

## The Broader Eurostrategic Orbit – Challenges and Perspectives

*Doris Vogl*



This chapter is dedicated to the broader strategic orbit of the European Union. There is no exact definition in the European Union’s Global Strategy (EUGS), as to which regions are located outside the European neighbourhood. The Global Strategy repeatedly refers to the “wider world” without indicating geographical details, like in the executive summary:

To promote the security and prosperity of our citizens and to safeguard our democracies, we will manage interdependence, with all the opportunities, challenges and fears it brings about, by engaging the wider world.<sup>1</sup>

A more detailed specification of the broader European strategic orbit refers to countries “to the East stretching into Central Asia, and to the South down to Central Africa” (EUGS, 2016, 9). The main goal of the European Union vis-a-vis countries along the Southern and Eastern vector is – as explained in the EUGS – to support the resilience of governmental and social structures. The development of “more effective” migration policies is stated as additional strategic objective.<sup>2</sup> For the South in particular, i.e. Africa, a comprehensive policy package is announced:

We will build stronger links between our trade, development and security policies in Africa, and blend development efforts with work on migration, health, education, energy and climate, science and technology, notably to improve food security.<sup>3</sup>

For the East, meaning Central Asia, European commitment intends “to support state-building and reconciliation processes in Afghanistan” (EUGS, 2016, 38) together with regional and international partners. In summary, it can be said that eurostrategic priorities for the South and East have remained largely the same since 2016 with a strong focus on resilience building and migration management.

Another more general commitment of the EUGS, with regard to engaging in the “wider world” across all regions, is the development of cooperative

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<sup>1</sup> EEAS (2016), *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe, A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy*, June 2016, 9. See also quote on page 17: “In fact, internal policies often deal only with the consequences of external dynamics. We will manage interdependence, with all the opportunities, challenges and fears it brings about, by engaging in and with the wider world.”

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., “State and Societal Resilience to our East and South,” 9. Original quote: “It is in the interests of our citizens to invest in the resilience of states and societies to the east stretching into Central Asia, and to the south down to Central Africa. [...] The EU will support different paths to resilience, targeting the most acute cases of governmental, economic, societal and climate/energy fragility, as well as develop more effective migration policies for Europe and its partners.”

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., “Africa,” 36.

relationships in order to bear global responsibility collectively.<sup>4</sup> However, no specific countries are named as potential partners of cooperation for global issues across the world, including the Low Earth Orbit and Outer Space. It is exactly under the headline “Cooperative Regional Orders” that the collaboration with major powers like the PR of China comes into play. The stated EUGS goal “to spur sharing global responsibilities”<sup>5</sup> accommodates, to some extent, in its fundamental objectives the Chinese narrative of the “community of common destiny for mankind.”<sup>6</sup>

### **Common findings for Africa, the Arabian Peninsula and Afghanistan**

In Part II of this publication, three contributions offer situational analyses on China’s footprint within the broader Eurostrategic orbit towards the South and the East: the African continent (Gerald Hainzl), the Arabian Peninsula in western Asia (Stephan Reiner) and Afghanistan in Central Asia (Markus Gauster). It is not easy to establish similarities between these inherently different locations in terms of their relationship with China, but it may nonetheless prove interesting:

- The first similarity shared by the three geographical areas is that they have a past of European imperialism. Even if Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia had not been colonised by European powers, they would still be part of the chess game of European spheres of influence. Therefore, in the collective memory of these societies, any political influence from Europe has negative connotations, due to historical reasons. The contributions of Markus Gauster, Gerald Hainzl and Stephan Reiner highlight that China can build on the strategic advantage of being a “political newcomer” as a major power and financial guarantor, without a loaded past. In addition, Beijing very

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., “Cooperative Regional Orders,” 32. Original quote: “Across all regions, we will invest in cooperative relationships to spur shared global responsibilities.”

<sup>5</sup> Cf. quote above.

<sup>6</sup> The Chinese slogan “Renlei mingyun gongtongti 人类命运共同体” was first used by General Secretary Hu Jintao in his report to the 18<sup>th</sup> CCP National Congress in November 2012. It was later included (2018) in the preamble of the Constitution of the People’s Republic of China. The more common English translation disseminated internationally via Chinese media and diplomats is somewhat incorrect and watered down into “community of shared future for mankind.”

skilfully appropriates the main theme of the global struggle against hegemonism.

- The positive perception of China's foreign policy principle with regard to non-interference in internal affairs represents a second similarity in the conclusions of all three authors, although the future compliance with this principle is called into doubt.

This position of strict non-interference in internal Arab affairs will be undermined in the future by its economic strength and cannot be maintained, not least because of global competition.<sup>7</sup>

- A third similarity is the argument that the recent withdrawal of Western powers economically and politically, within a very short timeframe, has resulted in increased Chinese presence. In other words, the enhanced Chinese footprint was partly caused by European and/or US economic and political neglect of the respective areas. The same argument is now already used for the case of Serbia in the "narrow orbit" of Eurostrategic interests (Jureković).

For both Africa and the Arabian Peninsula, it is concluded that China's backbone of influence on the ground is to be found in the infrastructure and financial sector against the background of the Belt & Road Initiative (BRI). By comparison, the military footprint appears negligible. Afghanistan shows quite a different picture, since Central Asia is thought of by Beijing as its security backyard. In this regard, Markus Gauster acknowledges a recent policy change on the part of China:

China's engagement in Afghanistan represents a strategic test case to show its ability and capacity to achieve a secure and stable periphery. Therefore, China has switched from an economic- and assistance-driven approach (approx. between 2001-2011) to a more security-orientated approach (2011-2021).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Reiner, 218.

<sup>8</sup> Gauster, 249.

Regarding the military sphere, one prediction is made in all three contributions regarding the geographical “wider orbit:” China’s drive to secure BRI facilities on the ground and protect Chinese personnel overseas will increase in the near future.<sup>9</sup>

## Competition and rivalry

The three-dimensional EU China-Strategy of 2019 identifies possible fields of cooperation, but also addresses competition and rivalry. The problem of normative rivalry should be emphasised here, in particular, as it has been of increased intensity since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. The comprehensive field of normative rivalry is closely connected with systemic rivalry. The long-lasting human rights discussion serves as the most illustrative example in this regard.

China’s human rights tradition has always been critical vis-à-vis the UN Charter of Universal Human Rights. First of all, rights to social services and welfare are given priority to political rights; secondly the People’s Republic state interests often limit human rights instead of human rights being a restriction of power for the state.<sup>10</sup> Discussing different patterns of discourse regarding the role and limits of state power means stepping into the arena of systemic rivalry.

When talking about normative rivalry between the European Union and China concerning human rights, it should not be overlooked that China is by no means an isolated actor but can draw on considerable discursive support from the developing South. This support cannot hastily be explained with economic promises and the pressure of a rising great power, but follows a more complex, multi-dimensional logic.

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<sup>9</sup> Gerald Hainzl, 230, original quote: “Although China’s role grew significantly over the last ten to fifteen years, the military sector is still far behind the economic one. Therefore, in the near future Chinese efforts are likely to increase.” Stephan Reiner, 218, original quote: “Therefore, China’s military presence in the region is likely to increase in the medium term.” Markus Gauster, 250, original quote: “In any case, China will do everything to contain Afghanistan in terms of security [...]”

<sup>10</sup> Andrew Nathan and Randle Edwards (1986), *Human Rights in Contemporary China*, 43-47, 121-22.

When, in April 1993, the so-called *Bangkok Declaration* was signed by 34 Asian countries, the PR of China definitely did not have the economic leverage it has today. The Belt & Road Initiative, which took shape twenty years later, was not even on the planning horizon of the People's Republic of China. Among the signatories of the Bangkok Declaration were Southeast and East Asian countries, but also West Asian states like the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Kuwait, Bahrain, Iran, Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic.<sup>11</sup>

In the Bangkok Declaration, the signatories articulated their resistance vis-à-vis a global normative framework decided by the United Nations and requested that human rights “must be considered in the context of a dynamic and evolving process of international norm-setting, bearing in mind the significance of national and regional particularities and various historical, cultural and religious backgrounds.”<sup>12</sup>

One text passage of the Declaration in particular galvanised the organisers of the UN World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, which followed briefly afterwards in June 1993:

[The ministers and representatives of the Asian states] emphasise the principles of respect for national sovereignty and territorial integrity as well as non-interference in the internal affairs of States, and the non-use of human rights as an instrument of political pressure.<sup>13</sup>

The abovementioned reference to a collective political statement – formulated almost three decades ago – very clearly exemplifies an inconvenient fact: With regard to normative rivalry, Europe was confronted with a robust front of countries in tandem with China – aiming at defining human rights on their own – long before the People's Republic stepped into the Eurostrategic orbit as a powerful player. The trend of political proclivities for non-democratic norms is growing and, even without a pro-active

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<sup>11</sup> In this context, it should be mentioned that Cyprus, which became an EU member state on May 1, 2004, was among the signatories, whereas Turkey was part of the group of 25 – mostly Western – observer states.

<sup>12</sup> The Bangkok Declaration, *Declaration of the Ministers and Representatives of Asian States*, Bangkok, March 29 – April 2, 1993, <https://www.ru.nl/publish/pages/688605/bangkok-eng.pdf>. Cf. also *Far Eastern Economic Review*, June 17, 1993, “Preparatory Meeting of Asian Nations in Bangkok,” 16.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, paragraph 5.

approach, China is in a position to take full advantage of this development within the international community or in other international arenas.

At this point, it seems appropriate to draw a comparison between the UN human rights debates of 1993 and 2021. In 2021, the UN Human Rights Council is looking back on 15 years of existence. In this year anniversary of anniversary, debates are more polarised than ever regarding the human rights situation in the PRC. In fact, most of the countries that have been opposing non-interference in internal affairs already for decades have now rallied around China and are rejecting UN-led investigations in Xinjiang, Tibet or Hongkong.

During the 47<sup>th</sup> session of the UN Council of Human Rights, a joint statement of 40 countries denounced human rights violations in the PR of China and requested immediate and stepped-up UN engagement.<sup>14</sup> This call for action found immediate response in a joint statement from a total of 67 countries, emphasising the principle of non-interference and the rejection of “politicisation of human rights and double standards”<sup>15</sup> in the case of China.

A look at the list of the signatories shows the following development: The support for Beijing to challenge the normative supremacy of democracies has gained allies in Africa and West Asia; however, at the same time, a significant decline in support can be observed for Southeast and East Asia. In the Bangkok Declaration of 1993, all ten member states of the ASEAN signalled an anti-Western approach. The joint pro-China statement of June 2021 was only signed by Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar, whereas major ASEAN states like Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand or the Philippines refrained from signing.

As to the systemic rivalry between the European Union and China, the neutral stance of the vast majority of ASEAN states should be regarded a window of opportunity. The European approach towards human rights is

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<sup>14</sup> *SwissInfo*, June 30, 2021, “Human Rights Council: Fundamental or fundamentally flawed,” <https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/human-rights-council--fundamental-or-fundamentally-flawed-/46744558>.

<sup>15</sup> Joint statement of 67 countries at the Interactive Dialogue on High Commissioner’s annual report at the 47<sup>th</sup> session of the Human Rights Council on June 22, 2021, <http://www.china-un.ch/eng/dbdt/t1886467.htm>.

based on the European Charter of Human Rights and institutionalised, to an advanced degree, in the Council of Europe. The Council includes an impressive 47 member states, considering that only 27 are members of the European Union. Admittedly, the remaining members are not countries of the European “broader orbit.” Yet, it is noteworthy that the Russian Federation, a member since 1996, despite increasing polarisation is still upholding its moratorium on the death penalty. Japan is included in the group of observer states; this observer group might be enlarged towards the East and the South in order to widen the normative radius of the Council of Europe.

As for the Chinese side, the normative rivalry in the human rights debate is currently directed towards global health policy. The “right to health” has been strikingly often mentioned by Chinese officials and state media since the Global Health Summit in May 2021, in direct connection with human rights. Under the headline “China takes forward the human rights cause,” China Daily points out that the life expectancy of citizens of the PR of China has risen to more than 77 years, close to that of many developed countries.<sup>16</sup> Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson, Wang Wenbin, underlines in a press conference that the elimination of malaria in China is far more than a national health policy success:

The elimination of malaria is a notable feat of China’s health endeavor and another major achievement in China’s human rights cause, following the elimination of absolute poverty [...]. Eliminating malaria is also a major contribution made by China to human health and the world human rights progress.<sup>17</sup>

Recalling the Global Health Summit of May 21, 2021, the Chinese proposal of an international forum on vaccine cooperation for vaccine-developing and producing countries to promote a “fair and equitable distribution of vaccines

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<sup>16</sup> Lu Guangjin, “China takes forward the human rights cause,” *China Daily*, July 4, 2021, [http://en.chinadiplomacy.org.cn/2021-07/04/content\\_77605142.shtml](http://en.chinadiplomacy.org.cn/2021-07/04/content_77605142.shtml).

<sup>17</sup> Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Wang Wenbin’s Regular Press Conference on June 30, 2021, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/xwfw\\_665399/s2510\\_665401/2511\\_665403/t1888344.shtml](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/2511_665403/t1888344.shtml).



around the world”<sup>18</sup> contains a certain nuance of subtle criticism to the address of the developed world. Of course, the spearhead of Chinese criticism regarding global vaccination policies is also directed at Europe, given the slow progress of the COVAX initiative in developing countries.

Carl Bildt, Swedish co-chair of the European Council of Foreign Relations, considers the fact that by the end of May 2021 only 0.3% of the total vaccines administered globally had arrived at low-income countries a breeding ground for growing anti-Western and anti-European sentiments:

Vaccine inequity risks not only endangering the global recovery, and giving an easier path to new variants, it also breeds global resentment that might be difficult to overcome.<sup>19</sup>

This warning also contains considerable security-policy significance.

Even though the normative rivalry between the European Union and China was put in this sub-chapter at the first place, the question of economic competition also plays an increasingly prominent role in the Eurostrategic broader orbit. Despite considerable systemic divergence, both economic systems follow the same logic and must therefore necessarily meet as competitors in emerging markets, such as the Gulf States or West Africa. It is mainly about market access and natural resources, since both the EU as well as the PRC are under pressure to look for new export markets and to secure the import of crude oil, copper, iron, gold or rare earths.

With regard to intergovernmental agreements China appears to pay little attention to the issue of corruption, although the latter is thoroughly investigated and severely punished at home. As for the Chinese private sector investing in Africa or Western Asia, the development economist Were Anzette sees a certain laxity regarding compliance with the rule of law. She underlines that Chinese private companies should be held accountable to laws that apply in the PRC, even though they operate on the African

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<sup>18</sup> President Xi Jinping at the Global Health Summit, May 21, 2021, “Working together to Build a Global community of Health for All,” [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/zxxx\\_662805/t1877666.shtml](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1877666.shtml).

<sup>19</sup> Carl Bildt, May 21, 2021, Global Health Summit 2021, <https://www.who.int/news-room/events/detail/2021/05/21/default-calendar/global-health-summit-2021>.

continent.<sup>20</sup> European investors are thus at a clear disadvantage compared to Chinese companies, as they have to follow strict European regulations regarding environmental compatibility or financial transparency.

Currently, the EU holds the undisputed first place as a trading partner for goods in Africa with 28%, followed by China with less than 16%.<sup>21</sup> However, recent Eurostat data indicate that, over the last decade, only a minor increase in the flow of goods between EU and Africa can be observed, whereas the pandemic year 2020 is marked by a significant decline in terms of exported as well as imported goods.<sup>22</sup> 25 EU member states had a trade in goods surplus, to the detriment of African countries, with the exception of Slovenia and Spain.<sup>23</sup>

Even though the volume of European investments outnumbers Chinese investments by far, European capital largely flows into traditional sectors, like mining. Chinese investment appears more focused on non-traditional sectors (infrastructure, construction, manufacture); accordingly, Chinese companies are increasingly gaining foothold in key innovative sectors, like smart urbanisation or G5 communication technology.<sup>24</sup> Yet, concerning the highly competitive economic sphere, Gerald Hainzl also notes new opportunities in view of the new decoupling policy:

The interest of European countries and others to take back production formerly outsourced to China is changing the whole setup for the continent. African countries are set to become a new geopolitical playground.<sup>25</sup>

The re-allocation of production industry out of China and geographically closer to the European Union would definitely create new job opportunities and facilitate the transfer of technological knowhow to underdeveloped regions in the European broader orbit.

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<sup>20</sup> Anzette Were, Interview with *VIDC* on May 9, 2019, video link: <https://www.facebook.com/VIDC.org/videos/1087499714793986/>.

<sup>21</sup> UN Comtrade, African export and import shares with main partners 2020.

<sup>22</sup> *Eurostat*, April 2021, Africa-EU – international trade in goods statistics, Comext DS-018995

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> October 20, 2020, *VIDC* webinar: “Europe and China: A new Race for Africa during a pandemic.”

<sup>25</sup> Hainzl, 230.

On a final note, let me add a strongly nuanced comment of the economist and China expert, Solange Chatelard, with regard to the debate of China's economic footprint in Africa. Chatelard describes the main discourse pattern as "stuck in between two polarizing narratives: paranoia and propaganda, framing the current China-Africa debate."<sup>26</sup> Indeed, growing polarization of contrasting narratives does not only apply to African regions, but also to West and Central Asia.

## Options for cooperation

Europe's pragmatic willingness to cooperate with the PR of China is particularly connected to non-traditional security threats. Yet, the existential issue of climate change has emerged as one of the top security challenges in the diplomatic communication between Brussels and Beijing. Both sides acknowledge that only collective global action serves as the key to address natural disasters caused by climate change, like large-scale forest fires, flooding, draught or the rise of sea levels. Countermeasures against climate change require big data analysis; and big data are, among other things, generated by Earth-observing satellite systems.

The existing cooperation and bilateral exchange of Earth observation data between the European Space Agency and China are dealt with in the chapter on Low Earth Orbit and Outer Space. The bilateral Dragon 5 Earth observation program has already entered its second year; the results of the first year were presented at an online symposium in July 2021.<sup>27</sup> Current bilateral projects of the Dragon 5 cooperation focus on climate change, sustainable agriculture and water resources, ecosystems, urbanisation and environment, oceans and coastal zones.<sup>28</sup> On the website of the European Space Agency (ESA), the Vice Minister of the Chinese Ministry of Science and Technology praises the Dragon Programme as the flagship of Chinese-

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<sup>26</sup> Panel discussion: China and the Future of Africa, June 26, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yRwY5cgi-O8>; Florence Chatelard, Free University of Brussels, produced two films thematising Chinese presence in Africa: "When China Met Africa" (BBC, 2011), and "King Cobra and the Dragon" (Al Jazeera, 2012).

<sup>27</sup> July 19-26, 2021, for details see conference program, <https://dragon-symp2021.esa.int/>.

<sup>28</sup> <http://dragon5.esa.int/>.

European cooperation in Earth observation.<sup>29</sup> Even more interesting is the fact that in an ESA strategy document from March 2021 there is not a single mention of current and future cooperation with the People's Republic of China. Quite on the contrary, reference is only made to other global space actors:

ESA will pursue and will strengthen its cooperation with key international partners like the US, Japan, and Russia and will also promote the value of space and its applications in regions like Africa, Southeast Asia and Latin America.<sup>30</sup>

Whether there are options for further expanding the scientific cooperation basis of the Dragon 5 Programme, according to the EU China strategy, or whether the existing bilateral cooperation is called into question will be decided at a European Space Summit, scheduled for 2022.

A definitely undisputed and vast field of cooperation between the EU and the PR of China is about green economics. Brussels repeatedly reaffirms the political will to join efforts with Beijing in promoting a green economic recovery in the post-pandemic era. Europe's commitment to speed up the implementation of the Paris agreement 2015 also implies working together with other major powers to establish cooperation in areas such as renewable energy production and energy efficiency, low-carbon cities, clean energy, carbon markets and hydrofluorocarbons. Nearly one third of the European post-Covid-19 economic recovery funds is earmarked for sustainable investment and energy transition. In this vein, holding a *China-EU Green Economic Cooperation and Development Summit* on July 8, 2021<sup>31</sup> was certainly in line with Brussels' strategic intent. At the same time, it is noteworthy that no leading EU official in office was among the keynote speakers of the respective online summit. Herman Van Rompuy, president emeritus of the

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., statement from Dr. Huang Wei, Vice Minister MOST-China: "The Dragon Programme, a flagship of the China-Europe Science & Technology cooperation in Earth observation, has achieved impressive results by bringing together top scientists, training young talents, and sharing satellite data from both sides."

<sup>30</sup> Josef Aschbacher, March 31, 2021, *ESA Agenda 2025 – Make space for Europe*, 14, [https://esamultimedia.esa.int/docs/ESA\\_Agenda\\_2025\\_final.pdf](https://esamultimedia.esa.int/docs/ESA_Agenda_2025_final.pdf).

<sup>31</sup> China-EU Green Economic Cooperation and Development Summit, organized online by Luxembourg Stock Exchange, Bank of China, China Chamber of Commerce to the EU, <https://www.bourse.lu/news-china-eu-green-summit>.

European Council, presented the position of the European Union. This reticence regarding the presence of top EU decision-makers is a clear indication of Brussels' diplomatic caution with regard to the cooperation with Beijing.

Combined EU-China efforts to reach faster climate neutrality – the EU commitment until 2050, the PR of China's commitment until 2060 – eventually affect all countries in the broader Eurostrategic orbit and will be closely monitored by their governments. On the other hand, an EU-Chinese “green” cooperation will exercise more effective monitoring vis-à-vis governments in Africa, West Asia, and Central Asia in order to reduce their national emission levels. At the above mentioned Green Economic Cooperation Summit, Chargé d’Affaires Wang Hongjian emphasises that it is the responsibility of both major powers to set an example for developing countries; the European Union and China “should show their respective responsibilities to strengthen in-depth cooperation and create more ideas and projects, thus giving more experience for countries at different stages of development to learn from and bringing more confidence to the global response to green development.”<sup>32</sup> In the context of Green Development cooperation, however, it must be borne in mind that economic competition also plays a role here. It cannot be ignored that European companies have to compete with Chinese enterprises in emerging economies like e.g. the Gulf States as regards highly innovative products in the field of energy transition and environmental protection.

Another frequently invoked area of cooperation between Europe and China across the globe is the health sector. In Part I of this volume, Barbara Farkas elaborates in full detail on the narrative and implications of China's “Health Silk Road”. Since the respective policy concept entails visible effects in the broader Eurostrategic orbit, two points will be shortly addressed as follows: Despite the vaccine distribution initiative COVAX under the aegis of the WHO, the regularly expressed affirmations of an EU-China coordination in global health governance appear to have limits as to their implementation. The non-approval of Chinese vaccines in the EU may serve as a prime example, at the date early August 2021. Despite the fact that the World

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., joint press release, July 8, 2021, see also <https://delano.lu/article/financial-outfits-aim-to-boost?index=0>.

Health Organization has validated the Chinese vaccine Sinovac on June 1, 2021, for WHO emergency use listing, the overwhelming majority of EU member countries recognise vaccination only in case of vaccines approved by the European Medicines Agency (EMA). So far Chinese vaccines are not included in the EMA Covid-19 vaccine approval list. At this stage, only six EU members - including Austria - recognise the Sinovac vaccine for international travellers.<sup>33</sup> Another factor constituting a perceivable obstacle to European-Chinese collaboration regarding global health is Beijing's reluctance to share data regarded as sensitive.<sup>34</sup> In this context, the paranoia about the PRC's growing footprint as mentioned above for the West can be applied to China. Beijing all too often refuses the disclosure of relevant data on the grounds of fear of politicisation.

Before concluding the reflection on options for cooperation between Europe and China, the ideas of a prominent academic voice without allegiance to either side should be briefly addressed. Kishore Mahbubani, a Singapore based ex-diplomat, sees the migration issue as the main security risk for Europe and recommends close cooperation with China in the field of development policy in Africa:

If Europe wants to preserve its own long-term interests, it should make the development of Africa, in partnership with China, an immediate priority. [...] A massive turnout of European leaders at such a summit (China-Africa summit in Beijing, author's note) would send a powerful market signal. It could catalyse a powerful wave of new investment in Africa. Over time, with a strong African economy, there will be less incentive for widespread African migration to Europe.<sup>35</sup>

Mahbubani's analysis should not be dismissed, despite showing a strong focus on geopolitical great power rivalry rather than on emerging existential global threats such as climate change, pandemics, and pollution.

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<sup>33</sup> Per July 4, 2021, the following EU member countries accept Sinovac as valid proof of immunity: Austria, Finland, Greece, Iceland, Netherlands, Spain, <https://www.schengenvisainfo.com/news/travel-only-6-eu-schengen-countries-recognise-chinas-sinovac-vaccine-as-valid-proof-of-immunity/>.

<sup>34</sup> See EURICS Brief 2021/9, 3, [http://eurics.eu/upload/document/20210226100241\\_eurics-february2021.pdf](http://eurics.eu/upload/document/20210226100241_eurics-february2021.pdf).

<sup>35</sup> Kishore Mahbubani (2020), *Has China Won? The Chinese Challenge to American Primacy*, 222.

In summary, a “new restraint” on the part of the European Union in terms of cooperation with the PR China at the global level is discernible in several respects. This reluctance ultimately causes a number of options for cooperation not fully exploited. The EU’s positioning vis-a-vis China is all too readily related to transatlantic relations. Yet, considering Brussels’s relationship with Washington the main driver for EU-China “disturbances” reflects a rather one-dimensional view. A multi-layered approach taking into account all aspects of the European China strategy in its present form should be applied. In a sense, the frequently discussed issue of a European strategic autonomy starts at the question of an appropriate analytical approach.

Another analytical tool too often neglected in current analysis of China is the fourth dimension: the timeline. Many analyses focus too much on the last decade. While the Belt & Road Initiative is undoubtedly a foreign policy instrument of the Xi Jinping era, most policies of the People’s Republic, especially in the Eurostrategic broader orbit, follow a longer-term Grand Strategy and in some cases go back far beyond the era of Jiang Zemin or Hu Jintao.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> For the Grand Strategy analysis of the Hu Jintao and Jiang Zemin eras see Feichtinger, Buchas and Vogl (eds.), *China’s Grand Strategy im Wandel* (2019).