

UACES 41st Annual Conference

Cambridge, 5-7 September 2011

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**THE EU, THE US AND CHINA: STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENT, POLITICAL
COMMITMENT AND DIPLOMATIC INTERACTION IN MULTILATERAL
ARENAS**

**Michael Smith
Loughborough University, UK**

M.H.Smith@lboro.ac.uk

**Paper Presented at the UACES Annual Conference, Cambridge
University, 5-7 September 2011**

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The EU, the US and China: Strategic Engagement, Political Commitment and Diplomatic Interaction in Multilateral Arenas

Michael Smith

ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the issues arising from the engagement of the EU, the US and China with multilateral fora such as the G2, the G3, G7/8 and G20. The first part of the paper explores the variations between the EU, the US and China as 'multilateralists' and identifies the need for a more searching exploration of the roots of their behaviour in multilateral arenas. The second part links multilateral engagement to changing patterns of global power distribution and institutional structure, arguing that asymmetries of engagement and interaction reflect both strategic choices by and structural pressures on the three parties. The third part of the paper explores the extent of commitment shown by the three parties, both to cooperation in general and to specific initiatives undertaken in different multilateral forums, arguing that variations reflect the desire on the part of the EU, the US and China to assert power, to promote specific interests, to accommodate domestic and global pressures or to defend existing positions. The fourth part of the paper investigates the diplomatic interactions involving the three parties within multilateral forums, and argues that issues of representation, communication and negotiation as well as the potential for learning through the diplomatic process provide an important element in an explanation of their mutual relations. The paper concludes by reconsidering the validity of the framework proposed, exploring its implications for approaches to multilateralism and discussing the potential implications of this for policy.

Introduction

This paper sets out to delineate and to explore a puzzle arising from the mutual engagement of the EU, the US and China in a range of multilateral arenas. The puzzle is this: that the three parties are increasingly engaged with groupings such as the G20, but that they apparently have markedly differing conceptualisations and experiences of and approaches to multilateral cooperation arising from a series of contextual and other factors. This in turn leads to a puzzle about multilateral cooperation more generally: there is clearly an increasing demand for such cooperation, but it is very unclear exactly where and how this demand can be satisfied and if it were to be satisfied how this would affect the broader provision of global governance and world order. The performance of multilateral groupings can be seen as decidedly sub-optimal, and this raises important questions about the roles of

institutions, ideas and power in processes of global governance (Barnett and Duval 2003).

In addressing these questions, the paper deals with a much broader set of issues: how, when and why might the relations between the EU, the US and China form the basis for a New International Order? What is more, these issues relate very strongly to questions about the ways in which the EU might approach some solutions to the global puzzles that confront it (Gnesotto and Grevi 2006). So the paper is attempting to clarify a number of general questions about the relations between the EU, the US and China, and to draw from them some guidance as to appropriate courses of action for the EU especially in an increasingly turbulent world. The paper concerns itself primarily with questions of the global political economy, but touches on security and political issues where this is appropriate and necessary.

The paper proceeds as follows. In the first part, it addresses issues of multilateralism, as seen from the EU, the US and China, and identifies some important areas of difference between the three parties, essentially by asking 'what does it mean to be a multilateralist?' Since the pursuit of this question raises further questions about exactly how, when and why the EU, the US and China practice multilateralism, the paper then suggests that three key areas need to be investigated: strategic engagement, political commitment and diplomatic interaction. The argument is that attention to these three components of multilateralism in practice will provide a finer-grained analysis of the ways in which the EU, the US and China engage with multilateral

groupings, and thus give a firmer basis for evaluation and policy prescription. Each component is dealt with separately, and then in the Conclusions an attempt is made to bring them together and to use them as the basis for an overall evaluation of the current state of multilateralism and the roles played by the EU, the US and China. The paper attempts throughout to link the analysis to specific multilateral processes and events, and particularly reactions to the global financial crisis between 2008-2011, but at this stage it is not supported by detailed empirical evidence: the aim is to provide a launch-pad for more detailed empirical study in a revised version of the paper, and to frame key issues for discussion in the light of such study.

Exploring Multilateralisms

What does it mean to be a multilateralist? This question gets us to the heart of the argument in this paper, because it is capable of almost as many answers as there are participants in multilateral groupings or processes of governance. Initially, it is important to take a step back from the question itself, and to clarify some of the key ideas relating to multilateralism in the contemporary world arena. As argued nearly twenty years ago by John Ruggie and others, multilateralism can be seen as a form of international praxis, embodying a set of principles of action including (for example) reciprocity (Ruggie 1993). But this form of praxis is clearly more salient or more viable in certain conditions than in others, and it is therefore closely linked to such factors as the distribution of power in the world arena, the nature of issues and the institutional forms in which multilateralism may be practised.

In current conditions, these relationships are particularly debated in relation to the links between multilateralism and multipolarity, since it is assumed that the world is moving towards a more dispersed distribution of power and away from the unipolarity seen as characteristic of the early post-Cold War years (see for example Grevi and de Vasconcelos 2008). But it must be remembered that the distribution of power is a multi-dimensional phenomenon, and that it will vary according to issue area and to the nature of participants in the world arena. It must also be held in mind that multilateralism will take expression in a variety of ways: through the establishment and maintenance of institutions and regimes, through the generation of 'reigning ideas' and through the application of material power. This means that the test of multilateralism as an international practice is the extent to which it shapes institutions and rules, frames international norms and values, and affects behaviour especially of key actors (Foot and Walter 2011).

Given this general background, what can we say about the three putative 'multilateralists' with which we are concerned in this paper: the EU, the US and China? The EU is often portrayed as almost a compulsive multilateralist; multilateralism is said to be in its DNA, and to be the means not only by which the EU can exert its influence in the world but also establish its legitimacy as an international actor (Smith 2011a). This can be connected to the idea that the EU is a 'post-modern' international actor (Cooper 200?; Zongze 2008), based on post-sovereign values and in a sense pathologically committed to the pursuit of multilateral solutions to shared problems. But this is not the only

possible perspective on the EU's approach to multilateralism. Others have proposed a more instrumentalist view, which treats the EU as an 'emerging international actor' committed to multilateralism because that is the route to the kinds of rules and institutional frameworks within which it can prosper (Möller 2002; see also Odgaard and Biscop 2007). And it is also possible to mount a critical attack on the extent to which the EU actually lives up to its own propaganda as a multilateralist, by showing the extent to which EU behaviour deviates from the kind of liberal internationalism to which it expresses its commitment (Youngs and Solbes 2010; Youngs 2011). Finally, it can be argued that whatever its approach to multilateralism, the EU lacks credibility because of its failure to speak with one voice in multilateral arenas or groupings, and the persistence (and subversive) influence of the member states (Grant 2009).

Just as on the surface the EU is easy to pigeonhole as a multilateralist, so it appears that the US is also a clearcut case. The US, it can be argued, is the ultimate 'selective multilateralist', enabled by its power and its position to practice 'multilateralism *à la carte*'. It can be argued further that this expresses the nature of the US as essentially a 'modernist' actor, focused on sovereignist assumptions about the way the world works and the way in which its interests can be defended (Smith 2011a; Zongze 2008). But this image of the US as multilateralist can be overstated, and there is a series of correctives that can be applied. One of these relates to the changing power position of the US and the need to prepare for a world in which American power is markedly less predominant (thus linking with the debate about multipolarity in

a very direct way) (Ikenberry 2008; Grant 2008). Such a prescription seems also to be borne out at least in part by the Obama administration's adoption of a kind of pragmatic realist approach to its international commitments and its pursuit of multilateral solutions to some of its key international dilemmas (Smith 2011b). Nonetheless, it is still fair to identify the US posture on multilateralism as essentially selective and 'domesticist', focusing on the needs of the USA first.

The Chinese approach to multilateralism contrasts both with that of the EU and that of the USA. It has been characterised widely as cautious and conditional, and indeed as 'experimental' – the emphasis in these characterisations being on the extent to which the approach reflects the Chinese position as an emerging power with an overwhelming preoccupation with domestic modernization (Ogdaard and Biscop 2007; Zongze 2008; Clegg 2009). This is not the whole of the story, however, since it is also often argued that the Chinese position reflects the need to instrumentalise multilateralism as a defence against US predominance and as a means of preserving Chinese autonomy within the world arena (Clegg 2009; Grant and Barysch 2008). It can also be pointed out that the Chinese approach to global multilateralism is essentially conditional upon the benefits to be gained from engagement, and that it could be re-directed if multilateralism seemed to be working against Chinese interests – for example, into forms of regional multilateralism in which China would hold a dominant position.

What are the implications of these contrasting approaches to 'being a multilateralist'? It seems to me that there are several. First, there is apparently no settled pattern of multilateralism in the contemporary world arena, and this reflects the divergence of approaches to and experiences of multilateralism among key actors, here the EU, the US and China. Rather, there is a set of partial multilateralisms that fluctuate and can be put into reverse, along with a set of partial multilateral groupings (G2, G3, G7/8, G20) that lay claim to parts of the multilateral agenda and may or may not be able to manage what they lay claim to. So there is a proliferation of multilateral or quasi-multilateral groupings that sometimes reinforce and sometimes undermine each other.

At the same time, and particularly in relations among established and emergent major actors, there is a form of multiple bilateralism that centres on (for example) 'strategic partnerships' and which may or may not support the more general versions of multilateralism that exist; sometimes this multiple bilateralism extends to the creation or perception of 'diplomatic triangles' such as that which has been identified in EU/US/China relations (Ross et al 2009). In terms of relations between the EU, the US and China, there is thus a mosaic of multilateral, quasi-multilateral and bilateral relationships that reflect the different approaches and experiences of the parties and which give rise to often uneasy relationships among the fragments of order to which they give rise.

If this is the case – and I would argue strongly that it is – then it is important to conduct a more forensic examination of the ways in which this mosaic of

multilateralisms has arisen, the forces that shape it and the ways in which it gives rise to processes of interaction that shape the policies of the EU, the US and China. The remainder of this paper is dedicated to exploring three interconnected dimensions that I see as shaping EU/US/China relations in the context of multilateralism (and indeed the approaches of almost all actors to multilateralism): strategic engagement, political commitment and diplomatic interaction.

Strategic Engagement

The first element in my framework is strategic engagement. By this I mean the ways in which structural and positional factors act upon the EU, the US and China to shape the ways in which and the extent to which they become involved in multilateral arenas and groupings. This element entails an assumption that the three parties can be conceptualised as strategic actors, pursuing forms of ‘grand strategy’ that bring them into contact with multilateral processes. It also entails an assumption that once involved with multilateral processes they will continue to act strategically and to calculate the costs and benefits of engagement – thus entailing a linked assumption that the choice to defect or to impose conditions on engagement is open to those with sufficient weight in the system, and a further assumption that there is a possibility of exclusion if the conditions for continued participation are not met and other major actors conclude that exclusion should take place. This approach is essentially a systemic one, focusing on the grand forces that shove and shape the responses of the key actors in the world arena.

The argument in the previous part of the paper gives some grounds for recognising the validity of this 'strategic engagement' approach. Although the EU can be seen as a compulsive multilateralist, it is also clear that calculations of a more material kind and of the EU's international position enter into its approach to multilateral groupings. Indeed, it has been argued that the EU spends a lot of time (by implication, unhelpfully) defending the positions it has established in key multilateral contexts, and that it should move to a more assertive multilateralist position (Youngs 2011, Grant 2009, 2010). For the US, the assumption of selective multilateralism implies that participation or defection is a choice open to successive administrations, and that this choice will be exercised if the costs and benefits of participation no longer add up. For China, the principle of experimental multilateralism implies that there is an exit option if the experiment doesn't work out as expected; although there are those that argue that China simply needs multilateralism too much for this to be a realistic option, the logic of strategic engagement means that the Chinese should calculate the gains and potential losses from multilateralism especially in light of their modernisation needs and the potential returns to bilateralism or regional multilateralism, and take decisions accordingly.

This form of strategic calculation gives rise to typical roles within multilateral institutions and arenas. To put it simply, we can deploy three images of roles for the EU, the US and China: rule maker, rule shaper and rule taker. The argument deployed so far implies that the EU is predominantly cast as a rule shaper, the US as a rule maker, and China as a rule taker. But these roles are

not static and they are not unaffected by changes in international structure or position, so the further implication is that this is an area that will change markedly over the next decade or so (for examples of potential effects, see Gnesotto and Grevi 2006). Evidence from the responses to the global financial crisis during the past three years suggests that neither the EU, nor the US, nor China has stayed in role during discussions within the G20 or other contexts. Rather, they have played a combination of roles and sometimes none of the above. This suggests that there is something else going on, and this leads us to the next part of the argument.

Political Commitment

If there is something else going on and shaping EU, US and Chinese approaches to multilateralism, one place to look for it is in the logic of political commitment. Whilst strategic engagement points in general terms to the need to get involved in multilateralism, it does not conclusively account for patterns of behaviour once that engagement has taken place. An approach from political commitment conceptualises the EU, the US and China as political actors, influenced by a plurality of domestic forces as well as by international conditions. It also places an emphasis on the existence of linkages, alignments and coalitions relevant to attempts to achieve multilateral cooperation and action, and thus to the political complexities that arise in conditions of complex interdependence (Keohane and Nye 2001; Smith and Xie 2009). Such an approach entails a close look at the politics of choice and the constraints shaping choices, not simply a linear 'reading off' of policies and actions from structural and positional characteristics of actors.

The first feature that such an approach brings into sharp focus is the impact of domestic politics. This can be disaggregated into a number of elements. First, there is the institutional make-up of an international actor, and the implications of institutional change. Second, there is the impact of broader political change, and especially its relationship to the legitimacy and capacity of governing authorities. Third, there is the impact of socio-economic change, and particularly of the kind of change that demands large amounts of financial and political resources to underpin and progress it – this might be referred to as the modernisation factor. When added together, these factors can be seen as having a decisive impact on three aspects of international action: first, the preferences that are pursued by an actor, second, the alignments that are possible for that actor, and those that are chosen by it, and finally, the resources available to the actor for external use and the pursuit of external objectives.

My argument is that attention to this aspect of multilateralism enables us to focus sharply on the level and scope of political commitment to multilateral practices by key actors – in other words, it gives more than a clue to the kinds of orientations assumed by key actors in multilateral contexts. I would identify four such postures or orientations. The first is assertive; the second promotive; the third accommodative; the fourth defensive. In other words, the actions taken and positions assumed in multilateral arenas by key actors are likely to reflect broad orientations based on the combination of forces outlined above.

What does this tell us about the ways in which the EU, the US and China have approached multilateralism during the recent and current periods? I would argue that EU policies have been an uneasy combination of promotive and defensive. On the one hand, they reflect the rhetorical commitment to multilateralism that goes along with parts of the EU's self-image. But on the other hand, they reflect the impact of domestic factors and the divergences between strategies espoused by member states, the internal institutional issues that attend the problems of the euro zone and the differential commitments of member states to 'European' as opposed to national solutions, and the desire to defend entrenched positions in multilateral institutions (Lardy 2008; Wacker 2010; Walter 2010; Grant 2009; Fox and Godement 2009). US policies have demonstrated a parallel schizophrenia: at one and the same time, they can be seen as assertive, defensive and accommodative, but one thing is clear – they are overwhelmingly influenced by domestic economic and political factors, and by the institutional factors that give Congress and local politics a key role in shaping national policy postures (Walter 2010; Foot and Walter 2011). As far as China is concerned, the predominant impression is of a generally defensive policy posture, with elements of the accommodative reflecting the overwhelming importance of domestic modernisation and the desire to limit the damage caused by financial and economic crisis in major markets – including the damage that might result from direct or indirect protectionism (Lo 2010; Foot 2010; Walter 2010; Zhongzong 2007). As David Shambaugh has argued, there is evidence here of a 'conflicted China' reflecting not only the need to adjust to a new

international status but also the impact of domestic needs and tensions (Shambaugh 2011)

From this discussion, it can be seen that an analysis of political commitment draws attention to a number of predominantly economic factors that give rise to specific patterns of behaviour in multilateral contexts. It also helps to explain a number of apparent contradictions that are not explored, let alone explained, by an approach simply based on strategic engagement. In a sense, this is the liberal intergovernmentalist approach to multilateralism, translated to a global rather than the European level. It moves us from an appreciation of why actors might get engaged in multilateral processes to an appreciation of what happens once they are engaged and once there are questions of political costs and benefits to be addressed. What it does not do is give us a full appreciation of the dynamics of multilateral diplomacy, and this is what the next part of the argument deals with.

Diplomatic Interaction

The final stage of my argument focuses on the ways in which diplomatic interaction within multilateral contexts can shape the ways in which actors such as the EU, the US and China shape and adjust their policies and learn from their experiences. With this, we move from the 'macro' level of strategic engagement and the 'meso' level of political commitment to the 'micro' level of day to day interactions. Diplomatic interaction broadly reflects the pursuit of three functions by actors involved in multilateral contexts: representation, communication and negotiation. As such it raises problems that are

addressed by principal-agent approaches (including such issues as delegation and 'agency slack' or 'agency drift'), but it also focuses on the enactment of roles and on the potential for the shaping and re-shaping of preferences and policy positions. Perhaps most importantly, it implies the potential for social learning by those participating, and the generation of trust and responsiveness.

There is also here a strong element of the normative, in the sense that the development of shared understandings of norms and values is implicit in the diplomatic process. This can of course cause tensions with the more structural and institutional aspects that were dealt with earlier in the argument; but I would argue that this is a vital third element in the analysis of the ways in which the EU, the US and China approach multilateral encounters. It deals with the experience of multilateralism as a social process, rather than as a matter of strategic calculation or political manoeuvre, and thus provides us with an element that cannot be found elsewhere.

How can this element be applied to the interaction of the EU, the US and china in multilateral contexts? One way in which to operationalise it is through the study of representation – both the formal aspect of 'who speaks for Europe/the US/China', and the less formal aspects of the ways in which the three are represented. This is a particular problem for the EU, given that in many of the multilateral arenas to which the argument refers, they are represented by a multitude of voices: the European voices of the Commission, the President of the European Council and potentially the rotating presidency,

the national voices of the member states and in some cases by non-governmental voices. As has been pointed out by a number of observers, this does not make for a coherent representation (in the second sense outlined above) of the European position, and the responses to the financial crisis have provided plenty of evidence that this is a current and continuing problem (Defraigne 2009; Grant 2009). In a sense, it might be argued, the EU is both over-represented (in institutional terms) and under-represented (in terms of speaking with one voice and conveying a 'European' position) in multilateral arenas.

When this analysis is extended to the US and China, it is also clear that although in principle the issue of representation is less problematic for them, since they are states, another dimension comes into play: the fact that they (and the EU) are represented concurrently in a plurality of multilateral (or mini-lateral, or bilateral) arenas. This creates a set of pressures that arise from the 'bi-multilateralism' of many international encounters – situations in which the parties may meet in a bilateral (or maybe a trilateral) context, but in which their interactions are organically linked with multilateral processes. This means in turn that what is represented by the parties in any given diplomatic encounter can have complex externalities and repercussions for the broader multilateral process (Smith 2005; Smith and Xie 2009). In the current situation, such problems are clearly exemplified by the coexistence of the G2 (US and China), G3 (US, China and EU), G7/8 (neither of them including China except in the Heiligendam formation of 'G8 + 5') and most recently the G20 (including not only the US, China and the EU but also a core of four EU

member states and the possibility of others depending on which member state holds the rotating presidency).

Diplomatic representation in a context of 'variable-geometry multilateralism' is thus the source of potential problems (but also no doubt of opportunities for those who can manage it most effectively and use it as a tool for leverage in overlapping arenas). It is also linked very closely to the second element identified earlier: diplomatic communication. Implicit in the notion of 'bi-multilateralism' and its variants is the need for communication and 'messages' to be tightly controlled and coordinated across a range of linked contexts, but this is complicated where multiple or contested representation exists. It is easy to see that this complication applies especially to the EU, which can be (and has been) accused of talking with a variety of contradictory voices in multilateral arenas. This multiplicity of voices is not generally to be seen as a strength of the EU position, and can be contrasted with the more controlled communications that are seen to be characteristic of US and Chinese diplomacy. One consequence of this disparity between 'who speaks for Europe' and who speaks for the US and China is inevitably the prospect of differentiated multilateralism – in other words, the exclusion of the EU from certain processes, or (more subversively) the addressing of messages to the EU member states rather than to Brussels. The latter tactic, whether practised by the US or China, amounts to a conscious or unconscious 'divide and rule' approach to the Union, as noted by a variety of commentators (). The former can be seen in operation in such arenas as global environmental policy and certain aspects of currency management, where the G2 has played a role in

effectively marginalizing the EU and reducing its claim to leadership in key multilateral processes (Vogler 2011; Foot and Walter 2011).

Representation and communication thus have a lot to tell us about what happens in detailed processes of multilateral interactions between the EU, the US and China. No less does the third component of diplomatic interaction: negotiation. As already noted, the development and differentiation of multilateral contexts in which the EU, the US and China are engaged produces the possibility of negotiations carried on within interlinked and overlapping contexts, by a variety of representatives addressing themselves to a series of linked issues and potential outcomes. This means that the diplomatic process becomes one in which there is a variety of participants and stakeholders, and in which networked negotiations can complement if not supplant traditional government to government processes (Hocking and Smith 2010; Cooper et al 2008). Crucially, this complex pattern of involvement in a conduct of negotiations varies significantly between issue areas: financial and macro-economic negotiations such as those carried on within the key multilateral arenas might be conceived of as forms of 'high politics', but they are also informed by the involvement of a broad array of experts and commercial stakeholders. They also create problems of compliance, since agreements reached in multilateral contexts have to be implemented within domestic (or European) contexts and with the participation of a much broader array of participants whose interests may or may not have been served by the original negotiations and agreements.

Unsurprisingly, then, this means that negotiations in complex and interconnected contexts on complex and interconnected issues are open to (re)interpretation and to variable application. And equally unsurprisingly, this is one of the problems that are confronted by EU/US/Chinese interactions in key multilateral groupings. It is often noted that the EU and the US have markedly different approaches to such interactions, with the EU demonstrating a process orientation and the US a results orientation, and that this in turn reflects basic cultural and institutional differences between them; when we focus on the trilateral relationship between these two and China, it becomes clear that there is yet another dimension, with the Chinese seeing their involvement as predominantly directed towards the preservation of their relative autonomy, recognition of their status and defence of the 'modernisation project'. During 2009 and 2010, this primarily manifested itself in Chinese manoeuvrings related to currencies and the international value of the RMB, but this in turn was linked with the broader issues of international coordination and management outlined above.

Conclusions

This paper has argued that we need to subject EU/US/China relations in multilateral arenas to a more forensic examination than those that have previously been conducted. In doing so, it has pursued the kind of arguments that have recently begun to emerge (for example) about the links between US/China relations and world order (Foot and Walter 2011), and about the implications of the EU/US/China 'diplomatic triangle' for management of the broader world order (Ross et al 2010). Primarily it has tried to set an agenda

for further detailed empirical investigation of these processes, and tried to establish some clear analytical categories that might be helpful to such investigation. Given the proliferation of multilateral arenas and the accumulation of experience of the ways in which the EU, the US and China have interacted through them and around them during the past five years or so, there is now the basis for more detailed empirical work and thus a clear need for clarification of key ideas.

The conclusions are several. First, the paper has attempted to validate the need for what might be termed 'multi-focal' research in this area, by advancing a framework with three key components: strategic engagement (which asks broadly why parties become involved in multilateral processes), political commitment (which asks why and how those parties once engaged adopt certain positions and orientations) and diplomatic interaction (which asks why and how the detailed processes of representation, communication and negotiation lead to particular forms of diplomatic interactions, and relates these interactions to specific outcomes). My argument is that each of these three components is necessary to an understanding of what is going on in EU/US/China relations, and none of them provides a sufficient understanding on its own.

A second conclusion is that we should not be looking for comprehensive multilateral solutions to current issues of world order. The analysis put forward in this paper suggests that we should focus instead on the implications of what Richard Haass has termed 'messy multilateralism', and others have

termed 'functional multilateralism' (Haass 2010; Wissenbach 2007; see also Grant and Valasek 2007). Although these terms in themselves raise questions, they capture the phenomenon that this paper has identified: the proliferation of differentiated multilateral groupings and arenas that often overlap and are linked, perhaps in a designed manner and often by circumstances. Given this reality, analysis should focus on precisely those areas of overlap and linkage, and the types of diplomatic processes that they generate, whether these are characterised as 'bi-multilateral' or in other terms.

A third conclusion is that the argument put forward here is not simply an abstract or theoretical one. The components in the framework set out in the paper should be easily recognisable to officials and others engaged in the processes it has tried to penetrate, and should in principle lead to policy prescriptions. In the first place, the paper argues for a strong awareness of the different levels at which relations are conducted, and of the need for policy to link these levels. Strategic design by itself is likely to be ineffective without an accompanying consciousness of the ways in which issues of political commitment and diplomatic process can undermine or reinforce the best laid plans; a concentration on the politics of positioning cannot be truly effective without an awareness of the ways in which structural factors and the details of process can constrain or divert activity; and a focus on diplomatic process to the exclusion of the factors operating at the systemic and the 'meso' levels is unlikely to be effective. These prescriptions apply in principle to all three of the EU, the US and China, but with different implications for each of them. They

also allow for the fact that the steady accumulation of interactions between the three parties in a variety of context will lead to forms of policy learning and adaptation that can shape the future prospects for their continuing contributions to the building of world order.

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