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The Prospects of China-Europe Relations and the Element of Taiwan Question

Xing Hua

**Senior Fellow and Director of the Center of EU Studies
China Institute of International Studies**

German Institute for International and Security Affairs **Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik**

SWP

Ludwigkirchplatz 3-4
10719 Berlin
Phone +49 30 880 07-0
Fax +49 30 880 07-100
www.swp-berlin.org

It has been more than 30 years since China established diplomatic relations with the European Union. However, China's relations with some EU members have an even longer history. By the untiring efforts of both sides, in the past several decades, China and the EU have made tremendous progress in all dimensions. Generally both sides have positive assessment of the other's development. They think that the cooperation between the two sides is not only in their own interests, but also conducive to the development of the international relations. Thus, this bilateral relationship has reached the level of a comprehensive strategic partnership and become one of the most important and influential relations in current world politics. China-Europe relation has been one of the most important bilateral relations in the world. Both sides should cherish the achievements and realize that the cooperation between the two sides is still important in the new situation. Both sides should overcome the difficulties and solve the problems in order to advance the bilateral relations to a higher level.

Firstly, at the beginning of the new century, peace and development is still the main trend of the world. The deep development of globalization has enhanced the interdependence of the international actors. No major country can deal with the traditional and non-traditional challenges singly and the need for international cooperation has been unprecedentedly desirable. There can be coordination and cooperation among the major powers, which are influential on the international affairs.

However, the international relations are experiencing complex and deep changes. Every country reassesses its advantages and disadvantages under the new economic and political situation. At the same time, they adjust their policies to other countries and relations with them. The new situation reflects some uncertainties and can't be assessed by the historical experiences. International politicians and scholars have different views and judgments about the international relations, the rise and fall of America's power and the rise of emerging powers. China and Europe both assume growing significant responsibilities in world affairs and have extensive and fruitful consultation and cooperation. While the world's development entered a new crossing road, China and Europe who see each other as strategic partners should have more consensus on world affairs and cooperatively make contributions to the global peace and development.

What should be pointed out is that with the Europeans' reassessment of the gain and loss of globalization and the changes of the political environment in Europe, the Euro-centrism, which has the Cold War mentality, has emerged in Europe under the new circumstances and has affected the Europeans' attitude towards China. This school of thinking is concerned that the various forces out of the West are very difficult to control, thus the Western countries should be unified to deal with the outside threats. It uses the out-dated ideological standards to divide the

foreign countries into various categories and treats them differently. The parliamentary working group of the Christian Democratic Union of Germany has published an Asia Strategy which says that there is competition of political systems between China and the Europe, and although China is not necessarily the enemy of Europe, Europe should strengthen its relationship with “democratic countries” like Japan and India. This kind of thinking is a copy of the policy of “containing China” within the idea of “democratic alliance in Asia” raised by some forces in the U.S. and Japan. This point of view may shake the foundation of China-EU relations, damage mutual trust, encourage public opinion’s prejudice towards China and affect other major powers’ policies towards China. Both sides should pay more attention to this and attach more importance to the cornerstone of the bilateral comprehensive partnership, which has strategic implications for both sides, should not be stopped, swayed, but should move on continuously.

Secondly, the promotion of the mutual understanding between China and the EU both on the government and public levels under the new circumstances is the key to consolidating and promoting the bilateral relations.

The Chinese side should fully recognize that (1) the Europeans’ understanding of China is quite limited. The Europeans’ increasing concerns and suspicion are understandable under the circumstances of China’s fast speed economic growth and the changes in the interests between the two sides. China should improve and strengthen its communication with the EU and help the European side to understand China’s choice of peaceful development. (2) There has been no fundamental change in the EU policy towards China. Though some political forces and media have prejudices and even baleful criticism of China, the Chinese should not forget the EU friendly policy to China, the long-time friendship between China and the EU, and the voices from the European publics which hope to understand and treat China objectively. The Chinese should not draw the conclusion that will cause a pessimistic view towards the friendly and cooperative relations between China and EU according to the partial European opinions either.

The European side should perceive China’s development path and the influence to the world in a practical and realistic way. (1) China’s deepening and broadening reform and opening-up in the past three decades is a historical revolution. It has changed China not only in the fields of economy and society, but also in internal and external guiding thinking. Reform and opening-up is not only in the field of economy but also in the field of politics. China doesn’t refuse political reform and is determined to go on reforming. (2) China’s reform and opening-up is driven by the international situation and by globalization, but the main aspect of China’s progress is its internal changes, such as the Chinese people’s demand for more reform and opening-up, the policies’ adjustment adopted under the principles of keeping up with the times and government for people by the Communist party of China and the tightening legal system. (3) The main character of China’s foreign

policy is open and comprehensive. China learns advanced experience from other countries, particularly in the dialogues and exchanges with Europeans. But China's development should find the way that fits China's basic condition. It's the only way that is responsible for Chinese people and even the people in the world. (4) China's deep reform and opening-up changed its international thinking and behaviour. China realized that its relations with the outside world have made historical changes. China's fate and future have been tied together with the whole world. (5) China has made great achievements in development, but it is still facing many challenges, such as the inequalities of development, the shortage of energy and the degradation of nature. Despite of China's great progress in economic development, its development road is still long and difficult. China will not pose a threat to Europe's development. Moreover, the separatism forces threaten the unification of China and disturb the national security and construction severely, quite often harming China's foreign relations. Most of the European countries do not have these problems. Europe's realization about the threat of China's separatism is becoming more and more important for bilateral relations. China is a multi-ethnic country. The areas where minority ethnic groups are living enjoy regional autonomy. The central government protects the rights and religious beliefs and social customs of minority nationalities. The living standards have significantly changed for the better. There is no doubt about these facts. Some separation movements in Tibet and Xinjiang have nothing to do with the ethnic and religion policies. China needs Europe's understanding and support.

Thirdly, China and Europe should continue to make efforts to make the Taiwan question to be an element of cohesion and not of separation in bilateral relations.

At the beginning of this year, the political situation in Taiwan underwent positive changes. Taiwan Strait relations have a better development perspective; Taiwan people suspect the intentions of independence force. China mainland has made great positive efforts in sustaining the peaceful development of Taiwan Strait relations. The mainland of China has confidence in solving the Taiwan question peacefully. China appreciates the EU's and some European countries' support for the 'one China' policy and their opposition to the "Referendum for the UN" movement. But, the road of peaceful development across Taiwan Strait is not always smooth. That the EU continues to insist on the "One China" policy, does not give the "independence" force any international space and does not send any wrong signals is conducive to strengthening the trust between the China and EU, sustaining stability and peace across the Taiwan strait and even the wider region.

Fourthly, in recent days, the two sides have some conflicts in Tibet and Olympic questions. The EU and some member countries are working hard to solve the controversy and strengthen dialogues with China. It reflects that the main force of Europe still takes a friendly policy to China guided by strategic thinking. China also thinks that the bilateral relations are very important. Currently, both sides are

removing some differences and bring the bilateral relations back to a healthy track. They launched a high-level economic dialogue. In the future, the two sides should emphasize the common interests and the demands of strategy, learn lessons from the ups and downs of the bilateral relations, and insist on pursuing and exploring methods and ways in the new situation. This will make sure that the bilateral relations will get a better development and make great contributions to the stability and prosperity of the world.