

New Horizons in European Studies

Aston University, 24-25 April 2014

Conference papers are works-in-progress - they should not be cited without the author's permission. The views and opinions expressed in this paper are those of the author(s).

www.uaces.org

‘The EU and the Rise of China: The Neglect of the Military Dimension’

**Claude Zanardi, King’s College London (KCL) – War Studies,
claudezanard@gmail.com; claudia.zanardi@kcl.ac.uk**

Paper to Be Presented at the UACES Conference – Birmingham, 24-25 April 2014

Abstract

Over the past decades, the shift of power towards East has been enhancing the relevance of Asia. A major driver has been China’s rise made possible by its opening up policy and rapid economic growth. Its parallel military modernisation is significantly modifying the balance of power in Asia. While China’s Ground Forces have been downsized, the other services have been allocated more resources to boost their programmes of weapon acquisition, indigenous weapons development and training. Thanks to these growing capabilities, the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) is increasingly operating outside its traditional theatre of confidence (e.g. contribution of the PLA Navy to the international counter-piracy operation in the Gulf of Aden).

The new Strategic Guidance for the Department of Defence (MoD) and the ‘Pivot to Asia’ of the Obama Administration recognise the strategic relevance of this power shift towards Asia.’ And what about the European Union (EU)? This is the object of this paper. It will show that although the progress brought by the Lisbon Treaty (e.g. establishment of a European diplomatic service) and the upgrade of the EU-China relationship to a ‘strategic partnership’, the Sino-European relations remain mainly economical: their political and military dimensions have been neglected as well as the challenges that China’s military modernisation poses to the EU. The adoption of a European maritime strategy may be a step in the right direction since this may help develop a broader common security policy while further strengthening the relationship with the Chinese Army. Nevertheless, more attention should be paid to develop the EU-China Military dimension.

The Power Shift towards Asia & the EU

Over the past decades, the shift of power towards East has been enhancing the relevance of Asia. A major driver has been China’s rise made possible by its opening up policy and subsequent rapid economic growth. The parallel upgrade of its Army has been significantly modifying the balance of power in Asia. While its Ground Forces have been downsized, the other services have been allocated more resources to foster their programmes of weapon

acquisition, indigenous weapon development and training. Thanks to these growing capabilities, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) is now increasingly operating outside its traditional theatre of confidence (e.g. contribution of the PLA Navy to the international counter-piracy operation in the Gulf of Aden).

The new Strategic Guidance for the Department of Defence (MoD) and the 'Pivot to Asia' of the Obama Administration¹ recognise the strategic relevance of this power shift towards Asia. Previously, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton acknowledged that the Twenty first century 'will be America's Pacific century [...] the future of politics will be decided in Asia [...] and the United States will be right at the centre of the action.'² But what has been going on this side of the Atlantic? Does the European Union (EU) have developed its own comprehensive policy towards Asia, a 'European rebalancing' as some argues?³ Does a common view exist in Brussels?

Some researchers believe that a EU Pivot to Asia exists which 'provides a broadly complementary – rather than alternative – political presence to that of the US;⁴ they explain that the EU has been implementing its own pivot to Asia through its reengagement 'with the region both through bilateral 'strategic partnerships' (China, India, Japan and South Korea) and through multilateral cooperative schemes, e.g. by adhering to the ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) and joining the ASEAN Regional Forum in 2012.'⁵ Finally, on 6th of December last year, the EU became a member of the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP) through its leading lead institution (the European Union Institute of Security Studies (EUISS)).⁶ The CSCAP is a track-2 multilateral informal forum created in 1993, which discusses security issues in the region and provides recommendations to ASEAN. Therefore, these initiatives aiming at increasing the EU involvement in building an Asian security architecture and debating security issues in the region are viewed as proofs of a European pivot.

Some others, such as Javier Solana, former High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy of the EU, speak about the necessity for the EU to implement a 'smart pivot to Asia.'⁷ According to him, this European smart pivot would differentiate itself from the hard nature of the American Pivot or rebalancing and it would include three dimensions: trade, regional integration and finally a sort of 'global issues,' mainly energy cooperation. Hence, once again, the EU should play the role of 'civilian power'⁸ or of 'normative power'⁹ while

¹ 'We will of necessity rebalance toward the Asia-Pacific region', in: US Department of Defence, *Sustaining US Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defence*, Washington, The White House, 3rd January 2012

http://www.defence.gov/news/Defence_Strategy_guidance.pdf

² Liberthal, K. 'The American Pivot to Asia', *Foreign Policy*, 21st December 2012

³ Casarini, N. 'The European Pivot', *EUISS Issue Alert*, March 2013,

http://www.iss.europa.eu/uploads/media/Alert_Asia.pdf

⁴ Casarini, N. 'The European Pivot', *EUISS Issue Alert*, March 2013,

http://www.iss.europa.eu/uploads/media/Alert_Asia.pdf

⁵ Pejsova, E. 'East Asia's security architecture – track two,' *EUISS Issue Alert*, 18, 2014

http://www.iss.europa.eu/uploads/media/Alert_18_East_Asia_security.pdf

⁶ 'New Member: CSCAP EU,' *CSCAP Latest News*, 6th December 2013

<http://www.cscap.org/index.php?mact=News,cntnt01,detail,0&cntnt01articleid=39&cntnt01origid=51&cntnt01dateformat=%25d%20%25b&cntnt01returnid=31>

⁷ Solana, J. 'Europe's Smart Asian Pivot,' *Project Syndicate*, 17 September 2013

<http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/the-eu-s-startegic-advantages-in-asia-by-javier-solana>

⁸ Duchêne, F. 'Europe's Role in World Peace' in Mayne, R. (Ed.) (1972) *Europe Tomorrow: Sixteen Europeans Look Ahead*, London: Fontana

neglecting any development of its defence and security policy. Others, such as myself, can only take notice of the European lack of political coherence towards the rise of China: there cannot be a 'European pivot to Asia' due to the lack of resources, military basis, comprehensive foreign policy as well as of political will within the EU member states.

In other words, the EU is far from being able to rebalance to Asia. Although the progress brought by the Lisbon Treaty (e.g. establishment of a European diplomatic service) and the upgrade of the EU-China relationship to a 'strategic partnership', the Sino-European relations remain mainly economical: their political and military dimensions have been neglected and a European debate is missing on the challenges that China's military modernisation poses to the EU.

EU-China Relations: Neglecting Military & Security Dimensions

During the Cold War, the US perception of the new China as a communist threat deeply influenced the European countries' perception of China. The bipolar order constrained strongly Europe's room of manoeuvre since the old continent became the major theatre of the ideological conflict between the two superpowers. This is why Shambaugh illustrates the relations between Europe and China until the end of the Cold War as 'derivative',¹⁰ a pure reflection of the American approach. In other words, the state of the relations between the PRC and European countries was dictated by the confrontation between the US-URSS. The last years of the Cold War coincided with the Tiananmen Square massacre and the consequent embargo imposed by the US and Europe against the People's Republic of China (PRC). Things changed slowly after the Soviet collapse when Europe lost its strategic status for the US and thus regained more room of manoeuvre internationally.¹¹

The EU has growing interests in keeping security in Asia but lacks a strategic approach to the region and the knowledge of the PLA's modernisation which is reshaping the balance of power in that region. Overall, the EU and its member states have not only economic interests but also security interests in keeping regional stability, avoiding conflict breakout because of the risk of escalation, maintaining the freedom of navigation, improving energy and environmental security.¹² Nevertheless, although Europe's long-term economic interests require the investment of resources and the formulation of the more efficient way to defend them, until now the formulation of the 'US rebalance to Asia' does not have any correspondent at the EU level. The EU is also present in Asia by the joint and individual action of its member states. Increasing interdependence makes events such as China's interruption of rare earth exports (2010) highly disruptive for others economies. Among its member states France and the UK also have territories in Asia but contrary to the US they have no military bases. Thus, Beijing does not perceive the EU and its member states as a threat; rather the EU is a contributor to regional security (e.g. Aceh, the Mindanao peace process in The Philippines).

⁹ On a summary of the debate on Europe as a civilian, military or normative power see Manners, I., 'Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?' *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 40 (2), 2002. 235-58

¹⁰ Shambaugh, D. (1996), *China and Europe: 1949-1995*, London: SOAS

¹¹ Shambaugh, D. (1996), *China and Europe: 1949-1995*, London: SOAS

¹² Stares, P., & Regaud, N. 'Europe's Role in Asia-Pacific Security,' *Survival*, 39 (4), Winter 1997-1998

The history of the Sino-European relations is now approaching four decades as the European Economic Community (EEC) established diplomatic relations with the PRC in 1975; since then, their economic dimension were boosted while the political field remained underdeveloped, the military and security initiatives neglected. This was demonstrated by the 1985 Agreement on Trade & Economic Cooperation between Brussels and Beijing. Although the EU has promoted the Asian multilateral institutionalisation (ASEAN Regional Forum and Asia-Europe Meeting ASEM)

In 1995, the European Commission stated that ‘with the ban of contacts between military personnel now lifted, the political and economic influence of the People’s Liberation Army makes it appropriate to include the People’s Liberation Army among potential dialogue partners [and] China and the EU can now discuss mutual interests and find common ground on the full range of political and security issues.’¹³ Nevertheless, no steps had been taken since to translate that statement to any practical decision: ‘the absence of military and security issues in the initiative [of 1995] is due to the fact that the EU does not yet have a common security policy, and defence cooperation takes place in a purely bilateral context and via NATO. This is not to imply that China is unimportant as a military and security actor to the EU, but rather that technically it cannot include security matters in its external relations in the absence of EU-mandated security role and identity.’¹⁴

The European Concept of 2001 recognised the need for ‘strengthening of the EU’s political and economic presence,’¹⁵ despite the first ever European Security Concept (2003)¹⁶, the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), a Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the establishment of the EEAS, no major developments took place in the EU-China security and military relations. It was only in 2003 that the relations between the EU and the PRC were upgraded at an unspecified ‘strategic partnership’¹⁷ to include issues such as non proliferation or Asian security. A new high level dialogue on strategic and foreign policy issues was later established between the EU High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy and her counterpart in China. Some experts on EU-China relations such as Casarini highlight the transition from the constructive engagement to a strategic partnership level as a significant step in the Sino-European relations.¹⁸ Nonetheless, the EU is far from developing a strategic position towards China and no European coherent strategy towards China’s military modernisation exists.

In fact, since Deng Xiaoping’s ‘Open Door Policy’ (1978) the European perception of the PRC has been traditionally linked to the growing bilateral trade while the political and military dimensions have been neglected. This is also linked to the nature of the European

¹³ European Commission, ‘A Long Term Policy for China-Europe Relations’, COM (1995)0279/final http://eeas.europa.eu/china/docs/com95_279_en.pdf

¹⁴ Shambaugh, D. (1996), *China and Europe: 1949-1995*, London: SOAS. 27

¹⁵ Commission of the European Communities, *Communication from the Commission. Europe and Asia: A Strategic Framework for Enhanced Partnership*, COM (2001) 469 final, Brussels: 4 September 2001 http://ec.europa.eu/development/icenter/repository/strategy_asia_2001_en.pdf

¹⁶ European Commission, *A Secure Europe in a Better World: European Security Strategy*, Bru cember Desels, 12 December 2003

¹⁷ The 1985 EU-China Trade and Cooperation Agreement was updated to the level of Strategic Partnership in 2003. This meant that it included new areas such as foreign and security issues, climate change and global economy governance.

¹⁸ Casarini, N., ‘The Evolution of the EU-China Relationship: from Constructive Engagement to Strategic Partnership’, *EUISS Occasional Paper 64*, 1 October 2006

integration process and the characteristics of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP): in fact, this European deficit of a coherent strategy to address the PLA build-up reflects the focus on trade and economy of the European integration process. However, this shortage in Brussels is not mirrored at EU member states' level where debates are rising. The uploading of these national debates on the challenges posed in the long term by the modernisation of the PLA may serve as a trigger to start a European debate which will likely bring to the definition of an EU comprehensive strategy to address the rise of China. In particular, two are the countries likely to contribute the most to this uploading process: France and the UK. This is because they have the capabilities, the interests and traditionally dynamic foreign and defence policy inherited by their former status of great powers.¹⁹

Generally, EU member states' perception of China's military modernisation is not as negative as the American perception. As stressed by several experts such as the French Admiral (Rtd) Dufourcq or the British Kerry Brown this is mainly due to the geographical distance between China and Europe: it plays an important role in shaping their mutual perceptions. Although geography does matter (tyranny of distance)²⁰ and the relationship between the PRC and each EU member states are unique due to historical reasons, the political and military perception of the PLA's modernisation in EU member states is still widely impacted by the American perception. This does not mean that differences among European countries' perception on China's RMA are irrelevant; rather, the EU Member states often view China through the American lenses and dissimilarities among their perceptions are likely to be nuanced by their alignment to their traditional ally.

The Taboo of the EU Arms Embargo and the Issue of Dual-use Technology Transfer

A crucial issue in China-EU relations is the issue of the arms embargo imposed by the EU towards the PRC in the aftermath of the Tiananmen repression. In an international context of economic crisis and austerity policies where military budgets are shrinking in all EU member states with the exception of Poland, China's expanding defence expenditures may profit the European military industry. Its soaring demand of weapons and equipment may help the European defence industries to cope with the declining orders in the defence sector made even more relevant by the budget cuts required by the economic crisis. Nevertheless, two major problems weaken this option.

First, the existence of the arms embargo, even if the EU member states often use a 'flexible interpretation' of the ban to allow military technology sales to China. Secondly, the military equipment sold to China will inevitably pass through the reverse engineering procedure to boost its indigenous capabilities. This would only accelerate the capacity and the performance of the Chinese military industries as a competitor to European defence industries.

¹⁹ Lehne, S. 'The Big Three in EU Foreign Policy,' Carnegie Endowment, 5 July 2012, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2012/07/05/big-three-in-eu-foreign-policy/ck4c>

²⁰ See Blainey, G. (1966) *The Tyranny of Distance: How Distance Shaped Australia's History*, who described how much the great distance between Australia and Great Britain shaped Australia's history. The idea that the great distance between China and Europe limits their interaction is increasingly challenged by the development of communications, global economic and security challenges.

The European approach towards the embargo has proven to be different from the American approach. EU member states have made several attempts to remove the embargo. For instance, in 2005 Beijing did not grab the European proposition to put Human Rights (HRs) as the precondition to lift the embargo. In any case, the European attempt was overcome by the U.S. strong opposition. The American pressure was so powerful that Casarini speaks of 'realignment of the EU foreign and security policy in China and East Asia on the position of the United States' following the failure to lift the arms embargo towards the PRC in 2005.²¹ Later, when in 2010 the Spanish presidency promised to push for lifting the embargo, the PRC did not even react to the Spanish declaration as the EU had lost any autonomy to Beijing's eyes.

The European policy towards arms sales is also ruled by a Code of Conduct on arms export (1998) which is voluntary and a Common Position (2008) 'defining common rules governing control of exports of military technology and equipment.'²²

The transfer of civilian technology with potential military application, the so-called double-use technology, also undermines the long-term European capacity to preserve its supremacy in military technology. For example, a significant number of European - but also American and Israeli - technology have been used by the Chinese Aviation industry which is fast becoming a competitor for Western companies.

Hence, technology transfers but also stolen technologies (espionage) are areas where the EU should act in a careful and unified way.²³ This was clear when China gained technological competences in participating to the European Galileo Programme which served to build its own global positioning system, Baidu with obvious military application. The problem has been widely treated by May-Britt Stumbhaum who called for the EU to address the issue of 'double-use technology'²⁴ in a thoroughly manner. Technology transfers represent a major problem since European companies are also tempted to act individually while negotiating with China. The gloomy expectations of economic growth could undermine the position of European industries compared with China's position as China represents a growing market with a huge potential development. Member countries' national champions may opt for a bilateral approach that would stress the lack of coordination among member countries in the military industry and thus undermine further the European level approach.

These issues are complicated further by the fact that 'Chinese enterprises, state or non-state, and no matter what sector or size, have the responsibility, should they be required by the political authorities, to share what technology they have. The Party-state defines national security and interest as largely those that suit its own purposes and feel they have the moral and political justification to call in any technology that is useful to them, no matter what the arrangements with specific partners in the country and outside actors. This has made the sharing of technology with companies in the PRC particularly sensitive and

²¹ Casarini, N. (2009) *Remaking Global Order. The Evolution of Europe-China Relations and its Implications for East Asia and the United States*, Oxford: Oxford University Press. 3

²² Council of the EU, 'Council Common Position 2008/944/CFSP, of 8 December 2008 defining common rules governing control of exports of military technology and equipment' <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2008:335:0099:0103:EN:PDF>

²³ French and British Government Representatives, Personal Interviews

²⁴ Stumbhaum, May-Britt, 'Risky Business? The EU, China and the Dual-use Technology, *EUISS Occasional Paper*, 80, 9 October 2009

means that foreign enterprises have had to devise a number of protective measures or simply accept that once their technology is available in the country it is available to all.²⁵

The European Commission has played a role in establishing a European defence market: in particular, since the second half of the 2000s, it 'has become more proactive in using its market-making powers to push for greater integration of the EU market for armaments. It has worked closely with the inter-governmental European Defence Agency (EDA) on this issue' and 'the Commission's role in promoting a European military-industrial complex which is crucial for a powerful and autonomous CSDP is likely to grow in the future.'²⁶ Nevertheless, the European defence market remains highly fragmented.

The Communist Party of China (CPC) has been cultivating nationalistic sentiments in the population (e.g. patriotic education). As Chinese nationalism is soaring, the political leadership may decide to play the nationalistic card abroad to boost its legitimacy domestically. *China Can Say No*, first of a series of successful nationalistic books, is on the same line of outspoken nationalists such as Gen. Liu Yuan or Col. Liu Mingfu among a long cohort of growing Chinese nationalists.²⁷ As the new Chinese leadership seems more nationalistic and the military more influential in China's foreign policy, a new push from Beijing to lifting the arms embargo is probable. What would the European answer be? May the EU consider removing the embargo and replacing it with a stricter and more comprehensive legislation on arms and dual-use technologies?²⁸

PLA's Growing Presence Abroad & EU-China Military Contacts

The general trend in Asia seems towards an increasing militarisation. However, if someone speaks about an Asian arms race,²⁹ others prefer to speak about 'modernisation' instead.³⁰ Overall, it is clear that the Chinese military upgrade is modifying the balance of power in Asia, a significant trend which had already been pointed out by Shambaugh in the mid-1990s.³¹ China's economic interests have expanded widely and the unprecedentedly presence of its companies and citizens abroad has raised the demand for protection. The PRC's mounting needs to secure huge energy requirements have had unexpected

²⁵ Brown, K. & Zanardi, C. 'The Chinese Military: Its Political and Economic Function', in Stavrianakis, A. & Selby, (eds) (2012) *Militarism and International Relations: Political Economy, Security and Theory*, Cass Military Series, London: Routledge

²⁶ Merlingen, M. (2011) *What Is the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy?*, London: Rienner Publisher. 51

²⁷ Hughes, C. R. (2011) 'The enduring function of the substance/essence (Ti/Yong) Dichotomy in Chinese Nationalism' in Callahan, W. A. and Barabantseva, E. (eds.) *China Orders the World: Soft Power and Normative Foreign Policy*, NY: The Johns Hopkins University Press; Hughes, C. R. (2011) 'Reclassifying Chinese Nationalism: the Geopolitik Turn', *Journal of Contemporary China*, 20 (71). 601-620

²⁸ High-ranking French representative

²⁹ 'Asia's New Arms Race', *WSJ*, 12 February 2011

<http://online.esj.com/article/SB10001424052748704881304576094173297995198.html>; Huxley, T.

'Controlling Asia's Arms Race', *DefenceNews*, 30 March 2011

<http://www.defencenews.com/article/20110530/DEFPEAT05.105300308/Controlling-Asia-s-Arms-Race>; Joshi,

S. 'The Arms Race Myth', *NYT*, 23 April 2012

<http://india.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/04/23/the-arms-race-myth/>

³⁰ Bill Edgar quoted in 'Military Spending in South-East Asia. Shopping Spree', *The Economist*, 24 March 2012

³¹ Shambaugh, D. 'Growing Strong: China's Challenge to Asian Security', *Survival*, Summer 1994. 43-59

consequences on China's foreign policy. As its economic interests have spread out of Asia, China has become deeply involved in other countries' domestic issues and nowadays the PLA defends Chinese economic interests in Africa, Latin America and other parts of the world.

China has increasingly been contributing to UN Peace-keeping operations (PKOs). As it has been willing to contribute to PKOs, especially in Africa, this has increased the contacts between European and Chinese military personnel. For several reasons, spanning from terrorism to drug trafficking, instability, immigration, etc, Africa represents an important continent for ensuring Europe's stability. The role played by China under the UN framework is developing further and the EU needs to create the channels for working efficiently with their Chinese counterparts. For instance, at the end of 2013, for the first time China sent military troops to Mali under the UN Integrated Multidimensional Force in Mali (MINUSMA) under UN Security Council Res. 2100/2013. Hence, between November 2013 and January 2014, China sent contingent of 395 peacekeepers including engineers and 70 medical staff members.³² This confirms Beijing's positive contribution to maintain security in Africa, even if its role does not have to be overestimated. There is a huge gap in training, skills, operational capabilities between the Chinese and the European blue helmets. Usually, China limits itself to send medical, logistic or engineering staff whose language skills make often default.

Since December 2008, the PLA Navy is also engaged in an international counter-piracy operation along the coast of Somalia. A French independent military expert, Alfonsi, stresses that the Atalanta Operation represented a great challenge for the PLA Navy: this counter-piracy operation is not a mere maritime patrol operation. Rather, it implies the use of Landing Helicopter Dock (LHD), legal expertise, etc., and they also had to use harbours in Djibouti, Yemen and Oman for refuelling.³³ In addition to being deployed in the Gulf of Aden, in 2011 the PLAN contributed limitedly to the evacuation of around 36,000 Chinese citizens from Libya. In January and February 2014, the PLA Navy together with the Russian, Danish and Norwegian Navies escorted Syrian chemical weapons³⁴ and in January 2014 it made joint drills with the Russian in the East of the Mediterranean.³⁵

In 2010, a Chinese military ship had already made its appearance in the Mediterranean: the 'Peace Ark', a hospital ship of the PLAN launched in 2010, made several missions providing free care to people's in several countries. All these examples demonstrate that the PLA may be a positive contributor to enhance international security in different ways. They also demonstrate that there is an increasing need for manage growing interactions between European armies and the PLA. As the modernisation trend of the PLA has been positive over more than two decades with the exception of 2010 and the PLA is catching-up faster than

³² 'Chinese Peacekeepers in Mali's Northern Town of Gao', *Xinhua*, 17 January 2014
http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2014-01/17/c_133053773.htm

³³ 'L'Evolution de la Posture Stratégique de la Chine depuis la Guerre Froide', Journée d'Etudes de l'IRSEM, Paris, Ecole Militaire, 20 Janvier 2012

³⁴ 'Chinese navy completes escort mission of transporting Syria's chemical weapons,' *People's Daily*, 13 February 2014. <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90786/8534903.html>

³⁵ 'Russian-Chinese Naval Training Exercise Begins in Mediterranean', *Ria Novosti*, 25 January 2014
http://en.ria.ru/military_news/20140125/186916270/Russian-Chinese-Naval-Training-Exercise-Begins-in-Mediterranean.html

Western analysts had forecasted,³⁶ the development of its military relationships with other countries is increasingly relevant.

In 1994 military contacts resumed between EU member states and the PRC. However, as the European Communities lacked any military dimension, military-to-military contacts remained between single European country and China. Military exchanges and training for Chinese officers started in European military academies and institutions; for instance, since 1996, there are two Chinese officers trained every year at the *École de Guerre* in Paris³⁷ and the same has been happening in other EU member states such as the UK or Germany. The establishment of the EEAS through the Lisbon Treaty introduced new developments as it poses the basis for a more structured network of EU diplomatic representations around the world. The development of EU-China military-to-military contacts may enhance the European knowledge of the PLA and may contribute to provide global commons such as the freedom of navigation. As nationalism seems growing within the PLA, a high-level dialogue with China's military elites may also reduce bilateral mistrust. Non-traditional security threats not only as piracy, but also as energy and environmental security may be another promising platform for developing cooperation.

In the case of China, Beijing was pushing to deepen its defence cooperation with the EU.³⁸ Hence, in October 2011, the EU High-Representative Catherine Ashton met with the then China's Minister of Defence, General Liang and called for enhancing Sino-European military contacts firstly established during the counter-piracy operation EUNAVFOR Atalanta (December 2008). They restated their intention in 2012 when met again in Beijing: they addressed 'crisis management and anti-piracy [and] agreed to develop bilateral cooperation on defence. Not only was a High-Level Orientation Seminar on Security and Defence organised in March 2013 with European and Chinese diplomats, defence staff and academia but on an operational side joint training is being investigated and meetings between Chinese and European officers is being encouraged³⁹.

At the 4th round of the EU-China Strategic Dialogue in November 2013, the post of EU 'security advisor' was created in Beijing; the title was chosen to avoid member states' opposition to a 'EU military attaché'.⁴⁰ Since he will represent the EU military establishment and the EU has no army, he will have more a symbolic relevance. Nevertheless, its creation has removed an obstacle to EU-China security cooperation which was 'the lack of counterparts for Chinese military personnel'.⁴¹ This will contribute to modify the perception

³⁶ Military experts, Personal Interviews

³⁷ Col. Stéphane Samaran, Director of the 'International Affairs' Office at *École de Guerre*, 11 March 2014

³⁸ 'China to promote defence cooperation with the EU: defence ministry', *Xinhua*, 26 October 2011 http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/china/2011-10/26/c_131214225.htm; and 'Catherine Ashton discusses defence cooperation in China', *EU Security and Defence News*, 52, 28 October 2011 <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms/data/docs/pressdata/en/esdp/125776.pdf>

³⁹ Fiott, D. 'China and the Common Security and Defence Policy' 28 November 2013 http://www.europeangeostrategy.org/2013/11/china-csdp/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=china-csdp&utm_source=Newsletter&utm_campaign=552842f773-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_9661fbbba2-552842f773-81432701

⁴⁰ Brussels, Personal Interview

⁴¹ May-Britt U. Stumbaum, 'Europe's Views on China's Role in International Security', in van der Putten, F.-P. & Shulong, Chu (2011) *China, Europe and International Security: Interests, Roles and Perspectives*, NY: Routledge.

of the EU as more than just an economic power.⁴² Furthermore, he will implement practical military functions such as liaising with the PLAN to better coordinate on counterpiracy operations, provide a more direct contact between the PLA and the EU as well as more pieces of information about the PLA. According to sceptical analysts, this position would not add any value to the EU representation in China; rather, he will have just a figurative position with no real power and perform mere administrative tasks.⁴³ Moreover, his tasks would be undermined not only by the fragmentation of the CSDP but also by the fact that Chinese military personnel would not perceive him as a credible post.

Conclusions

Overall, this paper has shown that there have been several positive trends in Sino-European military interactions, particularly in recent years. This is the case of increasing contacts between the PLA and single EU member states armies as well as with the EU Military Staff (EUMS). As demonstrated at the 15th EU-China Summit: Towards a stronger EU-China Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, the two parts took many important initiatives to 'intensify their foreign and security policy dialogue on global and regional issues at all levels. They encouraged regular contacts between special representatives and special envoys. Both sides committed to holding a regular dialogue on defence and security policy, increasing training exchanges [and] affirmed and highlighted the continued good cooperation in the field of crisis management, counter-piracy and maritime security.'⁴⁴

The counter-piracy operation in the Gulf of Aden is unanimously recognised as a good example of positive interaction between the EU and China to provide security in that area and thus providing common goods. The formulation of an EU Maritime Strategy expected for June 2014⁴⁵ will be a step forward for the CSDP as it would certainly enhance the EU capacity to act as in a more unified way at least in maritime security. However, there is a greater need for a EU coherent vision and a comprehensive CSDP towards China and its military modernisation.

⁴² Personal Interviews

⁴³ French Military Officer, Personal Interview

⁴⁴ European Commission, Joint Press Communiqué - 15th EU-China Summit: Towards a stronger EU-China Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, Memo 12/693, Brussels, 20 Sept. 2012
http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-12-693_en.htm?locale=en

⁴⁵ European Commission – High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs & Security Policy, Joint Communication to the European Parliament & the Council, 'For an open and secure global maritime domain: elements for a European Union maritime security strategy,' JOIN(2014) 9 final, Brussels, 6 March 2014
http://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/policy/maritime-security/doc/join_2014_9_en.pdf