

The bear and the EU-China-US triangle: transatlantic and Russian influences on EU's “pivot to Asia”

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Abstract This chapter argues that in the case of the EU's efforts to undertake a “Pivot to Asia”, added explanatory salience can be achieved by recognising firstly the importance of the transatlantic factor and the US' own rebalance policies. Secondly, based on a model where the USA is regarded as a significant variable in the EU-China relationship, one may more saliently discern the influence of Russia by assessing its impact on the triangular EU-China-US relationship, both directly and indirectly. Addressing these issues in European policymaking, the chapter will be constituted of two main parts. In the first section, the triangular nature of European foreign policies towards China is introduced, addressing the transatlantic factor in EU-China relations. Based on research on the European policy debates on EU's Asia policies and the American Pivot to Asia, the section will illustrate the degree to which EU policy initiatives are conceived as playing out on a range from cooperation to competition with the US' rebalance initiatives. In the second section, the chapter will proceed to investigate a factor that is affecting, although to different degrees, all three corners of the triangular political context in which European China policies are being shaped, namely the effects of recent Russian actions in the Eurasian theatre. The analysis demonstrates how European policymakers struggle to define their place in the EU-China-US triangle. The dynamics of the ongoing Asian power shift highlights the dilemmas for the European continent, as it seeks to balance its relations in a shifting geopolitical landscape.

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Introduction

Analysing the role of the transatlantic alliance in shaping the debates and policies of the European Union's engagement with China, this chapter will argue that the alliance relationship with the USA is of a special nature, providing an impetus strong enough for it to be salient to talk about a triangular dimension to European China policies. This triangular dimension is, furthermore, a salient analytical approach for assessing the impact of other external actors, namely Russia, by analysing potential effects brought on EU's policies indirectly by influencing the broader triangular strategic dynamics. Thus, taking the EU's attempted "Pivot to Asia" as its case, this chapter investigates how third parties affect the timing and the allocation of attention of EU foreign policy.

The investigation proceeds along two main lines of argument. Firstly, that European policies towards China are shaped not only by the particularities of the European context and the feedback from China through bilateral ties, but that the USA is playing an active and considerable role as a formative factor for EU-China ties. This particular status of the USA is based both on the closeness of the transatlantic ties, and on the fact that the USA is a world power counting the transatlantic alliance into a wider net of alliance relationships and global interests. The peculiar dynamics of the USA being both exceptionally close and exceptionally globally engaged came into sharp focus in the European debates surrounding the Obama administration's pivot to Asia, highlighting how EU's China policies are made on an arena where the USA is an unavoidable third player. Secondly, in acknowledging the triangular aspect of EU's relations to China, where the US alliance relations will be a constitutive factor, it follows that one ought to pay particular attention to factors that have the capacity and motivation to affect all of the three "corners" of the triangular structure through which the formulation and implementation of EU's Asia policies are taking place. The main such factor is Russia, which is increasingly, and along various theatres, having an impact on the policies of both the EU, the USA and China. Investigating how Kremlin's increasingly assertive policies under Vladimir Putin may affect the triangular relationship EU-China-USA, is thus helpful in assessing the external factors shaping European policy options in Asia.

Addressing these issues in European policymaking towards China, this chapter will be constituted of two main parts. In the first section, the triangular nature of European foreign policies towards China is introduced, addressing the transatlantic factor in EU-China relations. Based on research on the European policy debates on EU's Asia policies and the American Pivot to Asia, the section will illustrate the degree to which EU policy initiatives are conceived as playing out on a range from cooperation to competition with the US' rebalance initiatives. In the second section, the chapter will proceed to investigate a factor that is affecting, although to different degrees, all three corners of the triangular political context in which European China policies are being shaped, namely how recent Russian policies is having a significant indirect influence. In conclusion, I will argue that by including the impact of the transatlantic factor, and the Russian influence on the triangular relationship between the EU, the USA and China, this allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the external political environment within which the EU debates its role in the Pacific century.

The triangular dimension of EU-China relations

Whether one subscribes to the theoretical approaches emphasising the material, or those pointing to normative incentives as the main drivers of alliance politics, there is a point on which they converge, namely that close alliance ties to a global hegemon, with whom one also shares a range of liberal democratic values and cultural affinities (Hemmer and Katzenstein 2002), is likely to have a particular wide range of potential impact on the formulation and implementation of foreign policies (Ikenberry and Kupchan 1990; Risse-Kappen 1997; Walt 2013). So also in the case of the EU and its European member states' relations to the USA, as these ties have developed into a close network of military alliances, cultural affinities and economic interdependence during the post-war period. This fact sets the transatlantic alliance bond apart from that of other great powers seeking to influence European foreign policy decisions.

Relations between the EU, the USA and China are, however, a bit of a lopsided triangle, for a range of reasons, including that the USA is regarded by both the two other nodes as being the most significant actor (Shambaugh 2005). Added to this is the fact that whereas China and the USA are relatively homogenous parties, US engagement with China being among the most bipartisan issues in Washington (McCain 2012), the complex institutional and political frameworks and competing national agendas, that constitute the EU is making foreign policy coordination a harder challenge than for the other two (Fox and Godement 2009). Whereas the US has not steered away from bringing influence to bear on its European partners, China has on its side been wary of taking sides on transatlantic disputes, even at its nadir in wake of the US invasion of Iraq (Foot 2010; Ross et al. 2011).

The literature on intra-alliance dynamics underlines how alliances can be used as a tool to constrain and shape allies' foreign policy behaviour (Pressman 2008). Ironically, a lot of literature is occupied with illustrating how less powerful allies, such as European ones, may impact a hegemon such as the US (Keohane 1971; Risse-Kappen 1997). The opposite dynamic has, however, been very much in play in the US' influence over EU's China policies. A potent example is how one of the juncture points of EU-China relations came about when plans, spearheaded by France and Germany, to end the European post-Tiananmen weapon's embargo towards China, was shelved following considerable US diplomatic pressure on European capitals (Griffin and Pantucci 2007). "Ultimately, US security interests in East Asia required the European states to change their China policies" (Ross et al. 2011). This symbolically significant policy outcome did cause somewhat of a reality check for Chinese policymakers' view of the EU as a potential strong separate pole in international relations (Shambaugh 2008). Concurrently, the example illustrates the salience of recognising the importance of the transatlantic bond in European policies towards China and East Asia.

On this basis, given that central voices in American policymaking circles are identifying China as their main strategic competitor, the transatlantic bond should not be disregarded as a shaping force in EU's policies towards a country its closest ally considers its closest "frenemy". As Maher underlines, this dynamic drives a key dilemma as Europe manoeuvres the triangular relationship, namely the risk, in Snyder's terms, to be abandoned by the USA in Europe, or to be entrapped in a conflict serving US' interests in Asia (Snyder 1997; Maher 2016). Both aspects of this dilemma

became highlighted all the more for the Europeans, as a result of the US' rebalance to Asia, and the transatlantic alliance became a key point around which the European policy debates did revolve.

The pivot and the transatlantic factor—a tale of four European perspectives

During the last decade, the relationship between China and Europe has intensified. The EU is now the biggest trading partner of China, and Europe is becoming increasingly important as a destination for Chinese investments (Hansakul and Levinger 2014; HRVP 2016). The US' pivot to Asia arguably affected European Asia policies in a range of ways. Firstly, the US' pivot increased the attention to Asia in Europe and also spurred the interest in the EU to formulate its own comprehensive and systematic policy. Secondly, the US pivot also raised concerns in Europe regarding the future of transatlantic relations and the extent to which Europe can expect to rely on US security guarantees and capabilities. While many Asian countries reacted positively to the US pivot, many in Europe saw it as a potential threat. Thirdly, the US' pivot also triggered an intense discussion in Europe on its core interests and the true nature of Europe's future cooperation with China, and on the relationship between the EU and the US in a Pacific century.

The American strategic rebalance of resources and attention to the Asia-Pacific region, popularly known as the “Pivot”, has become the main foreign policy initiative of the Obama administration. The Pivot or “rebalance” aims at intensifying the US' presence in the region through a range of economic, military and diplomatic means (Clinton 2011; Daggett et al. 2012; Swaine 2012). These changes, importantly, share the common denominator of reducing the relative military and political footprint allotted to Europe on the global scene. The years after Obama announced the American rebalance, saw the European Union's engagement with the region go through a step change.

A proverbial “European pivot to Asia” had been gathering steam for a while, and in 2012, an unprecedented series of EU high level meetings, visits and summits with Asian partners took place. In the 2012 Guidelines, the EU updated and spelled out a wide range of interests, goals and strategic objectives in the region (The Council of the European Union 2012). “As part of its own “pivot” to Asia, Brussels also stepped up its efforts to reengage with the region both through bilateral “strategic partnerships” (China, India, Japan and South Korea) and through multilateral cooperative schemes, e.g. by adhering to the ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) and joining the ASEAN Regional Forum in 2012” (Pejsova 2014). The diplomatic offensive towards the Asian continent undertaken by EU officials led to the EEAC dubbing the 2012 EU's “Year of Asia” (Reiterer 2013). Symbolically topped off by High Representative Catherine Ashton visiting East Asia five times in 2013, compared to three visits by US Foreign Minister John Kerry, and for the first time attending the key Shangri-La dialogue forum, this is regarded as symptomatic of a growing European recognition that also has a stake in the American rebalance (ECFR 2014). As Ashton emphasised, “developing our relations with Asia across the board is a major strategic objective for the European Union.” (Hofman 2014).

The declared American strategic rebalance thus provided an impetus for the EU, and the various European countries, to revisit and revive their policies towards the Asia Pacific, seeking to shore up their relevance to the USA by increasing their role as a relevant actor in Asia. While the US pivot has increased the attention to China, it has not triggered a convergence in policies between the USA and the EU. Based on the analysis of a wide range of political and academic material at both the level of the EU and the various member states, this chapter suggests that the European policies is quite distinct from the USA, and that there is considerable debate as to the direction of the policy. Analysing a wide range of academic and policy documents, four main approaches as to how to handle the transatlantic factor in European Asia policies are identified: co-operation, co-ordination, competition and conflict. Each of these four main strands of thought envisions a different place for the transatlantic alliance in the future direction of EU's policy towards China and the wider East Asian region. Over the coming sections, the four disparate strands on thinking about the European pivot will be presented, as Europe struggles to define their best response to the rise of Asia and China as a new central locus in world affairs, and how best to balance this with the transatlantic axis of the triangular relationship.

Cooperation with the USA: the transatlantic Pacific pivot

The first of the four perspectives argued for in European policymaking and academic circles focuses on the need for the European Union to develop a pivot to Asia in close coordination with the USA. This is motivated not only by the aim of further strengthening the transatlantic relationship, but also assisting Europe in playing a more active role in an Asia with complex security challenges which both Atlantic partners should address. The joint statement released at the conclusion of the 2011 EU-US summit would note "The EU and the United States have a strategic interest in enhancing cooperation on political, economic, security and human rights issues in the Asia-Pacific region to advance peace, stability and prosperity." (Europa.eu 2011). The primary factor distinguishing this statement from later perspectives on EU-US coordination in Asia is the degree to which this policy approach emphasised Europe's potential as a US partner also in terms of military security in the region.

These tenets were further underlined in the landmark joint statement by American Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and the EU High Representative Catherine Ashton on the eve of the July 2012 ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). As one study noted, "The Guidelines were designed to send a reassuring message to the United States about EU intentions in a region where security and public goods are guaranteed by Washington but where the Union is politically absent." (Casarini 2012). Erickson and Strange concluded in a 2012 report for the European Institute for International Security Studies that "It is essential that the US and its NATO allies do not simply pursue a "division of labour" scenario in which the US handles the Alliance's Asia-Pacific duties while EU members essentially concentrate resources in regions closer to home. In fact, from an EU perspective it may be desirable to develop a more direct presence in the Asia Pacific." (Pawlak 2012). Although the EU is hardly a major actor on the Asian security scene, and there is little chance of the situation changing especially with the rise of the "Russia factor" since 2014, it should not be forgotten that some of the Union's leading members have at their disposal regional military capabilities which could potentially be

built upon in order to both symbolically and substantially contribute to the US-led security structure in the region (Reiterer 2014). *Operation Atalanta* on counter-piracy around Somalia is a current high-profile example of collaboration between EU and Asian security and military forces. In spite of the embargo, furthermore, European defence firms constitutes 7% of China's defence budget, Asia imports 20% of its arms from Europe, vs. 29% from the USA (Herrly and Meijer, 2013).

Coordination with the USA: the “Yin” of Europe

As Ashton would coin it in her speech at the 2013 Shangri-La Dialogue, the EU has come to Asia to stay, although importantly, not as an Asian Power, but as an Asian partner (Ashton 2013). Thus, Europe and primarily the European Union, as the EU level, is far more prevalent on economic and soft power issues than in the arena of hard power security, should contribute to the US efforts in a compatible role according to this approach. This would involve the fulfilling of a division of labour that, if one will, grants Europe the role as a soft power *yin*, to the American hard power *yang*. As such, playing a convergent role cooperating and contributing with their soft power approach without engaging too much in the realm of securitization and hard power, areas better left to the American superpower (Reiterer 2014). This approach has also been widely disseminated in academic circles. For example, a survey conducted of approximately 100 European and American experts demonstrated that most would support the potential division of labour between the EU and the USA, where the EU's main added value would be on the “soft” issues of economy, global governance and human rights (Pawlak and Ekmektsioglou 2012a).

Of course, criticisms have been raised concerning the effectiveness of such an approach to truly impact the East Asian security theatre. Yet, such concerns have not found a response in official EU policies to date. An example put forth by critics is how Catherine Ashton, during the time when Sino-Japanese territorial disputes in the East China Sea flared up in September 2012, demurred from publicly taking a side (Duchâtel and Huijskens 2015). Importantly, the convergent aspect of this approach with the US strategic line in the Asia-Pacific is explicitly spelled out in the Guidelines, which underline the necessity for the EU to help ensure that their Asian counterparts' policies do not undermine local stability, while establishing that the EU should “recognise that the credibility of US defence guarantees in the region is essential at present for the region's stability” (The Council of the European Union 2012).

Co-existence with the USA: the third road

This perspective, which is gathering strength among the research communities in some European research institutes, starts with the idea of an evolving “duopoly” in the Asia-Pacific region created by power balancing between Beijing and Washington and concludes that Europe has little to gain by alignment too close to either of the parties. European governments should instead carve out a role more independent from the two main actors, identifying themselves more closely with regional groupings such as ASEAN, thus developing a more relevant identity in the Asian century, while at the same time being less likely to be embroiled in the conflicts which may still occur in Asia. In a 2012 EUISS Analysis, Casarini formulates the central query facing EU

officials as “EU policy makers need to tackle the following question: does it remain in the long-term interest of the EU to be perceived as being closely aligned with the US in Asia-Pacific and renouncing the chance for its distinctive—and more neutral—voice to be heard?” (Casarini 2012). In a landmark report compiled on EU-China relations and published by the EUISS in 2013, the one of the main suggestions raised is that the controversial idea of European “neutrality” should not be shunned but instead embraced as an asset the EU can claim in East Asia. “The EU could also take a balanced approach to the US-China security relationship in East Asia by refraining on the one hand from lifting the arms embargo against China, and on the other hand from becoming directly involved in Washington’s current build-up of military and diplomatic pressure on China” (Putten 2013).

On this, the sources favouring varieties of a “third road” approach will point to the overlapping interests the EU has with China, and addition to those with Washington, not seeing cooperation with the one as excluding deep cooperation with the other. An example that broadly falls into this category is how a range of European states would, unlike e.g. Japan, break ranks with their American ally in the question of membership of the Chinese-initiated Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (Liao 2015). In this particular instance, it would seem the economic incentives for the European countries did outweigh the strategic imperatives argued for by the USA. As Javier Solana suggested, “on the global front, the EU and China may find themselves to be natural partners on key issues. China is facing increasing pressure (particularly from the US) to assume a global political role that corresponds to its economic weight. Here, China could find an excellent partner in Europe, either in a G-3 format with the US or in focused bilateral cooperation.” (Solana 2013).

Competition with the USA: the “Eurasian Axis”

The fourth perspective centres mainly around the common interests already noted as shared between the EU and China, and how these have the inherent potential for a substantially stronger EU-China relationship, if not an outright alliance (Gardner 2013). From an international relation theory perspective, while the other three options represent variations of balancing behaviour towards China, this course would essentially be based on “bandwagoning” with the rising Chinese power. This argument reached a high-water mark at the turn of the century, largely due to European discontentment with American foreign policy under the Bush Doctrine and sharp transatlantic policy divisions over the start of the Iraq War in 2003.

Since then, however, support for this option has cooled, although it continues to be voiced in certain European circles and remains a not-unthinkable recourse, as well as a challenging prospect for the future. A further finding suggested from an EUISS survey showed that among European experts, “Closer cooperation with China is considered to be a more important policy tool for the Union than cooperation with the US.” (Pawlak and Ekmektsioglou 2012b). In a similar vein, “a recent report by the German think tank GIGA, funded by Huawei, showed that 84 percent of Germans saw the economic relationship with China as more important than that with the US” (Kundnani 2014). France in particular has pushed for a better institutionalisation of the EU-Asia relationship, motivated by a desire to counterbalance American dominance. “For the EU—and in particular the core members of Central and Western Europe more active in promoting

integration—China is not only a trade and political challenge, but also presents a strategic opportunity to enhance Europe’s role in world affairs and gain autonomy from the US” (Pawlak 2012). Although for the EU to give this notion of a multipolar world priority over transatlantic ties seems rather unlikely under current global security conditions, the 2003 transatlantic rift resulting from the Iraq War serves to demonstrate that US unilateralism swiftly led to a backlash, straining even the old and cold war-tested ties over the Atlantic, and in effect leading to increased interest for stronger ties with China, renewing the question of an Eurasian alliance (Scott 2007).

All of the policy debates on EU’s relations with China spelled out so far point to how the USA continues informing and influencing, for better or worse, EU policymaking. The EU’s diplomatic offensive towards East Asia will necessarily be shaped in a global context where the transatlantic alliance with the USA, and the US own pivot policies are key drivers. Thus, working from the premise that EU’s policies towards China are shaped within a dynamic, triangular context involving both China, itself and the USA, it follows that in analysing other external actors’ influence on the EU’s China policies it is salient to look not only at how these actors influence the EU directly. One should also, as this chapter, argues through the case of Russia, take into consideration the indirect effects produced by influencing the broader strategic context of the EU-China-USA strategic triangle.

The Russian impetus on the EU-China-USA triangle

Russia’s contributions to shaping EU’s China policies are mainly of an indirect nature. However, precisely through exerting considerable influence over the EU’s security priorities, and the dynamic of the EU’s near abroad, Russia may be said to have a considerable impact at the EU’s capabilities and motivations to press forward with their diplomatic offensive towards China and Asia at large.

Direct effects

As Russian soldiers in unmarked uniforms spilt in over the borders of Ukraine in the spring of 2014, they provided a stark spotlight onto a range of predicaments the EU have been struggling with in reaction to Obama’s declaration of the US Pacific Pivot. As a 2011 Congressional report points out, in Europe there is still “unfinished business” remaining “in the Balkans, Caucasus and former Soviet states, and the United States will continue to cooperate closely with Europe on these issues” (Mix 2011). However, the events of Crimea and Eastern Ukraine have illustrated amply that the unfinished business was of a different magnitude than what was projected. Severely challenging the political order in EU’s neighbourhood, the invasion of Crimea and the conflict in Eastern Ukraine have again brought armed conflict on the top of the European agenda. This furthermore added to a long and fundamentally challenging list of crises facing the Union, from the euro crisis to the refugee crisis, to the Brexit saga (World Economic Forum 2016).

As such this chapter will argue that a considerable direct effect that Russia has exerted on the EU’s range of policies towards China and East Asia, although likely undeliberate, has been to rewrite the agenda of the EU’s leadership, in effect pushing

EU's Asia policies one tier down on the portfolios of European politicians. Furthermore, Europe's tepid ability to secure its own backyard calls into question the ability of European military structures to assume greater responsibilities even further abroad. Bringing to mind the four main policy directions debated with regards to the EU's Asia policies, Russia under Putin's leadership has arguably been pushing the likely future EU course of policy more towards a "soft" approach, as the EU and European countries are forced to spend more resources and political bandwidth on security on their own continent. Furthermore, by adding to the number of crises currently besetting the European agenda, Russian actions are likely to have caused a lack of impetus in the EU's Asia policies compared to what would otherwise have been the case (Rumer 2016). Furthermore, these trends are arguably amplified by certain indirect effects of the Kremlin's recent foreign policies on the transatlantic relationship.

Indirect effects

The main effect Russia has had on the contextual configuration shaping EU's China policies, has arguably been indirectly through influencing the EU-China-USA triangular relationship. Firstly, the recent Russian foreign policy adventures has led to a re-evaluation of the US role in Europe, as the security crisis present there means less time and attention given to Asia, bound up in Europe (Dyer 2014). "Ironically, though, after spending much of his first year as Secretary of Defense reassuring European and Middle Eastern leaders that a "rebalance" toward Asia did not mean neglect for other parts of the world, Hagel now finds himself reassuring Asians that the pivot is still on." (McManus 2014). Instead of pivoting to Asia from a Europe that was a point of strength, the pivot initiative instead arrived precisely at a point when European security was more vulnerable than it had been in decades. The renewed realisation of the importance of US security presence in the region is well exemplified by the Polish defence minister Siemoniak: "Events show that what is needed is a re-pivot, and that Europe was safe and secure because America was in Europe." (Weisgerber 2014). In light of these concerns, the US has sought through NATO to reinforce American deterrence on the European continent (Borger 2016).

Thus, by securing the American footprint on the European continent in the near future, to a larger extent than what would otherwise be likely, the Russian actions have contributed to bringing the USA and the EU closer together after a period where there was initial fear from a range of European states about US "abandonment" in the wake of the American rebalance to East Asia (Hiatt 2014). As such, the impetus is no longer equally urgent to ensure European relevance to the US by building a strong partnership with them in East Asia. The transatlantic motivation for a strong European involvement in the US pivot to Asia is thus somewhat lessened, especially since a range of more immediate challenges to the EU's security and prosperity has appeared, arguably augmenting the lessened importance of East Asia to the transatlantic relationship, at least in the short term.

Regarding the indirect effects to be gathered from Russian interactions with the third corner of the EU-China-USA triangle, the relationship between China and Russia is making international headlines, as China and the Asia-Pacific region have become central in a new Russian strategy to establish Moscow as a "Euro-Pacific Power" (Hill and Lo 2013; Liik 2014). This new momentum on the Eurasian continent, given

impetus by the Ukraine crisis and Western sanctions against Russia, plays into Chinese hands an opportunity to further strengthen the historically significant Sino-Russian relationship (Zhong 2014; Xinhua 2014). This new, closer relationship creates an additional incentive for the EU not to stoke Sino-Russian fears of a shared destiny of Western powers surrounding the Eurasian heartland. The incentives to avoid providing the *raison d'être* for a stronger Sino-Russian relationship, arguably pushes in the direction of EU policies towards China being less based on security and more on economic cooperation. These policy incentives do, however, potentially run counter to the interests of EU's American alliance partners, again underscoring the policy dilemmas faced by the EU in seeking to find the balance-point for the transatlantic relationship in the EU-China-US triangle.

Conclusion

Among the range of external and internal factors shaping EU foreign policy initiatives, this chapter argues that in the case of the EU's efforts to undertake a "Pivot to Asia", added explanatory salience can be achieved by recognising firstly the importance of the transatlantic factor and the US own rebalance policies. Secondly, based on a model where the USA is regarded as a significant variable in the EU-China relationship, one may more saliently discern the influence of Russia by assessing its impact on the triangular EU-China-US relationship, both directly and indirectly. Through this treatise it is demonstrated how the USA and the transatlantic relationship continues to play a significant role in European public debates and policymaking regarding the EU's current and future role in East Asia. The Obama administration's pivot to Asia played an important part in the timing of the EU's own turn towards Asia. Although certain of these EU policies was already in the making, the US policy initiatives towards Asia provided a significant impetus that inspired and accelerated European focus Eastwards.

Analysing EU's policies towards East Asia, and China in particular, through the prism of a triangular model with the US as a noticeable impetus, one may thus also be able to more clearly discern which effects other main international actors have played in shaping the international context in which EU policies are sought created and implemented. A key case in point is the case of Russia that as illustrated in the discussions above has recently undertaken a range of policy actions of wider relevance for European policymaking. Although the direct effects of these on EU-Asia policies are relatively small, Putin's recent assertions of Russian power abroad effects all actors of the EU-China-US triangle, and as such carries noticeable indirect effects on the EU's Pivot to Asia through affecting the broader international political context.

The analysis has also demonstrated how European policymakers struggle to define their place in the EU-China-US triangle. The dynamics of the ongoing Asian power shift highlights the dilemmas for a continent trying to balance its relations with a close ally and security guarantor, the USA, with its rising strategic competitor in East Asia, China. Russia's policies further accentuate the dilemma, making it more challenging for the EU to participate in US' security policies in East Asia, and thus deepening the yet unanswered question of how, or if, Europe would contribute to the transatlantic alliance should the relations between the two other parties in the EU-China-US triangle turn problematic. EU's foreign policies are affected by the member states, affected by the

neighbourhood, by the region, but not the least also by transatlantic relations. Approaching the EU's relations to China through this prism arguably allows for this range of factors to be more saliently analysed.

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