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EU-China Relations in the Age of Globalization and Regionalization*

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Abstract

Until the beginning of 2005, the “mood” in EU-China relations was generally optimistic, boasting that a new “Europe-China” axis was in the making, and the arms embargo might be lifted eventually. During the last five years the relationship between these two powers has been full of controversy and competition, though cooperation remains the main theme. With the change of leaders in the major European powers, notably the advent to power of Angela Merkel in Germany and Nicholas Sarkozy in France, the lustre that could be found in Europe-China relations during the days of Chirac and Schroeder gradually faded. The new leaders are more critical on the issue of human rights in China, the Tibetan problem etc., and also appear to be more ready to voice

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their dissatisfaction over the growing trade deficit with China. This paper will focus on whether and how China could play a role in the minds of European policy-makers in mapping the future of Europe, taking into consideration four contextual factors: the implications of globalization for Europe, regionalization efforts in Asia, the “peaceful rise” or the subsequent “peaceful development” of China, and multilateralism in Europe-Asia relations. The paper aims to investigate how political leaders in Europe and China think and proceed on the prospects for cooperating with one another, the political implications of their cooperation and conflict over the future international political order, and the difficulties ahead that might interfere with cooperation in various fields.

Key Words: globalization, regionalization, arms embargo, multilateralism, peaceful development