

EU Common Security and Defence Policy and China: a case study of coopetition¹

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Abstract

With the 2019 *EU–China Strategic Outlook*, the EU has revalidated its dual perspective on China as cooperation partner and strategic competitor at the same time. So far, considerations of China in EU and EU Member States have primarily focused on economic questions. However, as China's foreign policy becomes more assertive and visible via military deployments in the EU's geopolitical neighbourhood, the EU needs to confront this challenge by giving appropriate and concrete political responses in a geostrategic context as well. Based on the concept of „coopetition”, this article provides an analysis and subsequent recommendations on how the EU can integrate the “China factor” in its Common Security and Defence Policy, while ensuring that a balance of cooperation and competition in EU's China policy is retained.

Keywords: European Union, China, EU–China relations, EU Common Security and Defence Policy, EU defence integration, EU defence partnership, concept of coopetition.

Wspólna Polityka Bezpieczeństwa i Obrony UE a Chiny: studium przypadku kooperacji

Streszczenie

Poprzez *UE–Chiny perspektywę strategiczną na 2019 rok*, UE ponownie potwierdziła swoje podwójne spojrzenie na Chiny jako partnera do współpracy i konkurenta strategicznego. Jak dotąd rozważania dotyczące Chin w obrębie Unii Europejskiej i jej państw członkowskich koncentrowały się głównie na kwestiach gospodarczych. Ale ponieważ polityka zagraniczna Chin staje się coraz bardziej asertywna i widoczna dzięki rozmieszczeniom wojskowym w geopolitycznym sąsiedztwie UE, Unia musi stawić czoła temu wyzwaniu, udzielając odpowiednich i konkretnych odpowiedzi politycznych również w kontekście geostrategicznym. W oparciu o koncepcję „kooperacji” niniejszy artykuł zawiera analizę i kolejne zalecenia dotyczące tego, w jaki sposób UE może włączyć „czynniki Chin” do swojej wspólnej polityki bezpieczeństwa i obrony, zachowując jednocześnie równowagę współpracy i konkurencji w polityce wobec Chin.

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Słowa kluczowe: Unia Europejska, Chiny, relacje UE-Chiny, Wspólna Polityka Bezpieczeństwa i Obrony, integracja obronna UE; Partnerstwo obronne UE, koncepcja kooperacji.

On October 1st 2019, news channels around the world reported about the People's Republic of China's (PRC, China) lavish celebrations of its 70th anniversary. With the public display of a comprehensive range of new and sophisticated military equipment, including ballistic nuclear missiles, China had sent a clear message to regional capitals (Kosaka 2019) and the US (Wolfgang 2019) that Beijing must be recognised as a military power to be reckoned with more than ever. Only the year before, China's President Xi Jinping commented that the allegorical 'sleeping lion', to which China is popularly referred to, had woken up as a „peaceful lion“. Seeing the pictures of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) marching parade on Tiananmen Square provides a stark contrast to that comment and every outlook for a future, in which China has finally woken up (Ng, Chen 2018).

The Western response to China has so far been everything else than unified and coordinated. While the Trump administration already declared the PRC a 'revisionist power' (*National Security Strategy...* 2017: p. 25) and a "strategic competitor" (Sevastopulo 2017) to the US, reactions of European countries to China's rise have been rather mixed, due to the strong consideration of economic arguments in spite of the geopolitical factors. For example, European countries have been far from being hostile towards Chinese economic investments. Following a number of European states, Italy, the first G7 member, decided to join most ambitious 'Belt and Road Initiative' in March 2019, while Germany considers the Chinese telecommunication giant Huawei offer for building up the country's 5G network infrastructure despite strong warnings by the US regarding the cyber security risks of this move (*How Should Europe...* 2019). The essence of duality in the European response to China has been summarised very well by departing European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, who said: „China and Europe must and can do great things together. We are strategic partners, and yes, rivals, but competition among us is a good thing.“ (Willsher 2019).

In order to consolidate a common European approach to accommodate China's changing role in global political and economic affairs, the EU began to adopt strategic political guidance, formalised as "EU Strategy on China", in summer 2016 (EEAS 2016a). In March 2019, the European Commission together with the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy conducted a strategic review, leading to the EU-China Strategic Outlook (EEAS 2019a: p. 1–2). In this document, the European institutions involved in the drafting process came to an inevitable outcome: China pursues an increasingly assertive role in foreign policy, which provides interesting prospects for cooperation, e.g. in the field of crisis management.

„With EU Member States collectively being the largest contributor to the United Nations peacekeeping budget, and China the next largest after the US, opportunities should be identified to share operational experience in this area.“ (European Commission 2019: p. 3).

However, at the same time and in the same document, it is also acknowledged that China is going to present a considerable security challenge for the Union in a shifting world order.

„China's increasing military capabilities coupled with its comprehensive vision and ambition to have the technologically most advanced armed forces by 2050 present security issues for the EU, already in a short to mid-term perspective. Cross-sectoral hybrid threats including information operations, and large military exercises not only undermine trust, but also challenge the EU's security and must be addressed in the context of our mutual relationship.“ (European Commission 2019: p. 4).

In the scope of this article, the seemingly contradictory positioning of the EU towards China is analysed in a concrete policy field: *Common Security and Defence Policy* (CSDP).

In 2019, the EU was conducting 10 civilian and 6 military missions on three continents with a combined total of around 5000 civilian and military personnel deployed under the umbrella of CSDP (EEAS 2019b). As China's increasing political, economic and military presence expands to regions, where the EU undertakes those missions and operations, direct and indirect contact with China and the PLA will increase in likelihood.

The question for the EU would be: how to deal with this situation. In this sense, the article's thesis supposes that the EU has not yet developed a consistent policy strategy regarding China in activities related to CSDP. Keeping the oscillating stance of the EU between cooperation and competition with China in coherence with the *EU-China Strategic Outlook* in mind, this research makes use of the "coopetition" concept, a derivative of game theory, to identify an outline for a strategy with concrete recommendations for the EU's engagement of China in the remit of CSDP. While matter of European defence policy underwent an evolutionary process in recent years, e.g. through the establishment of the Permanent Structured Cooperation in Defence or PESCO among other EU Defence initiatives (see: *EU's new defence and security initiatives* 2019), this article focuses on the core of CSDP, namely CSDP missions and operations (European Commission 2017). Outside the scope of this article is furthermore China's impact on EU Member States' defence planning, defence industries and defence trade, as well as relations between NATO and China.

“Coopetition”: concept and application

Why the phenomenon of coopetition occurs, has been discussed for long-time in the academic circles and the theoretical schools of management, organisation and sociology have contributed several perspectives in order for an explanation (Herzog 2011: p. 26–30). The concept applied in this article is a derivative from game theory.

Since its inception in the first half of the 20th century, the discipline of game theory has grown in content as well as application. Dominant in the discipline remained the non-cooperative variant with various contributors, most notably a number of economic Nobel prize winners like John Nash, John Harsanyi and Reinhard Selten. However, the lesser known cooperative approach to game theory had continuously stepped up as

well, thanks to the initial works of John von Neumann and Oskar Morgenstern, as well as contributions from Lloyd Shapley amongst others.

The amalgamation of “competition” and “cooperation” into “coopetition”, as well as a comprehensive analytical framework thereof was brought to broader popularity by Adam Brandenburger and Barry Nalebuff (Brandenburger, Nalebuff W/W). In their book, which is focused heavily on market behaviour of firms, the two authors presented five basic elements for an analytical model, together with the reasoning, why these are relevant:

- (1) [Players]: Due to the fact that coopetition is first and foremost based on the academic discipline of economics, the authors have defined identified key actors on markets, such as customers, suppliers, competitors and complementors. Together, these actors form the so-called “Value Net”, i.e. an interrelationship that includes the other elements.
- (2) [Added value]: This element encompasses the contribution that each actor can bring into the game, either positively or negatively, depending if cooperation occurs or not.
- (3) [Rules]: Those are basically the conditions, according to which the actors behave and participate in the game, e.g. legal frameworks.
- (4) [Tactics]: Different from the military definition, the authors interpret tactics as perception and counter-perception of the actors, representing a fundamental part of the model, because perceptions strongly influence decision-making and action-taking of the actors.
- (5) [Scope]: The final element sets the boundaries of the game. While every market is interconnected to others (e.g. industrial manufacture, research & development, natural resources), games are usually restricted in scope, thereby ensuring that the analysis is focused and comprehensible (Brandenburger, Nalebuff 1996: p. 40–66).

After developing a basic model of a coopetitive game, additional attention should be placed on the rationale of cooperating with another competitor, thus making competition the standard and cooperation the exception for which a reason must be identified. Again, taking the examples from economic analysis of markets, there are some adaptable rationales for a state to cooperate with a competitor: (1) risk reduction, thus ensuring stability in the international order, (2) economies of scale and/or rationalisation to mitigate limited financial or personal resources, (3) complementary capabilities, e.g. one actor might have forces available for strategic airlift, while another does not, (4) minimising political, economic, military competition, thus lowering the cost of international activities of actors, and (5) establishing bi- or multilateral networks for trust-building, eventually leading to continuous cooperative behaviour in international affairs (Contractor, Lorange 2004: p. 25–32).

While having the rationales for cooperation in coopetition displayed, state can decide, how their strategy looks like and which balance between cooperation and competition is applied towards other actors. At the most extreme cooperative pole, cooperation could mean a merger between two or more countries into one, whereas as the most extreme

competitive pole would be a total war of annihilation between at least two states. In between are cooperative arrangements, such as multilateral frameworks, such as the UN, bilateral formal or informal contacts, like a EU–China summit, as well as competitive arrangements, ranging from political, economic, military rivalry, boycott, limited engagements and intimidating behaviour of armed forces in military-to-military contacts as possible strategy option (Daidj 2017: p. 6–41). Since interactions between two or more actors are dynamic rather than static and strategies may change overtime or be influenced by interaction between one of the actors and a third states.

Following the presentation of the theoretical foundations, this article uses a comparative approach with a view of identifying recommendations for EU CSDP policy-making.

In the first step, key elements of the EU's CSDP are presented, which provide the maneuvering space, in which the EU is able to integrate the 'China factor' in their decision-making processes: (1) legal framework provided by the Treaties of the EU [Rules], (2) actors and key stakeholders of CSDP [Players], (3) relevant policy papers, which provide strategic guidance and direction for the implementation of CSDP [Tactics], and lastly (4) relationship between CSDP and non-EU third states, such as China and other international organisations, like the UN with its peacekeeping missions [Boundaries].

In the second step of the analysis, (1) China is brought in the equation [Player]. By identifying (2) foreign policy objectives in regions, where contact with CSDP missions and operations are conducted [Rules], (3) China's activities to employ an international presence in respective regions, where CSDP missions and operations are usually conducted [Tactics], and (4) the broader context provided by interaction of China with third states, e.g. US and other regional players, which impacts EU–China relations [Boundaries].

By making use of the CSDP as a "transmission belt" between the EU's and China's security- and military-related activities in overlapping geographical areas of strategic interest, the article provides a number of recommendations thereby supports EU policy-makers about ways and means to respond to China's increasingly assertive foreign policy stance.

The Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP): a framework for crisis management

For a comprehensive understanding of the CSDP of the EU, looking into the legal foundation represents an inevitable first step. While the first introduction of CSDP in the Treaties of the European Union (TEU) goes back to the Treaty of Maastricht in 1991, this article skips the historical evolution² of CSDP and rather focuses on the most recent edition of the TEU (2016). Title V, Chapter 2, Section 2, Articles 42–46 TEU, in its latest form adopted as the 2007 Treaty of Lisbon, lays out the provisions for CSDP. Being "an integral part" of the broader *Common Foreign and Security Policy* (CFSP), the articles on CSDP establish the legal framework, wherein EU Member States contribute civilian and military assets for

² Detailed information about the history of the EU cooperation on security and defence you can find in the publication: (Council of the European Union 2019a).

executing tasks, engage in cooperative capability research and development, e.g. through the European Defence Agency (EDA), and eventually protect each other, when armed aggression against a EU Member State occurs (Art. 42.7). Most important element of CSDP is the principle of unanimity in decision-making by EU Member States as enshrined in Art. 31 (with few exemptions pursuant to Art. 31.2). This underlines the sovereign right of individual EU Member States to pursue defence and security-related policy, albeit with the soft caveat that each Member State should consult with other EU members in order to provide a cohesive and concise common approach to EU-external challenges (see more: TEU 2016: Title V, Chapters 1-2). The intergovernmental fora for this consultation are the Council of the EU in its defence and/or foreign ministers' format and the European Council with the political guidance set by the heads of government (EEAS 2016b).

As another outcome from the Treaty of Lisbon, the dual-headed position of High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice President of the European Commission (HR/VP) has been created in order to coordinate EU external relations, something previously conducted by the European Commission, and to streamline CFSP/CSDP through the establishment of the European External Action Service (EEAS), which also encompasses an agency for defence capability cooperation and development (EDA) (Marrone, Ungaro 2014: p. 16–17). Furthermore, as part of EEAS' structure, the Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability (CPCC) provides the civilian oversight and operational management of civilian CSDP missions. Central command of all civilian missions and their respective Heads of Mission is conducted through the CPCC Director, acting as Civilian Operation Commander (EEAS 2019c).

On the military side, EU Member States already began in 2001 to set up the EU Military Committee (EUMC) in EU national chief of defence format, which provides military advice to the CSDP decision-making committees of the CEU (Marrone, Ungaro 2014: p. 16). As part of the EEAS, but also working as junction point to EUMC, the EU Military Staff (EUMS) contributes subject matter expertise on crisis prevention, response and management (EEAS 2018a). In addition, in June 2017, EU Member States decided to establish a Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC) under the dual-headed responsibility of Director General of the EUMS/Director MPCC. In the EU military chain of command, the Mission force commanders of the three non-executive military training missions in Mali, Somalia and the Central African Republic now report to the Director MPCC, thereby consolidating operational command & control structures and streamlining military with civilian structures, such as the CPCC (EEAS 2018b: p. 1–2). Besides the MPCC, further command & control of military CSDP missions and operations can also be conducted either via NATO Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE), EU Operations Centre (EU OPCEN), or ad-hoc national Operational Headquarters (Council of the European Union 2019b: p. 10, 13–15).

With the EU Global Strategy (EUGS), the former High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the Commission Federica Mogherini has provided a comprehensive document, which defines the contemporary EU Level of Ambition (LoA) (EEAS 2016c).

„As set out in the EUGS, the EU must contribute to: (a) responding to external conflicts and crises, (b) building the capacities of partners, and (c) protecting the Union and its citizens.“ (Council of the European Union 2016: p. 2).

Pre-dating the EUGS by more than two decades, the EU undertook the establishment of CSDP with a military LoA under the 1999 Treaty of Amsterdam and following the European Council Summit in Cologne in the same year by transferring the ‘Petersberg Tasks’ from the Western European Union to the EU. Eventually, international crises since 11. September 2001 and further challenges, such as the disunity of Europe about the second Iraq War, led to further evolutionary development of CSDP (EEAS 2016b). The role of the *Franco-German engine* in European integration has also played a role in the further development of CSDP. Prior to the 2016 September meeting of the EU defence ministers, both countries presented a document concerning the revitalisation and reinforcement of CSDP to defence-related discussions of EU Member States (Žurek 2019: p. 14).

The current military LoA of the EU is to have the capabilities available to conduct missions and operations under CSDP according to the following illustrative scenarios (Barrie et al. 2018: p. 2):

- 1) peace enforcement (up to 4000 kilometres from Brussels);
- 2) conflict prevention (up to 6000 km from Brussels);
- 3) stabilisation and support to capacity-building (up to 8000 km from Brussels);
- 4) rescue and evacuation (up to 10000 km from Brussels); and
- 5) support to humanitarian assistance (up to 15000 km from Brussels).

Furthermore, in order to implement those activities, EU Member States have agreed to pursue Headline Goals 1999 and 2010. While the first has yet to be achieved (militarily self-sustaining formation for operations up to corps level (50000–60000 personnel) deployable in 60 days for a consecutive duration of 12 months), the second goal to acquire rapid reaction capabilities for crisis management operations led to the establishment of usually enhanced battalion-sized EU Battlegroups (around 1500 personnel) that has however not seen deployment in a CSDP mission or operation yet (Barrie et al. 2018: p. 6–9).

It is also worth mentioning that the requirements of fulfilling EU military LoA, as described above, are identified and developed through a complex capability development mechanism process, which forms an integral part to the general EU defence capability planning. While describing the full EU defence capability development process lies clearly outside the scope of this article, the link between capabilities for fulfilling specific CSDP operational requirements provides interesting indication of the efforts taken by EU Member States and European institutions to define coherent and output-oriented defence capability planning on the EU level (Fiott 2018: p. 2–6). The same can unfortunately not be said about the civilian side of CSDP. Formally launched at the European Council Summit in Feira, the civilian side of CSDP, has seen many missions, but lacking civilian capability planning and scarce personnel deployments make this part of CSDP rather under-resourced. Only as of 2019, this began to change slowly. Following in the footsteps of European defence initiatives, the EU adopted the Civilian CSDP Compact

its own set of more binding commitments of EU Member States (Pirozzi 2018: p. 1–8). Despite the modest speed of civilian CSDP, the EU accomplished some benchmark in this domain, particularly by setting up the EU Civil Protection mechanism and the Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC) for disaster response in- and outside the Union (Jacuch 2019: p.71–73).

As presented above, MPCC and CPCC represent the institutional core of CSDP, thus enabling the 'Comprehensive Approach to Crisis Management', which combines civilian and military planning capabilities of the EEAS and EUMS. Direction of this mechanism strongly depends on decision-making of EU Member States due to unanimity, as mentioned before. Due to different strategic national cultures, the institutional core of MPCC and CPCC is required to conduct coherent analyses of crisis situations, understand EU external interests and goals in foreign policy, and needs to be enabled to apply the EU's foreign policy toolset, depending on the commitment by EU Member States to contribute personnel and financial resources (Smith 2017: p. 266–270). Therefore, working towards a common strategic culture amongst EU Member States remains one of the key priorities in the near- and mid-term. The current divide between the different national strategic cultures (e.g. assertive vs. restrained foreign policy, or geostrategic vs. economic rationales) leads to various degrees of misfit between a national position and the negotiated EU position, thus increasing the likelihood of defecting behaviour by individual EU Member States (Giegerich 2006: p. 36–47, 63–66).

Regarding the last conceptual element of CSDP, the EU adopted the legal conditions and framework requirements for the participation of non-EU third states in CSDP missions and operations between 2001–2004. With the conclusion of a *Framework Participation Agreement* (FPA) between the EU and a third state, the legal, financial and political ramifications of troop and civilian expert contributions made by that third state to a CSDP mission or operation have been formalised. The intentions about third states' joining CSDP missions and operations largely depend on geopolitical factors. Some states might have a specific interest in the country, where the CSDP presence is undertaken, such as Albania in the Western Balkans. More powerful actors, like Russia or Turkey, might also take the opportunity to actively influence EU CSDP policies and objectives in line with their national interests in a specific region. In any case, an important aspect cannot be underestimated: The potential to mitigate capability, personnel and financial shortfalls in CSDP by including third states. Despite the fact, that contributions by third states have been rather marginal (with the exception of Russia, Georgia, and Turkey), cooperation with third states inside CSDP has further potential as cooperative model. In any case, the EU will have a hard time to integrate third countries in CSDP, while retaining the dominant decision-making authority in it. Considering that CSDP mission and operations are (1) a key element of EU civilian and military crisis management, and (2) a way for EU Member States to demonstrate unity in face of regional and global challenges, the EU might also opt for a participation of third states on a case-by-case basis, thereby retaining the appearance of CSDP as "European" instead of "global" activity (Tardy 2014: p. 1–4).

The “China factor”: opportunities and risks for CSDP

Since the beginning of Xi Jinping's term as state president in 2013, China has undergone a slow but continuous evolution into political, economic and military power beyond its own geographical neighbourhood (Joyce 2018: p. 1–2). The latest *Defense White Paper* that China had published as recently in July 2019 (see: *China's National Defense...* 2019), the country presented its perspective and level of ambition in this regard. Of particularly relevance is the statement on its activities outside traditional Chinese sphere of influence in East Asia: „Overseas interests are a crucial part of China's national interests. One of the missions of China's armed forces is to effectively protect the security and legitimate rights and interests of overseas Chinese people, organizations and institutions.“ (*China's National Defense...* 2019: p. 14).

Western security and defence analysts have been highly sceptical regarding the “spin” of the White Paper, mostly criticising the China's self-perception as the non-provocative, self-protecting and reactive towards external actors, such as the US (Cordesman 2019; Blasko 2019; Lowsen 2019). Nevertheless, modernisation efforts of China's armed forces provide ample evidence to the increasing role that its military might play for foreign policy objective of protecting China's national interests overseas. The ambitions of China to become a global player is reflected firstly in the defence budget. According to IISS analysis, China's share of the total defence expenditures of Asian economies (these include countries like India, Japan, South Korea and Australia) amount close to 40%. Eventual outcome of these expenditures is China's increasing self-reliance thanks to an advancing domestic defence-technology industrial base. Second, in terms of military capabilities, the organisational reform and modernisation of the PLA was announced and started in the end of 2015. Joint support and logistics as well as space and maritime assets received special attention. In 2017, China participated in multiple multilateral formats, with the noteworthy first participation in a maritime exercise with Russia in the Baltic Sea (International Institute for Security Studies 2018: p. 222–232). Beside national military reform and the participation in multinational exercises, China's PLA already underwent “trial by fire” live action in three key events: (1) the 2009 deployment of naval assets in the Gulf of Aden in order to conduct anti-piracy operations off the coast of Somalia, (2) the 2011 mass evacuation of Chinese citizens from Libya and (3) increased troop contributions to UN peacekeeping, including combat troops since 2014 (Parello-Plesner, Duchâtel 2015: p. 54–60, 107–121).

While historically rather reluctant to participation in UN peacekeeping missions abroad, China gradually adopted a foreign policy change to more active participation after economic reforms by Deng Xiaoping, which increased China's dependency on external markets, and political isolation due to the violent suppression of the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests, which had put the Chinese government in political isolation. In addition to that, China's economic model, eventually making it the “workbench of the world”, also increased the demand for natural resources not available in China. In this sense, international stability proved to be of vital interest to China. Since 2013,

China began to support UN peacekeeping more actively by sending military engineers to the UN mission in Mali or combat troops to UNMISS in South Sudan. In 2017, the PRC reported 8000 personnel for the UN peacekeeping standby force, including a detachment of 800 soldiers to the UN rapid response (“Vanguard”) brigade (Institute for Security&Development Policy 2018: p. 1–4, 6–7). Moving forward to today, as of 31 August 2019, China was the 12th largest troop and police contributor to UN peacekeeping. With more than 2500 personnel, the country is present in eight UN peacekeeping missions (United Nations Peacekeeping W/WW).

In a further move in its new foreign policy, China opened its first overseas naval base in Djibouti in 2017. Located alongside the probably busiest maritime shipping route connecting Red Sea with the Gulf of Aden, the base provides China with a strategic asset, where it can quickly deploy People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) warships to nearby theatres of operation, such as the Horn of Africa, the Gulf of Oman or the Mediterranean Sea, while also enabling operations in Africa and the Middle East. The mission portfolio encompasses activities such as anti-piracy duties as well as intelligence collection, non-combat evacuation operations, peacekeeping operation support, and counterterrorism (Headley 2018).

Presence of the PLAN did not go unnoticed, as there have been incidences of both, cooperation and competition. China’s desire to influence political conditions in the region and beyond by increasing its presence (not only economic, but also military one) introduces a competing power toward US ambitions as well as an alternative security provider for countries in Africa (Damon, Swails 2019). Beyond the political game, several physical stand-offs between China and the US have apparently already occurred in the near past as well. In 2018, the US issued a formal complaint to the PRC regarding usage of military-grade laser weapons against US military aircraft nearby Djibouti. The Chinese government has so far denied its involvement in the incidents (Ali 2018).

On the bright side, China acted also as cooperation partner in the same year, e.g. by conducting a joint exercise between PLAN and the EU Naval Force (EU NAVFOR) Atalanta. Despite positive referrals in the media, the actual operational value of this exercise should not be overestimated (Stanley-Lockman 2018). Largely unnoted, the German–Chinese joint exercise *Combined Aid 2019*, brought medical units of the Armed Forces from both countries together to conduct training on handling mass casualties and pandemic outbreaks. Chinese commentators underlined the importance for China to cooperate also with other internationally active countries, like Germany, while hoping for further European autonomy. Western voices were critical of exactly this last argument, fearing that those efforts might lead to more disunity in the Transatlantic relationship and weakening of a consolidated Western response to China, e.g. via NATO (Pickrell 2019).

It is indeed a strong and valid argument, that China would be glad, if improvements of European autonomy, particularly in defence matters, would lead to a decoupling from the US (Harold 2018: p. 1–12). However, it is up to EU Member States that are also members of NATO to ensure that European activities leading to more autonomous action by the Union do not harm the Transatlantic bond.

Perceptions of the US and other key regional actors, such as Japan, South Korea and India amongst other like-minded countries definitely matter. Having already presented the US perspective in the introduction in this article, it is no surprise that US armed forces have increased their power projection in the region. Further regional partners, such as South Korea, Japan and Australia amongst other countries located nearby the South East Asian Sea, sought US defence cooperation while the US also considers further increased troop deployments in order to balance China in the region (*US and 10 ASEAN navies...* 2019; Johnson 2019). In another example of third state interaction with China, India has been confronted directly by an increased presence of the PLAN in the Indian Ocean and indirectly through intensified defence cooperation between China and India's neighbours, including its long-time rival Pakistan (Zheng 2017). While such inter-state struggle for power and dominance in the Indo-Pacific is not part of CSDP framework, cooperation with China in whichever format is certainly scrutinised, particularly in case of maritime affairs. And just the other way, the EU should thoroughly analyse cooperation and competition between China and a third state in order to adapt its strategy towards China as well (Zhu 2015: p. 201–215).

Recommendations for CSDP and conclusion

Following the analysis of EU CSDP and China along the conceptual outline of "cooperation" as presented in the respective subchapter, this conclusion provides the synthesis of the research conducted in this article. In line with the EU's dual stance on China in international affairs, recalling that China is a cooperation partner and a competitor for the EU at the same time and depending on the policy sector, the results are compiled according to a cooperation and competition 'strand'.

Beginning with cooperation, three recommendations have been identified:

1) Identify means of integrating China into civilian CSDP missions.

As a trust-building measure, the presence of Chinese personnel in civilian CSDP could provide the EU and China the opportunity to develop a common understanding about the value of civilian crisis management. Subsequently, the EU would also have a chance to integrate China in a Western (European) framework, thereby overcoming the argument of Western bloc-building/counter-balancing China's rise as a global power. Since participation of a third state in CSDP, regardless if it is military and civilian, requires some legal framework, China also needs to accept codes of conduct and limitations, such as acceptance of not being the exclusive partner. From a practical perspective, the EU would have an additional contributor to its still under-resourced civilian CSDP.

2) Create a framework for the conduct of a selective joint maritime security cooperation.

Cooperation with the PLAN is a two-edged sword, as Matthew Joyce pointed out. Lessons learned from naval exercises, e.g. anti-mine warfare, could be used by China against competing powers in East and Southeast Asia (Joyce 2018: p. 3–6).

But despite the criticism about cooperation in maritime affairs, due to China gaining access to advanced tactics or even technology, the common understanding that the

so-called global commons, such as freedom of the seas, needs to be ensured by willing maritime actors. Where EU and China interest correspond, cooperation does not only serve as a trust-building measure, but does also provide cost reduction opportunities, if the burden is shared appropriately.

3) Identify formats to deconflict potential clashes of interest, e.g. by establishing contacts with counterparts in the Chinese Command & Control structures and conduct staff-to-staff contacts at MPCC/CPCC/Operational HQ and Field Office HQ-level.

This recommendation refers to a practical challenge in the actual implementation of CSDP missions and operations. Beyond political contacts between the EU, the EU Member States, and China, a direct link between the "boots on the ground" is required in order to avoid misunderstandings by shortening communication links. While the EU has developed different options of how to command and control a mission or operation, all such EU structures must be able to quickly communicate sudden events, particularly in case that EU or China rapid reaction forces conduct operations in the same area.

Against the positive backdrop of opportunities of EU–China cooperation in CSD, there are three recommendations that underline the interpretation of China as a strategic competitor. It needs to be particularly highlighted that two of the recommendations are rather inward-looking, i.e. ways of identifying a unified European response to China in CSDP rather than outward-looking "balance of power":

1) Conduct in-depth analysis of China's increasing civil-military presence in theatres where CSDP missions and operations are conducted, and establish European Code of Conduct regarding PLA interaction.

EU Member States should task the European institutions, such as EEAS, to provide regular analysis of China's political, economic, and military impact on countries and regions, where CSDP missions and operations are conducted (Africa, Middle East, Non-EU Eastern Europe, incl. Balkans). Subsequently, such analyses open to all EU Member States offer a comprehensive perspective on the situation 'on the ground' to those Member States that do not have the financial or personal capacity to gain this information.

In addition, some form of European Code of Conduct regarding with PLA forces would also considerably contribute to a more unified approach, as this would also add transparency towards third states that might be concerned by EU staff and forces cooperating or even exercising with China's military (Joyce 2018: p. 4–6).

2) Limit military cooperation with China to multinational formats, e.g. UN peacekeeping.

As a strong gesture of unity, the EU could establish not only a Code of Conduct on interaction with the PLA in CSDP areas, but also agree to completely multilateralising its military contacts with China. This would mean that exercises such as the one between EUNAVFOR Med and the PLAN would be restricted to ensuring UN legal frameworks in the global commons, such as the high seas, and bilateral exercises, like for example the German-Chinese medical exercise, would completely cease. While this recommendation might be rather far-reaching in its political connotation, a compromise could be found, if all EU Member States agree to work towards that goal, while committing themselves to conduct prior consultations with each other and potentially impacted third states.

- 3) Coordinate and cooperate with other regional partners in CSDP, e.g. US and other regional Indo-Pacific powers.

Having presented the importance of perceptions in foreign policy, the EU should seek close coordination and consultation with like-minded partners in order to demonstrate impartiality, when it comes to integrating the third states to CSDP. Being aware of the different geopolitical factors, not all third states might be recommended to be military contributors. Subsequently, if there is a risk, mitigation measures should be identified and implemented. This recommendation, when adopted, would make CSDP from crisis management tool of today to external partnership framework for international crisis management in the future. Just as the recommendation to limit military cooperation with China, this extension of CSDP's role could be an aim to be worked towards.

While the six recommendations, as presented in this article, are not exhaustive by far, each one requires further analysis for implementation. This research has proven the author's thesis that the EU as a whole has currently no consistent policy approach to China in CSDP. Activities between China's PLA and armed forces of EU Member States have so far been limited to bilateral contacts, limited multinational exercises or cooperation in an UN peacekeeping context. With the six recommendations, the article provided options for cooperative and competitive CSDP-related policies for China in CSDP. In coherence with the EU-China Strategic Outlook, the balance of cooperative and competitive suggestions could be adjusted by EU policy-makers, depending on e.g. the political context of a specific geographic area of interest, the availability of alternative partners for the EU, etc.

In any case, there is one general recommendation that can be made for the case of EU CSDP and China. An assertive Chinese foreign policy that uses the full spectrum of tools, such as diplomatic, political, economic means as well as military capabilities, will impact the regions, in which CSDP missions and operations are conducted – both positively and negatively. For the EU as a whole, ignoring these developments or demonstrating disunity in face of such challenges should, therefore, not be an option.

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nieniem wyzwań w zakresie bezpieczeństwa na świecie, integracji europejskiej obrony, ekonomii obrony oraz euroatlantyckiej współpracy w dziedzinie obronności.

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