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DEPARTMENT OF EU INTERNATIONAL  
RELATIONS AND DIPLOMACY STUDIES

InBev-Baillet Latour Chair of  
European Union-China Relations



# Is There a Strategic Partnership between the EU and China?

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- Three questions to be answered:
  - What?
  - Why?
  - How?





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- Outline
  - The EU-China strategic partnership and its definitions
  - Examination of EU-China relations with international relations theory
  - Prospect for EU-China relations





- The EU-China strategic partnership since 2003
  - Javier Solana:
    - We really do have a partnership which is getting wider and deeper. Our goals are converging across a wide range of international subjects... we are natural partners in many ways.





- The EU-China strategic partnership since 2003
  - Wen Jiabao:
    - By 'strategic', it means that the cooperation should be long-term and stable, bearing on the larger picture of China-EU relations. It transcends the differences in ideology and social system and is not subjected to the impacts of individual events that occur from time to time.





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- The honeymoon period did not last long. Problems:
  - Textile dispute
  - Arms embargo
  - Improved transatlantic relations
  - ....
- Period of reflection and adjustment





- The EU as a liberal player emphasizes liberty and human rights
  - Support China's transition to an open society, based on the rule of law and respect for human rights and democracy
  - Arms embargo kept as a bargaining chip



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- The EU as a liberal player emphasizes democracy
  - Democratic states will not fight against each other





- The EU as a liberal player emphasizes the importance of institutions
  - Welcome China to join IGOs
  - Establish a wide range of bilateral dialogue at different levels





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- The EU as a liberal player emphasizes cooperation instead of balance of power
  - Promote multilateralism



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- China as a realist player attaches great importance to the balance of power
  - Multipolar world
  - Partnership with the EU to balance against the US





- China as a realist player attaches great importance to its independent foreign policy
  - Respect for sovereignty: human rights issue; emphasize Chinese characteristics
  - Respect for territorial integrity: the Taiwan issue, the Tibet issue





- China as a realist player is unsatisfied at the current international order:
  - ‘China will continue to pursue its independent foreign policy of peace and work closely with other countries for the establishment of a new international political and economic order that is fair and equitable, and based on the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence’.





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- Problems:
  - The bilateral institutional framework, e.g.:  
summits and PCA
  - The EU as a normative power: not much  
influence on China
  - The EU has limited hard power: weak partner for  
China
  - Actor: the EU not speak with one voice



- Prospect for EU-China relations
  - Several scenarios
  - The most probable: an equal partnership characterized by reciprocity



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