

Europa era y sigue siendo un centro de gravedad para acontecimientos históricos con un gran impacto a escala internacional. Ambas Guerras Mundiales, la Guerra Fría y la actual fase activa de confrontación del Este con el Oeste han puesto de relieve las profundas brechas existentes en el continente europeo. Ello se ejemplifica con los sucesos acaecidos en los últimos tiempos en varios territorios al Este de la Unión Europea, en Ucrania, Armenia y Nagorno-Karabaj, que muestran como varios Estados vecinos de la Unión, en sus relaciones internacionales, se alejan de los valores comunes a esta Organización internacional.

Esta publicación, fruto de la Conferencia internacional hispano-armenia celebrada en Ereván (Armenia) los días 13 y 14 de octubre de 2022, examina estas situaciones desde una triple perspectiva jurídica, política e histórica, centrándose en particular en Armenia.

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EUROPA Y SUS PAÍSES DEL ESTE, EN PARTICULAR ARMENIA

EUROPE AND ITS EASTERN COUNTRIES, IN PARTICULAR ARMENIA

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CAPÍTULO 3

THE END OF THE “GEOPOLITICAL VACATION”: IMPACT OF THE WAR IN UKRAINE ON RELATIONS BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND CHINA

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Summary: 1. INTRODUCTION. - 2. ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK. - 2.1 When ideas shape foreign policy. - 2.2 “Uncertainty” in International Relations. - 3. EUROPEAN RESPONSES TO THE NEW GEOPOLITICAL REALITY. - 3.1 Responses at the level of the institutions of the European Union. - 3.2 Responses at the level of the Member States of the European Union. - 4. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS.

1. INTRODUCTION

On February 24, 2022, the Russian army launched a large-scale invasion of the Ukrainian territory which, as a result of local resistance, failed to achieve the military objectives initially envisaged, giving rise to the entrenchment of a conflict that continues up to the time of writing. The war has reached the borders of the European Union (EU), revealing not only the geopolitical transformations that have taken place internationally in recent years, but also the different perceptions of the conflict on Ukrainian soil at a global level. This situation also extends to the positions of the three largest world economies: The United States, China, and the EU.

While both the United States and the EU immediately condemned Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, China refused to do so. A day after the conflict began, China's foreign minister Wang Yi stated his country's position on the matter, saying that just as “China advocates respecting and safeguarding the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries,” it also “believes that the security of one country cannot be compromised at the expense of the security of others”, “that regional security cannot be ensured by reinforcing or even expanding military blocs”, and that “with five

consecutive rounds of NATO expansion in the East, Russia's legitimate security demands must be taken seriously and adequately addressed”⁷⁰.

The different perceptions and official positions on the Ukrainian war between an EU that unambiguously condemns the invasion, and a China that implicitly links as responsible for the conflict to NATO's policy of expansion, have the potential to further undermine the relationship between these two actors. In fact, as a consequence of growing disagreements in terms of economics, politics and values, this relationship was already immersed in a negative trend during the years immediately preceding the invasion, as highlighted in March 2019 by the document “EU-China - A strategic outlook”, in which the European Commission referred for the first time to China as “a systemic rival promoting alternative models of governance”⁷¹. This situation represented a clear contrast with the general tone of the relationship between the EU and China during the first decade of the 21st century, marked by the transition from being “distant neighbors” to “strategic partners”, a natural consequence of the deepening of economic ties and the emphasis on shared interests⁷² on the part of both political actors.

In this regard, given the seismic geopolitical nature of Russia's large-scale invasion of Ukraine, and given the contrasting positions of Brussels and Beijing in this regard, the aim of this chapter is precisely to answer the following question: how has the war in Ukraine impacted the EU's relationship with China? To address this question, this chapter will proceed to analyze European responses vis-à-vis China around two main groups. The first one, the responses carried out at the level of the EU institutions. And the second one, the responses given by the EU member states themselves. After analyzing the available evidence, both groups reflect similar results, which point to a more assertive stance towards China on the European side, an increase in mutual distrust, and a worsening of the bilateral relationship at least in the short and medium term.

⁷⁰ 王毅, 王毅·述中方·当前·克·克·的五点立·, 外交部·活·, 2022, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/wjbxhd/202202/t20220226_10645790.shtml (November 1, 2022) (WANG, Y., *Wang Yi expounds China's five-point position on the current Ukraine issue*, Activities of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, 2022).

⁷¹ HIGH REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNION FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND SECURITY POLICY, *Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the European Council and The Council. EU-China – A Strategic Outlook*, European Commission, Strasbourg, 2019, p. 1.

⁷² BATES, G., and MURPHY, M., *China-Europe Relations: Implications and Policy Responses for the United States*, Center for Strategic & International Studies, Washington, 2008, p. 4.

The structure of this chapter is as follows. The next section will develop the analytical framework, consisting of the role of ideas in the field of international relations and the concept of “uncertainty”. Then, the European responses to China as a consequence of the war in Ukraine will be analyzed, both at the level of the EU institutions and at the level of its member states. Finally, the last section will recapitulate the main research results and offer some concluding remarks.

2. ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

This section will develop the analytical framework of this chapter, which revolves around two main aspects: the impact of ideas on the formulation of foreign policy and the role of the concept of “uncertainty” in the field of international relations. From this point of view, the evidence available points to a negative trend in the perceptions of the EU and its member states about China, a phenomenon that in turn goes hand in hand with the formulation of a more assertive foreign policy vis-à-vis the Asian country.

2.1 *When ideas shape foreign policy*

As Alexander Wendt has claimed through its classification of anarchy into three categories (Hobbesian, Lockean, and Kantian) depending on the level of conflict and cooperation, positive change at the international level is possible because “anarchy is what states make of it”.⁷³ Or in other words, the anarchical structure of the international order does not deterministically condemn us to live in a world of distrust and conflict.

In this regard, one of the historical moments that best attests to the role of ideas in international politics is the series of events that would eventually trigger the end of the Cold War. The arrival in power of Mikhail Gorbachev in 1985 resulted in an improvement in Moscow's relations with the West. The *New Thinking* in foreign policy rejected a vision of the world divided into two antagonistic camps, the approach to diplomatic and security relations merely through the lenses of Marxism-Leninism, and the perception of international relations as nothing more than a zero-sum game⁷⁴. Mikhail Gorbachev's speech to the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1988 reflected this change in the political worldview of the Soviet Union: “The world in

⁷³ WENDT, A., *Social Theory of International Politics*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003, p. 42.

⁷⁴ DALLIN, A., “New Thinking in Soviet Foreign Policy”, in BROWN, A. (ed.), *New Thinking in Soviet Politics*, Palgrave MacMillan, New York, 1992, p. 72.

which we live today is radically different from what it was at the beginning or even in the middle of this century. [...] The new phase also requires de-ideologizing relations among states [...] let everyone show the advantages of their social system, way of life or values - and not just by words or propaganda, but by real deeds”⁷⁵. In the same way, the collapse of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991 was not a matter of material capabilities. Just before the country ceased to exist, its military power and its nuclear capabilities remained intact. It was, rather, the collapse of an idea: the belief in the Soviet model of development as a system superior to that of its capitalist counterparts⁷⁶.

More than 30 years after Gorbachev's speech, a “new thinking” is emerging again, but this time in the United States and the EU, and related to the way of dealing with China. This new thinking vis-à-vis China is overly pessimistic, perceiving the Asian country as a systemic challenge in terms of values. When it comes to the United States, ideological differences are one of the main reasons behind the worsening relations between the United States and China. Drawing on Alexander Wendt's constructivist insights, Wu Chengqiu argues that the current situation of hegemonic rivalry is heightened by their different ideas, perceptions, and strategies. China's foreign policy of “statist nationalism”, and the US approach to it as a defender of “liberal hegemony”, has increasingly deteriorated their bilateral relationship: whereas the rise of China was the fourth priority under the presidency of Bill Clinton, it was the third for George W. Bush, the second for Barack Obama before mid-2010, and the first one since then⁷⁷.

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has also accentuated this new thinking towards China on the part of the EU. At the end of September 2022, Stefano Sannino, secretary-general of the EU External Action Service made a statement that shows how the negative attitude towards Russia on the part of the EU has also extended to a negative opinion towards China. According to him, the relationship between Russia and China “will be relevant not only for the further development of the ongoing crisis, but also for the future geopolitical balance in the world”. He further stated that “the allying

⁷⁵ AP, *The Gorbachev Visit; Excerpts From Speech to U.N. on Major Soviet Military Cuts*, The New York Times, 1988, <https://www.nytimes.com/1988/12/08/world/the-gorbachev-visit-excerpts-from-speech-to-un-on-major-soviet-military-cuts.html> (November 7, 2022).

⁷⁶ ACHARYA, A., and BUZAN, B., *The Making of Global International Relations: Origins and Evolution of IR at its Centenary*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2019, p. 233.

⁷⁷ WU, C: “Ideational Differences, Perception Gaps, and the Emerging Sino-US Rivalry”, *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, vol. 13, n° 1, 2020, p. 66.

of the two states will bring significant challenges in the years to come”⁷⁸. For its part, Josep Borrell, High Representative for Foreign Affairs of the EU, stated in October 2022 that “people are not aware of that but [...] Russia and China are no longer the ones that [they were]”, and that the world in which China and Russia “provided the basis of our prosperity” is “a world that is no longer there”⁷⁹. These statements point to a hardening of the EU's stance towards China in the coming years as a consequence of the latter's position on the Ukraine war, suggesting a lessening “uncertainty” about China's future intentions at the international level.

2.2 “Uncertainty” in International Relations

Why do hegemonic powers cooperate with rising powers that might pose a long-term challenge to their own international position? According to David M. Edelstein, “such behavior results neither from downplaying an emerging potential threat nor from misplacing optimism about transforming a possible threat into a reliable friend. Rather, it is a product of the recurrent dilemma that state leaders face in taking costly action now or deferring that action until later. The short-term rewards of cooperation combine with uncertainty about the future to make cooperation not only possible but likely. Such cooperation is not naïve, nor is it irrational. It is, instead, a by-product of the incentive that state leaders face to capture short-term rewards despite long-term risks of doing so”⁸⁰.

In this regard, according to Edelstein's argument, time horizons, and especially the presence of uncertainty about the future intentions of the rising power, are behind the dilemma that policymakers in hegemonic countries have to face when dealing with rising powers. If they adopt a long-term vision, they will have to pay the short-term costs of abandoning their policy of cooperation and adopting a new policy of competition vis-à-vis the rising power in order to address a long-term threat whose future materialization is uncertain. On the contrary, even though the adoption of a short-term vision that favors cooperation might backfire and increase the long-term costs of dealing in the future with a materialized threat when it is already too late, this strategy

⁷⁸ PENNY, T., *West Must Awake to Russia-China Alliance, EU Warns*, Center for European Policy Analysis (CEPA), 2022, <https://cepa.org/article/west-must-awake-to-russia-china-alliance-eu-warns/> (November 7, 2022).

⁷⁹ BORRELL, J., *EU Ambassadors Annual Conference 2022: Opening speech by High Representative Josep Borrell*, European Union External Action, 2022, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/cu-ambassadors-annual-conference-2022-opening-speech-high-representative-josep-borrell_en (November 7, 2022).

⁸⁰ EDELSTEIN, D., *Over the Horizon: Time, Uncertainty, and the Rise of Great Powers*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 2017, p. 2.

allows policymakers to conserve resources in the short term. Therefore, policymakers in hegemonic powers tend to adopt the latter strategy... as long as uncertainty about the rising power's future intentions remains.

When it comes to China's long-term intentions, the Chinese government has long emphasized its commitment to peaceful development⁸¹, as well as its desire to maintain cooperative relations both with the United States⁸² and the EU⁸³. However, the severe disputes between China, on the one hand, and the United States and the EU, on the other, in terms of values, economics, and technology in recent years have brought their relationship, increasingly marked by geopolitical rivalry, to a five-decade low point, and have exacerbated mutual distrust. In fact, some academic publications have argued that China's long-term strategy precisely aims to displace the United States (as well as its allies) from its position of international leadership and undermine the current liberal international order⁸⁴.

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, as well as the divergent positions on the issue by the EU and China, only seem to have accelerated the trend of mistrust and competition into which their bilateral relationship had been heading in recent years. In this regard, in April 2022, Josep Borrell published the diplomatic statement "On China's choices and responsibilities", which adopted a harsh tone against China and indirectly linked it to Russia's actions: "In practice, Beijing's attitude has been one of pro-Russian neutrality [...] it does support Russia's justifications of the war, i.e. the claim that the root causes lie in 'Cold War thinking' and especially NATO enlargement. [...] Russia

⁸¹ 王毅, "和平·展尽力·担当", 外交部·活·, 2022, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/wjbxhd/202209/t20220925_10771110.shtml (November 7, 2022) (WANG, Y., *Doing our best in favor of peace and development; Taking responsibilities for unity and progress*, Activities of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, 2022).

⁸² 王毅, "王毅: 合作共·是中美·当·争取的共同目·", 外交部·活·, 2022, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/wjbxhd/202209/t20220923_10770713.shtml (November 7, 2022) (WANG, Y., *Wang Yi: Win-win cooperation is a common goal that China and the United States should continue to strive for*, Activities of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, 2022).

⁸³ 王毅, "王毅: 中欧在相互尊重、互利共·基·上·展·合作, 将·的世界局·提供更多·定因素", 2022, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/wjbxhd/202203/t20220307_10648861.shtml (November 7, 2022) (WANG, Y., *Wang Yi: Dialogue and cooperation between China and the European Union on the basis of mutual respect and mutual benefit will provide more stability to the turbulent world situation*, Activities of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, 2022).

⁸⁴ See, for example, ECONOMY, E., *The World According to China*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2021; DOSHI, R., *The Long Game: China's Grand Strategy to Displace American Order*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2021.

and China have made clear that they believe that great powers are entitled to a zone of influence in their respective neighbourhoods”⁸⁵.

Josep Borrell's words show that, on the part of the EU, China's international behavior is viewed with suspicion due to its political closeness to Russia. This aspect, in turn, plays against the appeasing concept of “uncertainty” à la Edelstein. With increasing distrust towards China's actions and intentions, the adoption of a short-term policy based on economic cooperation is discouraged in favor of a long-term policy of competition. The responses given by the EU and its member states to their relationship with China attest to this, putting an end, at least in the short and medium term, to their “geopolitical holiday” when it comes to dealing with Beijing.

3. EUROPEAN RESPONSES TO THE NEW GEOPOLITICAL REALITY

This section will elaborate on the responses of both EU institutions and EU member states to their relationship with China following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. As mentioned above, both types of responses yield similar results, offering a picture of a worsening relationship with China in the short to medium term.

3.1 *Responses at the level of the institutions of the European Union*

The recent events in Ukraine have affected the EU institutions' stance on China in two main ways: the hardening of the attitude towards Beijing, and the strengthening of ties with like-minded partners to confront the Asian country.

The tougher stance of the EU institutions towards Beijing is evident both in their attitude during diplomatic events with China and in the statements made by high-level officials of these institutions. In this regard, in April 2022, during the EU-China Summit, the EU side refused to “focus on the positives” and economic cooperation, as the Chinese side had asked previously. On the contrary, the EU repeatedly raised the issue of the war in Ukraine and asked China to reassure that it would not provide Russia with support for the invasion. According to Josep Borrell, the Summit was a “dialogue

⁸⁵ BORRELL, J., *On China's choices and responsibilities*, European Union External Action, 2022, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/china%E2%80%99s-choices-and-responsibilities_en (November 7, 2022).

of the deaf”⁸⁶, and at the end of the meeting there was no joint statement between both sides. A few days after the end of the Summit, Josep Borrell published the aforementioned diplomatic statement “On China's choices and responsibilities”, which adopted a harsh tone against China and indirectly linked it to Russia's actions. A side effect of this new situation is that the ratification of the Comprehensive Agreement on Investment (CAI) between the EU and China seems to be off the table in the short to medium term.

The fact that the negative attitude towards Russia on the part of the EU has also reinforced a negative opinion towards China was also manifested by the statement made by Stefano Sannino, secretary-general of the EU External Action Service, at the end of September 2022. According to him, the relationship between Russia and China “will be relevant not only for the further development of the ongoing crisis, but also for the future geopolitical balance in the world”. He further stated that “the allying of the two states will bring significant challenges in the years to come”⁸⁷.

It is therefore clear that there is a growing distrust towards China because of its relationship with Russia, which could end up undermining the relationship between China and the EU. Such undermining already seemed to be taken for granted by the aforementioned Josep Borrell's October statement, in which he seemed to anticipate a significant deterioration of economic relations between the EU and China, and perhaps even a situation of decoupling.

In fact, at this moment the EU seems determined to reduce its strategic dependence on China. To this end, the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, recently stated at a press conference with the President of the European Council, Charles Michel, that one way to reduce Europe's dependence on China for components and raw materials will be to strengthen ties with other partners in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Charles Michel seconded his words, stating that Latin America is a “very important” region for the EU. It is expected that the strengthening of

⁸⁶ BORRELL, J., *EU-China Summit: Speech by High Representative/Vice-President Josep Borrell at the EP plenary*, European Union External Action, 2022, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eu-china-summit-speech-high-representativevice-president-josep-borrell-ep-plenary_en (November 15, 2022).

⁸⁷ PENNY, T., *op. cit.*

EU relations with Latin America will be helped by the convening of the EU-CELAC summit next year, which has not been convened since 2015⁸⁸.

The deterioration of relations between the EU and China, as well as the will of the former to reduce its economic dependence on the latter, was also highlighted at the 5th Hongqiao International Economic Forum in Shanghai, held in early November 2022. European Council President Charles Michel recorded a message to be played during the opening ceremony of this trade expo. However, after it became known that the speech contained criticism of Russia's "illegal war" in Ukraine and a call to reduce economic dependence on China, its broadcast was cancelled by the Chinese authorities⁸⁹. In this regard, it can be argued that the EU is no longer willing to approach its relationship with China from the point of view of economic gains. The EU institutions are now approaching this relationship in systemic and structural terms, and this new situation leads them to consider not only Russia, but also China, as potential challenges that must be addressed from the point of view of new policies and mechanisms.

In the implementation of new policies and mechanisms vis-à-vis China, coordination with like-minded partners seems to play a fundamental role for the EU. This element has materialized in a strengthening of ties with the United States, Japan, and Taiwan.

In May 2022, the US-EU Trade and Technology Council (TTC) certified that the war in Ukraine has brought the US and the EU even closer. In the Joint Statement, they stated that "the world has changed dramatically since the first TTC meeting in Pittsburgh on 29 September 2021". In response, they created new mechanisms of cooperation, some of which might be also used against China: an "unprecedented cooperation on export controls", the update of the controlled goods list, and an increase in the bilateral cooperation on investment screening and on "security risks related to specific sensitive technologies"⁹⁰.

⁸⁸ SAHUQUILLO, M., et al., *Europa recalibra su relación con China tras la lección de la invasión rusa a Ucrania*, El País, 2022, https://elpais.com/internacional/2022-10-21/europa-recalibra-su-relacion-con-china-tras-la-leccion-de-la-invasion-rusa-a-ucrania.html?ssm=TW_CC (November 15, 2022).

⁸⁹ POLLARD, M., and STRUPCZEWSKI, J., *Exclusive: China cancelled EU leader's video address at opening of major trade expo*, Reuters, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/china/exclusive-china-cancelled-eu-leaders-video-address-opening-major-trade-expo-dips-2022-11-08/> (November 15, 2022).

⁹⁰ U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, *U.S.-EU Joint Statement of the Trade and Technology Council*, Office of Public Affairs, 2022, <https://www.commerce.gov/news/press-releases/2022/05/us-eu-joint-statement-trade-and-technology-council> (November 15, 2022).

That same month also took place the EU-Japan Summit, which had a very different tone from the EU-China Summit held a month earlier, and pointed to greater coordination between the two sides vis-à-vis Beijing. In this regard, they stated that they were “seriously concerned” about the situation in the East China Sea and the South China Sea, “strongly” opposing “any unilateral attempt to change the status quo and increase tensions”. Besides, in addition to continuing their coordination when it comes to Russia, they also agreed to “deepen” their “exchanges on China, notably with regard to political, economic and security dynamics, including the situation in Hong Kong as well as on human rights, including in Xinjiang”⁹¹. It is remarkable that both parties openly express their complicity and desire for coordination in such sensitive matters for the Chinese authorities.

Finally, Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has also led to a strengthening of ties between the EU and Taiwan. In June 2022, the EU conducted an “upgraded” high-level trade dialogue with the island, aiming to secure Taiwan's support for the European semiconductors industry. This was the first trade talks meeting at the ministerial-level between both sides, being co-chaired by the EU's Director-General for Trade, Sabine Weyand, and Taiwan's minister of economic affairs, Mei-Hua Wang. According to Taipei, the meeting was a “major breakthrough in relations with the EU”. According to Noah Barkin, the meeting was “also a reflection of the EU's deteriorating relationship with China”⁹². Besides, this meeting is also important because the EU wants to signal that it is willing to engage in talks with Taiwan regardless of China's possible annoyance. The impact of the war in Ukraine is shown by the fact that this same meeting was postponed in 2021 to avoid a negative impact on the relationship of the EU with Beijing⁹³. Moreover, in July 2022, the European Parliament adopted the “resolution of 6 July 2022 on the EU and the defence of multilateralism”. This resolution encourages the participation of Taiwan, with observer status, in important international organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the

⁹¹ LEYTS, B., *Joint Statement EU-Japan Summit 2022*, European Council, 2022, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/05/12/joint-statement-eu-japan-summit-2022/> (November 15, 2022).

⁹² BERMINGHAM, F., *Upgraded trade talks with EU on semiconductors signal an advance in Taiwan's standing*, South China Morning Post, 2022, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3180248/upgraded-trade-talks-eu-semiconductors-signal-advance-taiwans> (November 15, 2022).

⁹³ BERMINGHAM, F., *Exclusive | EU shelve Taiwan trade upgrade amid high-wire balancing act on China*, South China Morning Post, 2022, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3156345/eu-shelves-taiwan-trade-upgrade-amid-high-wire-balancing-act?module=inline&pgtype=article> (November 15, 2022).

International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol), and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)⁹⁴.

3.2 Responses at the level of the Member States of the European Union

The responses given by the EU member states can be classified into two types: the issuing of rhetorical statements by high-ranking officials reflecting their perceptions of their bilateral relationship with China, and the decision-making at the practical level. With the exception of the decisions taken by German Chancellor Olaf Scholz regarding Germany-China relations, a hardening of tone towards China can be observed in general terms, which is sometimes materialized in the area of concrete policy-making vis-à-vis Beijing.

The pronouncements by high-ranking politicians from the EU member states generally point to an increased distrust of China and a call to reduce economic dependence on the Asian country. Paradoxically, despite Olaf Scholz's conciliatory attitude towards China, it was Annalena Baerbock, Germany's minister for foreign affairs, who was one of the first European politicians to make statements to this effect. One month after the start of the war in Ukraine, she stated that “one-sided economic alignments in fact make us vulnerable. Not just with regards to Russia”⁹⁵.

Besides, additional voices within the German state also point out to China as a potential threat. In October 2022, much of the annual meeting between Germany's secret services was focused on the consequences of the war in Ukraine, and according to the participants, “the security authorities, society and politics in Germany have ignored warnings about the dangers emanating from Russia and China for too long”. After detailing the threat Russia poses to security and stability in Europe, Bruno Kahl, the president of the Federal Intelligence Service argued that a major threat to be feared is that of an “autocratic China that is rising to become a global power”. He claimed that German intelligence services have been trying for years to denounce the risks associated with the relationship with China, and that an example of success was in 2019 with the

⁹⁴ EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, *European Parliament resolution of 6 July 2022 on the EU and the defence of multilateralism*, European Parliament, 2022, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2022-0286_EN.html (November 15, 2022).

⁹⁵ BAERBOCK, A., “*Security for the freedom of our lives*”, Federal Foreign Office, 2022, <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/newsroom/news/baerbock-national-security-strategy/2517790> (November 15, 2022).

skeptical statement by the Federation of German Industries on the economic ties with China. For his part, Thomas Haldenwang, the president of the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, stated that it is clear in the long run the far greater threat to German security and German interests would come from China: “Russia is the storm, China is climate change”⁹⁶. It is therefore possible that, as a consequence of the war, China's economic ties with some EU member states might be affected in the medium to long term. In fact, Germany and France are nowadays preparing their strategic reports on China, and in light of the current circumstances, it is expected that they will be more negative than in the past⁹⁷.

However, despite this political climate that is not conducive to a positive development of the German-Chinese relationship, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz has stated that Germany "must continue to do business with China" and that decoupling is “the wrong answer”⁹⁸. This vision has materialized not only in the German government's permission for China's COSCO to acquire a 24.9% share of a terminal in the port of Hamburg, but also in Olaf Scholz's official visit to Beijing in November 2022, the first visit by a leader of the Group of Seven (G7) since the pandemic began. This visit was criticized in the weeks before it took place by some EU member state leaders. For example, in October, Estonian Prime Minister Kaja Kallas criticized the visit arguing that it is “important not to have separate deals on China”, or else it would be “very easy to divide us, in our interests to stick together”. She added that “China is like Russia”, as both countries benefit when the EU is divided. The words of Latvia's Prime Minister Arturs Krišjānis Kariņš were in a similar vein, defending the idea of dealing with China with one voice, and “not one on one”. He further stated that the goal of the EU should be to “make sure that China is on the right side of history regarding Russia's war of aggression”. These words contrast with those of Finland's Prime Minister Sanna Marin, who was more sympathetic towards Olaf Scholz's visit to Beijing⁹⁹. However, she herself also made clear her mistrust of the economic

⁹⁶ ZENTNER, C., *Dienste warnen vor Gefahren durch Russland und China*, Bundestag, 2022, <https://www.bundestag.de/presse/hib/kurzmeldungen-916626> (November 15, 2022).

⁹⁷ WANG, Z., *Chinese thinktank calls for restoring ppl-to-ppl exchanges ASAP*, Pekingology, 2022, <https://www.pekingology.com/p/chinese-thinktank-calls-for-restoring> (November 15, 2022).

⁹⁸ SHI, J., *Decoupling from China 'the wrong answer', says German leader*, South China Morning Post, 2022, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3195722/decoupling-china-wrong-answer-says-german-leader> (November 15, 2022).

⁹⁹ BERMINGHAM, F., *Latvian and Estonian leaders asked about Scholz visit to China with a biz delegation, both called for a 27+1 approach rather than member states freelancing*, Twitter, 2022,

relationship with China, stating that this distrust “doesn't mean there can't be any economic relations with China but it means we shouldn't be building that kind of strategic and critical dependencies on an authoritarian country”¹⁰⁰.

However, the greatest impact of the war in Ukraine on the relationship between China and the EU member states is observed in the area of specific policies adopted by the latter. The one that had the greatest resonance was the adoption of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)'s New Strategic Concept in June 2022, which is relevant to the issue at hand because 21 of the 27 EU member states are also members of NATO.

China was not a priority for NATO until very recently. At the beginning of the new millennium and after the attacks of September 11, 2001, the organization focused on combating -often unsuccessfully- the spread of jihadist terrorism globally. The invasion of Afghanistan that same year marked the beginning of the global war on terrorism, which would unfold over the next two decades. In more recent times, it was Russia that once again attracted the attention of NATO, which was already openly seen in 2014 as the greatest threat to the security of its members as a consequence of Moscow's annexation of Crimea and its involvement in the Ukrainian crisis. For its part, it would not be until 2019, within the context of Beijing's increasingly assertive foreign policy and the political crisis between the Asian country and the United States, that the first discussions would take place within NATO to consider China as a challenge in military terms at the request of Donald Trump.

In this regard, the 2022 NATO summit in Madrid marked a significant contrast to the two previously held meetings, which took place in 2019 and 2021. Since 2019, the United States had been trying to have China declared a threat to the alliance. However, the December 2019 NATO summit reflected the absence of unanimity among NATO allies regarding China's alleged military challenge against their own national security. In fact, the wording of the joint declaration by the heads of state and government at the end of the summit highlighted the allies' eagerness to maintain constructive ties with China:

https://twitter.com/fbermingham/status/1583370463266320384?t=xA_0-VF61T5QTJHJxUyepw&s=03 (November 15, 2022).

¹⁰⁰ STRAUSS, M., and VAN CAMPENHOUT, C., *EU shouldn't build dependency on regimes like China, says Finnish PM*, Reuters, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/eu-shouldnt-be-building-strategic-critical-dependency-regimes-like-china-says-2022-10-21/> (November 15, 2022).

“We recognize that China's growing influence and international policies present both opportunities and challenges that we need to address together as an Alliance”¹⁰¹.

At the 2021 NATO Summit, Washington's chances of using the military alliance to strengthen its position in a context of growing rivalry with China were again weakened, as it again failed to get the support of its allies to declare China as a threat or as a direct rival to the alliance for the second time. In fact, some EU member states did not hesitate to publicly express their refusal of US intentions. UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson rejected the idea of focusing excessively on China and thereby starting a “new Cold War” with the country, and German Chancellor Angela Merkel also defended a more cautious stance, stating that NATO “must not overrate” Beijing's increasing global influence and that the alliance needs “to find the right balance” in its relationship with China. In addition, Emmanuel Macron appeared publicly to oppose the idea of declaring China a threat or rival to the military alliance, stating that “NATO is an organization that concerns the North Atlantic, China has little to do with the North Atlantic”, and that “it's very important that we don't scatter ourselves and that we don't bias our relationship with China”¹⁰².

However, NATO's stance on China visibly hardened after the outbreak of the large-scale war in Ukraine, which was manifested in the new Strategic Concept approved by NATO allies in June 2022. Despite China being outside the territorial scope of the alliance, the view of China as a threat was reinforced, given that it was labeled as a systemic challenge. In addition, China was accused of challenging NATO's “interests, security and values”, of posing a challenge to global stability, and of aligning with Russia “against the Alliance's open door policy”. In other words, following the Russian invasion of Ukraine there has been a closing of ranks among NATO members (most of them, also, EU members) not only vis-à-vis Russia, but also vis-à-vis China. Moreover, unlike the NATO summit in 2021, there have been no critical statements by European leaders against the hardening of the Alliance's tone vis-à-vis China. Therefore, this lack of public criticism might indicate that there has been unanimity

¹⁰¹ BRZOZOWSKI, A., *With new focus on China, NATO patches up stormy summit*, Euractiv, 2022, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/with-new-focus-on-china-nato-patches-up-stormy-summit/> (November 15, 2022).

¹⁰² TRT WORLD, *NATO says China is a threat. But do all its members agree?*, TRT World, 2022, <https://www.trtworld.com/magazine/nato-says-china-is-a-threat-but-do-all-its-members-agree-47577> (November 15, 2022).

among NATO members to toughen the position on China after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine.

The importance of NATO's new Strategic Concept lies in the fact that it could make it easier for Washington to win the support of its allies in the future to confront the rise of China, given that their perceptions and ideas about the Asian country seem to converge. This support has not always been forthcoming in the past, as demonstrated by the support of the vast majority of its allies to the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the participation of some of them in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Moreover, the importance of this strategic concept is also evidenced by the Chinese government's response after its announcement: it defined it as a “malicious attack” on China, stated that it was “cold war thinking and ideological bias”, and asked itself “who's challenging global security and undermining world peace? Are there any wars or conflicts over the years where NATO is not involved?”¹⁰³.

In addition, there are other cases at the EU member states level that point to increased distrust of China or the intention to reduce ties with Beijing. When it comes to Western European member states of the EU, the Spanish government's stance towards Huawei's 5G networks contrasted sharply with the position of its major neighbors such as Germany, the United Kingdom, France, and Italy... until the start of the large-scale war in Ukraine. Before the invasion of 2022, Spain was one of the nations with the most lenient policy towards Huawei's 5G. The first draft of its cybersecurity bill, which was published in December 2020, did not include specifically the possibility of restricting or prohibiting Huawei's participation in the deployment of the country's 5G networks. However, after Russia's large-scale invasion of Ukraine, the Spanish government has drafted a new cybersecurity law that would severely undermine the deployment of Huawei's 5G in Spain. The enactment of the cybersecurity act was expedited after the start of the war, and one of its main objectives is to limit China's potential technological influence in Spain. The “Real Decreto-ley 7/2022”, although it does not directly mention Huawei as a risk company, states that in order to classify a company as risky, “the links of the suppliers and their supply chain with the governments of third countries”, and “the power of a third State to exert pressure on the performance or

¹⁰³ NI, V., *Beijing hits out at Nato strategy for 'malicious attack' on China*, The Guardian, 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jun/30/beijing-hits-out-at-nato-strategy-for-malicious-attack-on-china> (November 15, 2022).

location of the company” will be taken into account¹⁰⁴. This would imply de facto that Spanish telecommunications companies would have to dispense with the collaboration with Huawei and opt instead for other companies such as the Finnish Nokia and the Swedish Ericsson.

Besides, in the context of growing mutual distrust between China and the EU, some of the latter's member states have begun to monitor Chinese police stations located in their territories. In October 2022, Ireland's parliament asked the central government about the activities of the Fuzhou Police Overseas Service Station opened in Dublin earlier that year, amid rumors that it could be used by the Chinese government for policing outside of domestic laws and to pressure Chinese criminals to return to their country. The Irish government has requested explanations from the Chinese embassy in the country about the operation of the police station, and will examine whether its activities comply with domestic and international law¹⁰⁵. For its part, Spain is the country in the world that probably has the most of these Chinese police stations, with nine. Faced with allegations that coercion is sometimes used to get escaped Chinese criminals to return home, and that a Chinese man named Liu was persuaded through the Federation of Overseas Chinese and the Qingtian Chinese Association of Spain to return home to face charges of environmental pollution, Spain's Interior Ministry acknowledged that it is investigating the matter¹⁰⁶. The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs has also made similar statements on the matter, indicating that “appropriate action” will be taken with respect to two Chinese police stations located in Amsterdam and Rotterdam¹⁰⁷, as well as Germany's Hesse Interior Ministry, which has confirmed that it is investigating a Chinese police station in Frankfurt¹⁰⁸.

¹⁰⁴ FERNÁNDEZ, E., *El Gobierno hace saltar por los aires el mapa del 5G en España: se desbaratará el despliegue previo si hay riesgo con Huawei y China*, El Mundo, 2022, <https://amp.elmundo.es/economia/empresas/2022/04/02/6246dd70e4d4d836658bd1de.html> (November 15, 2022).

¹⁰⁵ GALLAGHER, C., *Government seeks answers from Chinese embassy on 'police service station' in Dublin*, The Irish Times, 2022, <https://www.irishtimes.com/politics/2022/10/08/government-seeks-answers-from-chinese-embassy-on-police-service-station-in-dublin/> (November 15, 2022).

¹⁰⁶ ALDAMA, Z., *Las operaciones 'secretas' de la policía china en España*, El Correo, 2022, <https://www.elcorreo.com/internacional/asia/operaciones-secretas-policia-20221009175227-ntrc.html> (November 15, 2022).

¹⁰⁷ NU, *China heeft illegale politiebureaus in Nederland, ministerie wil in actie komen*, NU.nl, 2022, <https://www.nu.nl/binnenland/6232130/china-heeft-illegale-politiebureaus-in-nederland-ministerie-wil-in-actie-komen.html> (November 15, 2022).

¹⁰⁸ KNOLLE, K., *German authorities looking into reports of illegal Chinese police in Frankfurt*, Reuters, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/german-authorities-looking-into-reports-illegal-chinese-police-frankfurt-2022-10-28/?taid=635c1078be9c930001887b91> (November 15, 2022).

The war in Ukraine has also affected the relationship between the Eastern European members of the EU with China, mainly through the deterioration of the 17+1 framework. The 17+1 framework was created in 2012 at the initiative of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs to improve communication and cooperation with Central and Eastern European countries. While it had 16 members until August 2022 (following Lithuania's withdrawal in 2021), Estonia and Latvia also decided to leave this framework as a consequence of the Russian invasion of Ukraine and China's close relationship with Moscow.

Following the withdrawal from the 17+1 framework, both countries made it clear that they still want to maintain positive relations with China, but that they must be based on the “rules-based international order” and “human rights”, two elements that in their view have been violated following Ukraine's invasion of Russia. In addition, Estonia made it very clear that the reason for its withdrawal was the said invasion, since “it has not attended any of the meetings of the format after the summit last February”¹⁰⁹.

Besides, their references to human rights and the rules-based international order can also be interpreted as a position on the recent tensions in the Taiwan Strait. In fact, as the EU is already doing through its institutions, it is also possible that some of its member states may decide on their own initiative to strengthen their ties with Taiwan. For example, an 11-person Lithuanian delegation led by Agne Vaiciukeviciute, the country's Deputy Minister of Transport and Communications, arrived in Taipei on August 7 to strengthen trade ties with the island and to reinforce political ties between both sides¹¹⁰.

Finally, at the level of the member states of the EU, one of the few optimistic images for the relationship with China is provided by German chancellor Olaf Scholz. As already mentioned, his administration has decided, despite domestic pressures, to authorize a major investment by COSCO in one of the terminals in the port of Hamburg, and has also made an official visit to China in November 2022. Scholz's China policy reflects that the war in Ukraine and differing perceptions about the conflict need not necessarily disrupt economic cooperation and the maintenance of relatively

¹⁰⁹ AP, *Latvia and Estonia leave China-backed East Europe forum in new setback for Beijing*, Euronews, 2022, <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2022/08/12/latvia-and-estonia-leave-china-backed-east-europe-forum-in-new-setback-for-beijing> (November 15, 2022).

¹¹⁰ TAIWAN TODAY, *Lithuania transportation delegation touches down in Taiwan*, Taiwan Today, 2022, <https://taiwantoday.tw/news.php?unit=6&post=223259> (November 15, 2022).

cordial political relations with Beijing. However, it remains to be seen to what extent this position, which contrasts with the hardening of the tone of EU institutions towards China, is sustainable in the long term, especially considering that, since the last few years, a long-term perspective consisting of a geopolitical distrust to the detriment of a short-term vision solely marked by cooperation and economic benefits is generally observed in the EU when it comes to its relationship with Beijing.

4. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Despite the fact that less than a year has passed since the beginning of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the available evidence seems to indicate that the conflict has reinforced the trend towards a bilateral relationship between the EU and China increasingly marked by disagreements and geopolitical rivalry to the detriment of a vision characterized by the pursuit of economic benefits. Or in other words, under a situation of growing mutual mistrust, EU-China relations are no longer guided exclusively by economic cooperation. Jean Pisani-Ferry, a senior fellow at Bruegel, has baptized this general trend in the field of international relations with the expression “the geopolitical conquest of economics”, which he attributes to “the failure of convergence through economic integration”¹¹¹.

Both the attitude towards China on the part of the EU institutions and the behavior of its member states at the individual level reveal the adoption of a long-term perspective that focuses no longer on the possibilities of obtaining economic benefits through the engagement with Beijing, as a short-term strategy would reflect, but rather on responding to what they perceive as the potential implications of the rise of China and the country's political closeness to Russia. The response given by the EU institutions to their relationship with China as a consequence of the war in Ukraine has been twofold: the hardening of the attitude towards Beijing, and the strengthening of ties with like-minded partners to confront the Asian country. On the other hand, at the level of the EU member states, the responses have consisted of pronouncements by high-ranking officials that mainly reflect a greater distrust towards China, and the implementation of concrete policies unfavorable in most cases to Beijing's interests.

¹¹¹ PISANI-FERRY, J., *The Geopolitical Conquest of Economics*, Project Syndicate, 2021, <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/geopolitics-is-trumping-economics-by-jean-pisani-ferry-2021-09> (November 15, 2022).

The evolution of the war in Ukraine, as well as the scale of the differences in EU and Chinese perceptions of the conflict, will continue to impact the bilateral relationship between the two sides. In this context, the willingness of both parties to find common ground, as well as the prospects for the success of such attempts, should they occur, will have to be closely monitored. The rejection of the use of nuclear weapons in the conflict, for example, has the potential to be a point of confluence between both sides. It remains to be seen, however, to what extent it is feasible in the near future the readoption of a short-term perspective that would allow the return of the emphasis on economic benefits and cooperation, or even whether at a theoretical level such a readoption is feasible, once a long-term perspective à-la-Edelstein already seems to be in place.