

# Introduction

**Gracia Abad**

Any analysis of the current state of international affairs would require devoting a great deal of its efforts to the examination of the People's Republic of China, its policies, its capabilities, its approaches, as well as its position regarding a wide range of issues. Not in vain, the People's Republic of China is a rising power whose attitudes and policies will have a direct impact on the future development of the international system and the international relations within.

Thus, the importance of the People's Republic of China status as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, the impressive growth of both its GDP and its Defence Budget over the last few years and its relatively good performance through the global financial and economic crisis are all factors that might recommend to pay attention to the evolution of this country.

Furthermore, the prominence of the People's Republic of China might not be accidental. On the contrary, it might be considered as a consequence of a deliberate Chinese strategy in line with the so called "Peaceful Rise" (a concept later replaced by the terms "peaceful development" and "harmonious development", at least in some circles close to the Chinese high officials). The new terminology was meant to ease the latent fears arising from the so called "China threat", a concern closely connected with the Chinese rise itself. Ultimately, these new concepts might be considered, at least to some degree, as a reaction to the continuous demands on China to ensure its responsive behaviour.

Moreover, the Chinese strategy might be in accordance with the diplomatic activism displayed by the People's Republic of China in many geographical areas and involving very diverse issues over the last few years, a diplomatic policy which appears to culminate the opening process initiated many years ago by Deng Xiao Ping.

The continuous efforts made by scholarship to provide an adequate answer to all these questions and their implications for the Chinese foreign policy and the international order itself might explain the current proliferation of publications aiming at analyzing different aspects of Chinese evolution and politics.

Thus together with more classical works giving account of the Chinese history like those of Buckley<sup>1</sup>, Dardess<sup>2</sup> or Fenby<sup>3</sup> and general works on China like those of Kissinger<sup>4</sup> and Dillon<sup>5</sup> among others, it is worth to mention scholars such as David Scott<sup>6</sup> or Liselotte Odgaard<sup>7</sup> who have authored a wide range of publications providing deep insights into the main features of China, its assets as well as its weaknesses. To that end, various dimensions of power are reviewed. These analyses are particularly useful as to assess Chinese likelihood to play a leading role in the next few years as well as the extent to which it will have to be considered a power with an important status in the international system. The contributions of Young Deng<sup>8</sup>, Guoli Liu<sup>9</sup>, Joseph S. Nye<sup>10</sup>, Gill Bates<sup>11</sup>, Samuel Kim<sup>12</sup> or Harsh V. Pant<sup>13</sup> might be mentioned at this point.

Besides, a great majority of publications have focused on the changes experienced by the Chinese foreign policy along with the links between those changes and the transformation experienced by the People's Republic of China in many other fields. In this point we should mention, for instance, the work of Andrew J. Nathan and

---

<sup>1</sup> Fenby, Jonathan *The Penguin history of modern China : the fall and rise of a great power, 1850-2008*, Penguin Books, London, 2008

<sup>2</sup> Dardess, John W. *Ming China, 1368-1644 : a concise history of a resilient empire*, Rowman& Littlefield, Lanham, 2012

<sup>3</sup> Fenby, Jonathan *The Penguin history of modern China : the fall and rise of a great power, 1850-2008* Penguin Books, London, 2008

<sup>4</sup> Henry Kissinger, *On China* Penguin Press, New York, 2011

<sup>5</sup> Dillon, Michael *Contemporary China : an introduction*, Routledge, London, 2009

<sup>6</sup> Scott, David *China Stands Up*, Routledge, Abingdom, 2007

<sup>7</sup> Odgaard, Liselotte, *The Balance of Power in Asia-Pacific Security*, Routledge, Abingdom, 2007

<sup>8</sup> Deng, Young y Wang, Fei-Ling *China: Power and Motivation in Chinese Foreign Policy*, Rowman and Littlefield, Oxford, 2005. See also Deng, Yong *China's Struggle for Status*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2008

<sup>9</sup> Liu, Guoli *Chinese Foreign Policy in Transition*, Aldine de Gruyter, New York, 2004

<sup>10</sup> Nye, Joseph "China's Re-emergence and the Future of the Asia-Pacific" in Liu, Guoli *Chinese Foreign Policy in Transition*, op. cit.

<sup>11</sup> Bates, Gill "Discussion of China: A responsible Great Power", *Journal of Contemporary China*, Vol 10 No 26 (2001) pp 27-32

<sup>12</sup> Kim, Samuel "China's Path to Great Power Status in the Globalization Era" in in Liu, Guoli *Chinese Foreign Policy in Transition*, op. cit.

<sup>13</sup> Pant, Harsh *China's Rising Global Profile*, Sussex Academic Press, Eastbourne, 2011

Bruce Gilley<sup>14</sup>, who give account of the dynamics, changes and evolution of Chinese leadership. Likewise, albeit from a different perspective, we have to mention the efforts of Mark Leonard to review the different schools of thought and approaches to the different issues currently existing in China<sup>15</sup>. Finally, some of these scholarly works have thoroughly looked at the changes taking place in Chinese foreign policy as a result of the “opening” process undergone since the late seventies by the People’s Republic of China.

In this context, special attention should also be paid to Liselotte Odgaard<sup>16</sup> for her scholarly contributions on the situation of security in Asia as well as the role played by the People’s Republic of China as regards security in Asia in general and the correlation of forces and the Regional Balance of Power in the area in particular. These approaches have conducted an in-depth analysis of the relations between China and some other powers in the region, notably, Japan and India. The work of Harsh V. Pant<sup>17</sup> can be mentioned also in this point.

In connection with that, an increasing number of works aimed at analysing the rise of China, its specific understanding of its own national security and its impact on the global security have recently flourished. These works are meant to assess to what extent China is either an adversarial, revisionist power or a *statu quo* power. These are issues on which Western and Chinese approaches frequently differ. Prominent scholars such as Kevin J. Cooney, Yoichiro Sato<sup>18</sup> or Russell Ong<sup>19</sup> are to be noted for their contribution in this realm.

In a similar vein, from a perspective of Political Economy, Shaun Breslin<sup>20</sup>, among others, has assessed the role and relevance of the People’s Republic of China in the Global Economy. He draws attention to the alternative economic model advanced for China and its impact on the relations between developing and developed countries<sup>21</sup>. Following this line of analysis, a number of academic works on the so called “Beijing Consensus” and its influence on Chinese Foreign Policy are worth mentioning here. That would be the case, for instance, of some works of Stephan Halper<sup>22</sup> or Joshua Kurlantzick<sup>23</sup>.

Also in connection with the Chinese understanding of its own security, a number of works provide useful insights into the Chinese approach to the human rights debate, their position as regards the US and European human rights policies and the widely shared view that Human Rights issues have been used by the West as an instrument to weaken the hegemonic position of China<sup>24</sup>.

Likewise, it is worth mentioning the contribution of a number of works dedicated to the question of Chinese increasing interest in multilateralism, a field in which the input of Guoyuang Wu, Helen Landsdowne<sup>25</sup> and Michael Yahuda<sup>26</sup>, among others, may be particularly remarkable. These scholars have made valuable attempts to explain how multilateralism, –and multipolarity–, have been seen by the PRC as a useful strategy to challenge US hegemony after the Cold War.

Finally, scholars such as Brzezinski<sup>27</sup>, Sutter<sup>28</sup>, Friedberg<sup>29</sup> and some others with different points of view and considering different sets of factors have tried to analyse the Chinese Foreign policy and how it conditions China’s relations with different areas and countries in the world, in particular with the US. In this context the likelihood for an eventual clash between the US and China in the future is assessed in some cases.

---

<sup>14</sup> Nathan, Andrew J. and Gilley, Bruce *China’s New Rulers: the secret files*, The New York Review of Books, New York, 2002

<sup>15</sup> Leonard, Mark *What does China Think?*, Harper Collins, London, 2008

<sup>16</sup> Odgaard, Liselotte, *The Balance of Power in Asia-Pacific Security*, op. cit.

<sup>17</sup> Pant, Harsh *China’s Rising Global Profile*, op. cit.

<sup>18</sup> Cooney, Kevin J. and Sato (Eds) *The Rise of China and International Security: America and Asia Respond*, Routledge, Abingdom, 2009

<sup>19</sup> Ong, Russell *China’s Security Interests in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Routledge, Abingdom, 2007

<sup>20</sup> Breslin, Shaun, *China and the Global Political Economy*, Palgrave McMillan, Basingstoke, 2007

<sup>21</sup> Peremboom Randall *China Modernizes: threat to the West or model for the rest?*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2007.

<sup>22</sup> Halper, Stephan *The Beijing Consensus: legitimizing authoritarianism in our time*, Basic Books, New York, 2010

<sup>23</sup> Kurlantzick, Joshua *Charm offensive: How China’s Soft Power is transforming the world*, Caravan Books, New York, 2007

<sup>24</sup> Kim, Mingyoung “Political Construction of Human Rights” in Cooney, Kevin J. and Sato (Eds) *The Rise of China and International Security: America and Asia Respond*, op. cit.

<sup>25</sup> Wu, Guoyuang and Landsdowne, Helen (Eds.), *China turns to Multilateralism*, Routledge, Abingdom, 2008

<sup>26</sup> Yahuda, Michael “China’s multilateral and regional order” in Wu, Guoyuang and Landsdowne, Helen (Eds.), *China turns to Multilateralism*, op. cit

<sup>27</sup> Brzezinski, Zbigniew “Balancing the East, Upgrading the West”, *Foreign Affairs* 91 N° 1 January/February 2012

<sup>28</sup> Sutter, Robert G., *Chinese Foreign Relations: Power and Policy since the Cold War*, Rowman and Littlefield, Plymouth, 2012

<sup>29</sup> Friedberg, Aaron L. *A Contest for Supremacy*, Norton, New York, 2011

No doubt there are numerous publications dedicated to China-Europe relations where different aspects of the bilateral relation are addressed. In this fashion, they pay attention to the bilateral dialogue, the areas for agreement and disagreement, mutual perceptions, trade, investment, institutional and legal frameworks for cooperation and so on. As an example we can mention the works of David Kerr and Liu Fei<sup>30</sup>, David Shambaugh<sup>31</sup>, Men Jing and G. Balducci, Nicola Cassarini, Robert S. Ross or Jens Hillebrand, among others.

In the aforementioned context, this book attempts to provide a slightly different perspective, looking at China's foreign policy from both the Chinese and the European standpoints. In other words this publication does not only provide a good account of the trends and characteristics of Chinese foreign policy but it also tries to illustrate the different understandings of the Chinese foreign policy actions embedded in both European and Chinese perceptions.

These different understandings are interesting in themselves but most importantly, they might set a solid basis for a joint effort to identify prospective opportunities for the reinforcement of China-EU cooperation while devising prospective areas where China-EU cooperation could be enhanced.

Thus, the book analyses the Chinese Foreign Policy by paying special attention to its goals and priorities, in particular regarding the Chinese approach to the different geographical areas in the world and the phenomenon of multilateralism and regionalism. Likewise, the Chinese position in respect to the different issues currently on the international agenda is also examined in detail.

This book constitutes an attempt to shed some light on the complexity and difficulties that the EU- China relationship might entail while showing up opportunities for cooperation for both actors.

The different chapters set the focus on a number of relevant issues that might have a decisive influence on the bloom or decline of the cooperation between China and the EU. The discussion gives the impression that, far from adopting a common stance, European and Chinese scholars have serious discrepancies regarding a number of fundamental aspects of international relations giving rise to some reasons for concern.

Nevertheless, the identification of those areas of disagreement and the enriching debate surrounding them are meant to serve well to the major purpose of the research project, which basically consist of fostering a more fruitful collaboration between China and the EU. In fact, the authors themselves seem to consider that there is some scope for greater cooperation between the EU and China.

The book is structured on the basis of nine chapters, illustrative of the growing importance of multilateralism and regionalism and the increasing interest in: the Chinese approach to those interaction patterns; the role and position of China in the framework of the Global Political Economy; the Chinese-EU relations, considering the China EU-Political Dialogue; the Chinese priorities in its relation with the EU; and the way the Chinese policy actions are perceived from the EU standpoint, both in the foreign policy and in the competition policy realms.

The first chapter prepared by Mario Telò presents a thorough analysis of the concept of multilateralism and the doctrinal debates that followed. In particular, it examines the crucial role that multilateralism has played over the last few decades and in recent times within the current complex and presumably multipolar international context.

This analysis is complemented by a comprehensive overview of the Chinese position in relation to multilateralism and multilateral initiatives displayed in recent times. The European perception of such approaches and the role China plays in them is subsequently examined.

The author goes beyond the formal analysis of the classic conceptions of multilateralism to provide an insightful conceptualisation of multilateralism as an effective tool for global governance. In this sense, Prof. Telò scrutinizes the conditions which such scenario would require. Among them, some concerns are raised regarding the necessary relaxation of Westphalian trends and dynamics, i.e. unipolarism, bilateralism and the balance of power. Similarly, some doubts are shed as to the introduction of changes aimed at ensuring that multilateral agreements are perceived as more efficient, legitimate and fair.

---

<sup>30</sup> Kerr, David and Fei, Liu (Eds.) *The International Politics of EU-China Relations*, OUP, Oxford, 2007

<sup>31</sup> Shambaugh, David and Sandschneid, Eberhard *China-Europe relations : perceptions, policies and prospects*, Routledge, Abingdon, 2008

According to the author, multilateralism could emerge as a genuine system for global governance rather than an instrument for the maintenance of a Westphalian order. In this view, multilateralism must be understood in such a way that it may serve as a vehicle for a “multilevel collective transnational action” involving states as well as civil societies as truly leading actors in international relations .

In the second chapter, Juliet Lodge and Angela Carpenter draw on the example of China and explain how the EU approaches towards third states in a multilateral model of international relations might contribute to build up a common position of Member States within the EU.

Subsequently, these scholars examine a number of areas where cooperation between the EU and China has already taken place. In this sense, it is noted that in most scenarios there is still some scope for stronger cooperation between both actors. Not in vain, the authors support the claim that the EU and China have become more engaged as a consequence of both, their increasing cooperation as well as their shared interests in a number of fields.

All in all, the authors also remind us of the fact that the EU and China compete in the global market for oil, food and raw materials, a factor that might be worth considering in their relations. It is precisely on these sensitive areas where multilateral diplomacy is most advisable and advances in cooperation are particularly difficult to achieve. A good example illustrating this claim is the ‘arms embargo’ imposed by the EU upon China. This particular case, unlike an arms embargo in the traditional sense, constitutes an interruption of military cooperation and arms trade with China subject to non-binding differential approaches of each EU Member State.

The authors hold an optimistic view on the future prospects of EU-China relations and they consider that a strong case for increased cooperation can be build on the basis of shared motivations and interests. In particular, in an attempt to enhance both their regional and their global influence, it is foreseeable that the EU and China may skilfully resort to the tools of multilateral diplomacy to strengthen their position in the area. The dynamics of this relation might contribute to the establishment of standards across a broad range of activities and policy areas to the advantage of the enhancement of EU-China cooperation. This scenario might operate in areas where both actors share common interests. Some examples might refer to the fight against organized international crime, fraud, piracy and counterfeiting; the promotion of enhanced cooperation with other regional organisations or the collaboration in priority areas such as climate change and energy, health, migration, education and culture; or policy reform in the area of security. In particular, the cooperation between the EU and China in the design of future policies in some of these areas might be of great importance.

Likewise, the authors underline the significance of two main issues where the potential room for mutual cooperation might arise:

Firstly, support for socio-economic reform, sustainable development, good governance and the rule of law might be a motivating factor for cooperation. This area seems to have replaced capacity building and rural development programmes as the main goal of the EU in its cooperation with China.

In this regard, among the new priorities for EU funding, education, trade and investment, human rights and environment will have to be considered. In this sense they mention how cultural region-to-region and vertical and horizontal multilateral diplomacy allow the exchange of experiences. In other words, the resort to multilateral diplomacy and forums where multilateral negotiation and dialogue can be conducted may contribute to promote cooperation and mutual understanding.

Secondly, Juliet Lodge and Angela Carpenter stress that the EU integration process itself is a good example of how the strategy of multilateralism may be conducive to the achievement of goals in the domestic realm. This case might be of interest for China in its efforts to overcome the fragmentation of its internal market. A more unified Chinese market would of course benefit China’s economic development, but it would also be highly beneficial for EU-China trade and business relations, as China’s fragmented market is frequently the cause of difficulties and misunderstandings in their relationship.

In Chapter 3 Maria-Eugenia Bardaro and Frederik Ponjaert, with a clearly innovative approach, and departing from more traditional analysis of Chinese foreign policy towards the Asian region, assess the extent to which we can consider that the PRC has managed to develop a specific approach to regional affairs where regionalism

and multilateralism constitute crucial aspects of the EU-China relations. Maria-Eugenia Bardaro and Frederik Ponjaert also examine to what extent we can consider that the PRC has indeed given rise to its own “Neighbourhood Policy” or an “Asian Neighbourhood Policy”.

The authors unveil the commonly mistaken assumptions underpinning most constructions of EU’s and China’s relations as comparable scenarios. Assuming that China is actually developing a coherent regional approach comparable to the European Neighbourhood Policy, the milestones and methods of both strategies may be similar. Nevertheless, their underlying models and implications are clearly different in the actual practice.

The European Neighbourhood Policy (hereinafter, the ENP) constitutes a clear example of these conceptual clashes. From the authors’ viewpoint, this policy was created as the result of a single multilateral effort on behalf of the EU Member States to include all their immediate neighbouring countries under a common frame so as to consider them as a single partner region. According to these scholars, this neighbouring policy was set up in a clear attempt to protect itself from external threats and regardless of region-building concerns.

In contrast to the EU position, China seems to have developed a very different approach which takes good account of the differences between its peripheries. All those differences together with its own strategic interests and goals as a rising power have been the defining elements in its strategy.

The EU, through its ENP, seems to have forgotten its initial interests in region-building and even its multilateral appeals, but China’s changing neighbourhoods might have provided an unparalleled opportunity to test and develop its own multilateral principles, which no doubt may have an impact on the East Asian reality.

In other words, whereas EU’s neighbourhood policies seem to be conceived as an efficient functional problem-solving tool, China’s diverse experiences of multilateralism in its neighbourhood give the impression of an instrumental, strategic approach to multilateralism with domestic, regional and global implications. The authors consider that “*Neighbourhood*” may well have been a testing-ground for multilateral functional governance, whereas China has found in its neighbouring regions a good area to test its geo-strategic approach towards multilateralism.

In Chapters 4 and 5 Chinese goals and priorities in economic and political terms are analysed from a Chinese point of view. Thus the chapters provide a valuable contribution as long as they permit to confront the Chinese view of their own goals in the economic and political fields with more commonly found Western analysis of these issues.

In particular, Chinese priorities and approaches to foreign relations constitute the focus of the fourth chapter, written by Xinning Song and Weiping Huang.

In this chapter, the authors outline the main characteristics of Chinese Foreign Policy under Hu Jintao, paying special attention to the different cases of developed countries, neighbouring countries and developing countries are examined.

Further, Xinning Song and Weiping Huang explain in the chapter the main conditions for a harmonious world, one of the supposed goals of Chinese Foreign Policy. In their opinion, two key words and five main elements should be present for that situation to emerge:

Those two key words are lasting peace and common prosperity.

Those five elements would be:

- (1) Politically, all countries should respect one another and conduct consultations on an equal footing in a common endeavour to promote democracy in international relations.
- (2) Economically, they should cooperate with one another; draw on one another’s strengths and work together to advance economic globalization in the direction of balanced development, shared benefits and win-win progress.
- (3) Culturally, they should learn from one another in the spirit of seeking common ground while shelving differences, respect the diversity of the world, and make joint efforts to advance human civilization.



(4) In the area of security, they should trust one another, strengthen cooperation, settle international disputes by peaceful means rather than by war, and work together to safeguard peace and stability in the world.

(5) On non-traditional security issues such as energy and climate change, they should assist and cooperate with one another in conservation efforts to take good care of the Earth, the only home of human beings.

Subsequently, these scholars look at the strategy and the tools set forth by the Chinese leadership to implement their foreign policy. This section continues with the analysis of China's role as a responsible power, the question of multilateralism and the importance of keeping a low profile stance. Next, the authors address the issue of the different understandings of multilateralism in both China and Europe, a topic dealt with throughout the book. In this regard, they explain how China considers multilateralism as a kind of inter-governmental arrangement useful to deal with common issues. In the context of the multilateral framework, all the sovereign states are equal to one another and the non-intervention in other's internal affairs principle is considered as the organizing principle, as the cornerstone. In this sense, China regards multilateralism as a diplomatic tool rather than a mechanism for the management of the international order. This conception of multilateralism is better understood if we take into account that the term "multilateral diplomacy" is frequently deployed in China.

Further, the authors continue to analyse the decisions China has made in its foreign policy and how these choices may determine the different levels of its foreign relations.

Last but not least, the chapter also analyses the Chinese Strategy for Economic Development, Chinese economic relations with both the US and the EU and the difficult question of the exchange rate of RMB.

In Chapter 5 Zhimin Chen, Bingran Dai, Zhongqi Pan and Chun Ding explore China's Priorities and Strategy in the sino-EU cooperation. Looking at the issue from the standpoint of the PRC, the authors reassess both the evolution of the European process itself and the evolution of the relations between China and the EU. On this basis, they highlight the difficulties encountered as a result of the disappointment following their strategic partnership and the unfulfilled potential of their relations. Thus, although the authors are aware that dramatic changes might not happen in the relationship overnight, particularly in the sensitive current context, they also agree on the need to develop their relations further. In fact, some opportunities to strengthen their links might arise in future scenarios.

They conclude the chapter with an analysis of the Chinese priorities in the relation with the EU in the near future with a special focus on the ways in which these relation might be better protected in the context of the new EU foreign policy framework. In this sense, they defend a pragmatic approach according to which China might have to deal simultaneously with the EU as a single actor on a bilateral basis, and with the different Member States at a multilateral level. Nonetheless, they remain optimistic as regards the future prospects of the relationship in the short run.

In contrast with this analysis of Chinese policies and goals from the Chinese point of view, in Chapter 6 Fernando Delage and Gracia Abad explain how Chinese approaches, actions and goals are perceived from the EU. The authors do not simply review Chinese policies from a European point of view as it is frequently done, but they analyse European perceptions of Chinese foreign policy.

Within this chapter would sound better, they give good account of the significant implications that China's policies may have for the current international order structure and governance, with special emphasis on the opportunities for cooperation arising from that situation. In this light, they explain how China's decision to join the international community has brought along some changes and challenges for the existing order but, at the same time, it has allowed China to be considered as one of the crucial actors in the globalisation process.

To a large extent, the impact of China's rise on the global trade system is the result of a combination of multiple factors among which we can mention China's exports, outflow investment, foreign aid policies and loans as well as its growing domestic demand. Likewise its growth pace and, consequently, its increasing consumption of energy and raw materials are influencing the prices and the access to these resources. These growing needs are undeniably the base for many Chinese Foreign Policy Actions and trends.

Most interestingly, these factors may explain why some reasons for concern might still remain in the current context, at least as it is perceived from an European standpoint. Thus, the EU resents what it considers as unfair competition in terms of labour and safety standards as well as protection of intellectual property rights, important aspects for Chinese and European “competitiveness” in the global markets. Finally, European governments are increasingly concerned with the growing trade deficit with China.

Similarly, the EU harbours the concern that China’s rise might become a major challenge to the EU’s social and economic model, already questioned as a consequence of the global economic and financial crisis which is having a particularly serious effect on the Euro zone.

Moreover, China’s growing presence in third world regions, notably Africa, constitutes an important cause of unrest for the EU, as this position threatens Europe’s traditional role as their main partner. This may not only confront EU economic interests but also weaken its ambitions as a global actor as well as its ability to promote its own values through its foreign policy.

The reform of the global governance architecture is another field to which the EU attaches great importance. The EU is also convinced that China, which is becoming a key actor in the world stage, might be a good partner in this realm.

However, the extent to which the EU and China share their goals as far as the reform of the global governance architecture is concerned remains an issue to be pondered in the future. To put it simply, it is far from clear if both, the EU and China, share the same expectations about global governance institutions.

The origin of many disagreements, as the authors explain, is likely to lie in the different stances that the EU and China have on foreign policy issues. Whereas China’s approach is predominantly realist, the EU maintains a liberal approach with elements of both institutionalism and idealism which may help to understand its normative approach as a global actor. These different conceptions may result in a contrasting situation where Europeans prefer a world shaped by institutions and rules managed through multilateral governance whereas the Chinese favour an international system based on the balance of power and the creation of a multipolar international order. These conceptual differences have given rise to a series of points of friction in the bilateral relationship, as Delage and Abad put forward.

All in all, the authors argue that even though the relationship between China and the United States might be considered as the most important geopolitical relationship of the 21<sup>st</sup> century because of their economic power and probable strategic competition, the China-EU relationship may be crucial as well. The consequences of these dynamics are various: should China and the EU manage to develop a friendly and productive strategic partnership, they would contribute positively to the emergence of a world where multilateral governance would become increasingly important, but if their relation becomes frosty, the scenario of competing blocks would become most likely.

In Chapter 7 Justo Corti and Alicia Sorroza revisit the relations between the European Union and China paying special attention to the most relevant aspect to take into account: the twofold approach to the EU and its institutions as a single international actor and, simultaneously, to the the EU Member States.

Along these lines, the authors examine the main channel through which the EU and China are meant to develop a firm and fruitful relation: the EU-China Political Dialogue and the efforts to build a strategic partnership.

Subsequently, the authors assess the contribution that the EU-China political dialogue has made in some specific fields, such as of the closely related issues of environment, energy and climate change. Achievements as well as shortcomings are identified in this analysis.

Similarly, Alicia Sorroza and Justo Corti conduct a thorough assessment on the impact that the global financial crisis and its effects on the Eurozone have had on the relation between the EU and China.

The authors explain with concern that although examples of effective cooperation between China and the EU are numerous, there are still some clashing points of view and contested issues in some areas.