrumentos efectivos para la promoción de la cooperación y el entendimiento en el ámbito de las relaciones internacionales, donde existen profundos desacuerdos y falta de compromisos. Este artículo examina brevemente alguna de las áreas clave de interés común en las relaciones internacionales –cambio climático, comercio, medio ambiente, asuntos sociales–.

Este documento de trabajo sugiere que el ejemplo de la integración europea y el proceso gradual de armonización europea, fruto del carácter supranacional de las políticas y la regulación, podrían ser de ayuda para China en el desarrollo de un método adecuado que supere la gran fragmentación de su mercado interno. Además se proponen pasos multilaterales para reforzar el entendimiento y las relaciones UE-China y para fomentar la experiencia europea como una rica fuente de colaboración futura.

**Palabras clave:** diplomacia multilateral, comercio, China, cultura, medio ambiente, asuntos sociales, integración europea.

**Abstract:** Using multilateral diplomacy and forums in which multilateral negotiation and dialogue can be expanded and developed is a productive way of promoting cooperation and understanding especially in international relations where there are issues of deep and persistent disagreement, or lack of engagement. The paper briefly examines some key areas of mutual concern –climate change, trade, environment, social affairs–. It suggests that the example of EU integration, and the gradual processes of harmonisation that the supranational approach to policymaking and regulation initiated, could be helpful in enabling China to develop an approach to overcoming its highly fragmented internal market. It concludes by suggesting some multilateral steps for strengthening EU-Chinese mutual understanding and relations and for drawing on the European experience as a rich source of collaboration in future.

**Keywords:** Multilateral diplomacy, trade, China, culture, environment, social affairs, EU integration.

Con la colaboración de:



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ISBN: 978-84-92989-71-3



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