Essay prepared for the Dahrendorf Programme 2024

Trust on Trial? Chinese Students in Europe Amid Geopolitical Uncertainty[1]

Xiaona Wang

Xiaona.wang@education.ox.ac.uk

DPhil Candidate in Education

St. Antony's College, University of Oxford

February 2025

[1] This essay is adapted from my doctoral research, part of which will be published in: Wang, X. (forthcoming). Ripples in Still Water: Analysing Scientific and Technology Collaboration Between China and Switzerland in G., Postiglione, Q., Zha, & W., Shen (Eds.), *Geopolitics and Higher Education: China and the World*. Routledge.

Trust on Trial? Chinese Students in Europe Amid Geopolitical Uncertainty

Xiaona Wang

In an increasingly interconnected world, international scientific collaboration is more than just a trend; it is a strategic imperative. However, geopolitical conflicts have added a new layer of complexity, fuelling competition, particularly around vital resources such as talent and fields such as science and technology (S&T) (Wu, 2019; Sun& Cao, 2024). This dynamic is especially evident among the three major players: the US, China, and the EU. The relationships between these entities have experienced significant volatility, evolving from the Cold War "strategic triangle" to the "diplomatic triangle" (e.g., Ross, Tunsjø, and Zhang, 2011, p.1) and more recently to a "rivalry triangle" (e.g., Haliżak & Jarczewska, 2023; Perthes, 2021; Brattberg & Le Corre, 2020). In response to diplomatic tensions with the US, China has proactively initiated scientific collaborations with scientifically advanced nations maintaining neutral political stances (Freeman & Huang, 2015). Amid these developments, understanding the evolving landscape of international scientific collaborations becomes paramount (Chen, Zhang & Fu, 2019). Consequently, China-Europe relations have emerged as a crucial focal point in the shifting landscape of global politics and economics (Goulard, 2020), however, these relationships are marked by a complex interplay of collaboration and contention (Geeraerts, 2019), including areas such as trade relations (e.g., Karkanis, 2018; Garcia-Herrero, 2020), technological cooperation (e.g., Assimakopoulos & Chen, 2013), and geopolitical concerns (e.g., De Scott, 2007; Maher, 2016; Yu, 2018). Despite the tensions, recent research indicates no significant signs of decoupling between China and Europe.

The changing geopolitical landscape

As noted in the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission annual report (2023, p.520), the EU and European countries are “an important locus of geostrategic competition between the United States and China”. In 2024, during the Dahrendorf Lecture (2024), Josep Borrell, the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security

Policy, emphasized in his speech at the University of Oxford that the current development goals of the EU are social cohesion, economic prosperity, and trust, whether in values, trade, technology, or knowledge, and advocating for reinforced security and defence capabilities from both institutional and geopolitical perspectives, viewing Europe as a whole.

However, Europe is currently undergoing significant changes and social tensions, with the ongoing wars being the most undeniable aspect. These conflicts have sparked debates among EU member states regarding survival and development among different countries (Borrell, 2024). On the other side, China continues to show a strong desire for collaboration, as evidenced by President Xi Jinping's visit to three European countries, France, Serbia, and Hungary, in May. (Xinhua News, 2024).

Building trust among countries remains challenging. The “de-risking” policy proposed by the EU, aimed at economic and technological engagement with China (Brinza et al., 2024), represents the significant issues, concerns, and tensions regarding security and development that are critically important for all European nations. As noted by Nature, “science and politics are interlinked” (Huang, 2024, p. 293).

The direct influence of such mistrust rapidly manifests in higher education institutions. Allegations concerning the Chinese Scholarship Council (CSC) have sparked significant discussions regarding its legitimacy and related security issues, leading some universities in the EU to cut such collaborative programs or ban students who receive this type of financial support. Such incidents have been reported across numerous European universities, including in the Netherlands (Bounds, 2023; Sharma, 2024), Germany (Sharma, 2023), Sweden (Hogan, 2023ab), and France (Sharma, 2020), etc. This situation reflects a broader international environment, indicating that for Chinese scholars, especially those who studying in European countries, is a particularly challenging era.

Academic mobility in an era of uncertainty

Academic mobility has a long history, taking various forms that have been shaped by regional and international political and economic power dynamics at different points in time (Kim, 2009). The circulation of knowledge and scholarly exchange naturally accompanied the mobility of academics, particularly following the emergence of universities. Modern doctoral education originated in Germany in the nineteenth century, but as the global academic landscape shifted, the United States gradually emerged as the leading centre for higher education (Corson &Ben-David, 1972). Among all levels of education in the U.S., doctoral education is the most internationalized (Shen et al., 2013).

Within the global higher education market, international doctoral students constitute one of the most mobile groups, making them particularly susceptible to shifts in the international environment and geopolitical tensions. On the one hand, they represent the final stage of higher education and serve as the next generation of research talent, contributing not only to their host countries but also to their home countries, thereby generating broader societal impact (e.g., Stuen et al., 2012; Bilecen & Faist, 2015). On the other hand, their high level of internationalization facilitates their mobility while also making them more sensitive to global political and environmental changes. Interestingly, however, recent studies suggest that students tend to base their mobility decisions on the assumption of scientific internationalism, placing less emphasis on geopolitical tensions as a determining factor (Mok et al., 2024).

While international doctoral students may prioritize academic considerations in their mobility choices, the geopolitical landscape inevitably shapes their experiences abroad. Marginson et al. (2010) argue that international students navigate safety concerns that permeate both their private and public lives, affecting them on a daily basis. Although the fundamental structure of these domains has remained unchanged, shifting geopolitical dynamics have introduced new challenges that students must confront. As international tensions evolve, so too do the risks and uncertainties surrounding academic mobility, highlighting the complex interplay

between academic mobility, security, and global politics. Also, underscoring the need to examine how these changes impact scholars studying and working in a new global context.

Against this backdrop, this research aims to foster the understanding of Sino-European academic relations by focusing on the lived experiences of Chinese scientists working in specific European countries. To address the research aim, this study is guided by two sub-questions: First, how do Chinese scientists in European countries experience and perceive insecurity, and how does this insecurity manifest in their daily lives? Second, how do these experiences shape their understanding and perception of Europe? To explore these questions, the research employs semi-structured interviews with Chinese doctoral students studying and Chinese-ethnic faculties working in European countries in different disciplines. The participants were interviewed during 2023-2024, and consent was obtained prior to each interview. Some typical stories from them were selected, and they were given pseudonyms to protect their personal information. Participants are drawn from diverse national contexts, including Switzerland, Netherlands, Germany, France and UK. The selection of these countries is particularly relevant in light of recent policy shifts that have reshaped the academic landscape. For instance, Switzerland's exclusion from the EU funding system (SERI, 2023) has created new barriers to international collaboration, while increased visa scrutiny for Chinese scholars in the Netherlands (Bounds, 2023) and France (Sharma, 2020) has introduced additional obstacles to their academic and professional engagement. As only a limited number of participants were involved in this research, the findings represent preliminary results.

Europe as an academic refuge?

> *"In a real sense international students find themselves in limbo, people without a state. A person without a state is an anathema to clean systems of security in both senses: the security of themselves as people, and the security of nation-states" (*Marginson et al., 2010, *pp. 241-242).*

This statement highlights two key dimensions of international students' safety concerns: their need to establish security in both public and private domains, and the broader political and institutional forces that shape their experiences. Among these forces, immigration policies remain one of the most unpredictable and intangible factors they must navigate. Amid rising geopolitical tensions, international students, particularly those from China, have become rational actors, carefully weighing their mobility decisions based on available information. They rely not only on formal sources but also on peer networks, online forums, and media narratives to assess potential risks and opportunities. In this context, politics has become an inescapable element of their daily lives, influencing their perceptions and choices in ways that were once less pronounced.

This brings to a central question: why do Chinese students increasingly choose to study in Europe and the UK over other destinations? While motivations vary, many, particularly in Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Medicine (STEMM) fields, are actively avoiding the US due to worsening geopolitical tensions between China and the United States (US). As the China-US relationship deteriorates, students are reconsidering their academic trajectories, seeking environments that offer not only strong academic reputations but also political stability and lower costs. Europe, in many ways, has positioned itself as an attractive alternative, appearing less directly affected by the geopolitical rivalry between China and the US while maintaining robust research networks.

A case in point is Tree, an international scholar with a PhD from Europe and postdoctoral experience in the US. Reflecting on his collaboration with American institutions, he described how political interference has increasingly constrained academic exchange. While both sides were eager to share data and resources for teaching, the strained China-US relationship made such collaboration difficult. *"Everyone is being very cautious,"* he explained, noting that this climate of caution has impeded curriculum development and data-sharing initiatives. The situation became particularly complicated when *"Chinese-ethnicity professors"* were involved, creating an atmosphere of suspicion that he described as *"very*

embarrassing". Frustrated by these restrictions, Tree eventually shifted his focus back to collaborating with European counterparts.

For some time, Europe has provided a relatively stable and neutral academic environment, offering an alternative to the growing complexities of US-China relations. However, as geopolitical tensions continue to evolve, both students and faculty in Europe are experiencing a shifting political landscape that is beginning to reshape their academic and professional lives.

China Scholarship Council

Founded in 1996, the China Scholarship Council (CSC) is a national organization under the supervision of China's Ministry of Education. Its core responsibilities include selecting, funding, and managing of sponsored scholars studying abroad. Beyond financial support, CSC also recognizes exceptional self-financed international students, collaborates with institutions to develop international education initiatives, and accepts contributions from domestic and international organizations (CSC, 2022) .

As of 2025, the data indicate that CSC programs cover nine categories of higher education for Chinese students pursuing study abroad. Similarly, for foreign students studying in China, scholarships are offered at various levels, including government, local government, and enterprise-sponsored initiatives, supporting both short- and long-term studies in Chinese higher education institutions (CSC, 2025).

For Chinese students studying abroad, CSC funding typically includes round-trip international travel allowance and stipend covering the approved duration of their program. Depending on the project type, the funding duration varies from 3 to 48 months and supports categories such as visiting scholars, postdoctoral researchers, joint training programs, and degree-seeking students (CSC, 2025) . While financial aid provides essential support for many students, its conditions, obligations, and political implications have sparked increasing

controversy, which will be discussed in the next section. To understand the influence of politics on scholarship students, this research considered the perspective of both CSC students and related academics.

CSC experience in STEMM disciplines: funding, scrutiny, and mobility

For students in STEMM fields studying in European countries, geopolitical pressure manifests in a nuanced but tangible way. These pressures come not only from national policy environments, but also from targeted social media narratives and their studying environment. Within universities, these concerns circulate informally, passing from administrators to faculty, and eventually to students.

A principal investigator (PI) in Materials Science at a Swiss university admitted, *"I don't hire them (CSC recipients) anymore."* The reasons for this decision were complex. One issue concerns CSC funding, which provides financial support for individual students, but often falls below the minimum national salary requirements for PhD candidates in some European countries. When CSC stipends fail to meet these requirements, the hosting research group or PI is responsible for covering the shortfall. *"So then it became less attractive because, you know, financially, you were still having to put in a fair amount of money,"* the PI explained.

However, financial concerns are not the only factor at play. Another PI, working in Biology, pointed out that students supported by CSC funding increasingly face visa restrictions in Germany, the UK, and the Netherlands. *"It's likely that students coming through CSC like this will face difficulties getting visas and may even be directly rejected,"* he observed. *"This situation has caused unnecessary shocks to the academic world, particularly affecting Chinese students. Honestly, that's the reality."*

His comments reflect a broader pattern of restrictions on Chinese researchers, particularly those working in "sensitive" STEMM fields. These measures, justified on national security

grounds, have led to reported increases in concern among Chinese students and scholars regarding potential visa rejections or cancellations.

One example of this trend came from ETH Zurich, which became the first major European university to explicitly acknowledge that an applicant's country of origin and institutional affiliations were factors in its admissions screening process. This transparency sparked widespread criticism, with many arguing that it may discriminate against Chinese applicants (Peng, 2024). Critics warn that these measures risk politicizing academic spaces and alienating talented students under the guise of security concerns.

As a result, many Chinese students are re-evaluating their study destinations. *"I came here because of the deteriorating relationship between China and the US",* explained Stone, a physics post-doc who has studied in both France and Switzerland. His sentiment is widely echoed among Chinese scholars who perceive Europe as a refuge from geopolitical tensions. They see Switzerland's political neutrality, in particular, as a protective buffer in the fields of research and technology.

However, this sense of security is increasingly being challenged, *"everything could happen",* Stone remarked after completing his postdoctoral fellowship in Switzerland and deciding to work in China. What was once perceived as an academic refuge is now becoming another contested space in the broader geopolitical landscape. As national security concerns continue to shape academic and professional pathways, the boundaries between scholarship and politics are blurring. For many students, this raises unsettling questions about their future mobility, career prospects, and the long-term sustainability of international collaboration.

CSC experience in Social Sciences: stability and obligation

Although the exact number of CSC selection is not publicly available, the process remains highly competitive. Sunny, a social sciences PhD student in the UK, recalls the intensity of the application process as a *"highly competitive process. You can never be sure you'll be the*

one until the results are in." For her, the uncertainty was eventually replaced by triumph, she was selected and finally had the opportunity to pursue her academic dream. Yet, securing the scholarship required months of meticulous preparation. The process itself, she noted, felt similar to applying for a PhD, as it demanded extensive supporting documents. *"Every step of your academic background counts",* she emphasized, explaining how she sought guidance from past recipients to improve her chances.

One of the most debated aspects of CSC is the requirement for recipient to check in at local Chinese embassies and submit periodic reports about their academic progress, research achievements, and published articles. The close relationship between the recipients and Chinese government institutions has raised concerns about political oversight, with critics in Germany and others European countries questioning whether the program facilitates surveillance or political influence (Sharma, 2023; Clark, 2023; Sharma, 2024).

When asked about these concerns, Sunny responded, *"I need the money. I couldn't afford this PhD without the scholarship, it's just too expensive here."* Her words highlight the financial realities facing many Chinese students, particularly in disciplines like the social sciences, where securing alternative public funding is difficult. CSC is a vital means of pursuing academic ambitions while remaining entangled in broader geopolitical debates about Chinese academic mobility.

This tension is also felt by Ming, a PhD in Netherland, who described a shift in how CSC funding is perceived. *"It used to be an honour."* she said. For Ming, receiving CSC scholarship was a significant moment to her whole family. As the first in her family to pursue a PhD, her parents, both civil servants in China, viewed her selection as a mark of distinction, a validation of her academic success. In her early years abroad, she took pride in her sponsored scholarship, which covered tuition and living expenses, ensuring that she could focus on research. However, the mandatory progress reports to the embassy soon felt like an obligation rather than an academic exercise. Yet, despite the bureaucratic demands, the embassy also provided a sense of community. *"Doing a PhD is tough and lonely",* she

admitted. Through CSC-organized events, she built friendships and even found a romantic partner. For Ming, CSC network was both a support system and a reminder of the obligations attached to her funding.

Bonding and obligations: between support and restriction

For many CSC-funded students, the primary tension lies in the post-graduation requirement to return to China for at least two years. While this is not an issue for students like Sunny and Ming, who had always planned to return, it was a dealbreaker for others like Feng. As a doctoral student in Germany, Feng deliberately chose not to apply for CSC funding to avoid this obligation. Instead, he relied on family support and is now actively seeking job opportunities in Europe. Once considered an unquestioned privilege, the scholarship is now carefully weighed against career aspirations and mobility constraints.

Overall, for STEMM students studying abroad, the environment of trust is more fragile due to national security concerns, yet they often enjoy greater funding flexibility and more diverse career options. Many can transition to non-CSC funding sources or alter their study destinations. In contrast, for students in the social sciences, while their research typically does not involve the dual-use applications of knowledge that attract security scrutiny, they still experience wider geopolitical tensions manifested in the programme's design and within European universities more generally. Additionally, they often have fewer funding alternatives and more limited post-graduation opportunities, making some them highly dependent on CSC support. Ultimately, while the CSC scholarship provides vital financial support, it also profoundly shapes scholars' career trajectories.

Navigating the tensions: mobility programs and geopolitical pressures

> *"The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness."* (Marx, 1859/2010:92)

Placing the individual experience within a wider context, education is never isolated from broader political and economic forces. In recent years, higher education has increasingly become a space where global politics and international relations directly influence academic agendas. As part of the internationalization of higher education, academic mobility and exchange programs have often been seen as tools of public diplomacy (Scott-Smith, 2020) and mechanisms of soft power to shape global influence (Nye, 1990) .

Historically, initiatives like the Fulbright Program in US, the Marie Curie program, and Erasmus in Europe have played significant roles in advancing transnational academic exchange. Originally designed to strengthen international ties in response to political tensions, these programs have served as instruments of soft power, fostering cross-border collaboration and the global exchange of knowledge (Medalis, 2012; Juška, 2024) . However, higher education institutions, the very hubs of these programs, are now at the centre of new geopolitical tensions, making international collaboration more complex and politically charged.

China's growing economic influence and rapid scientific advancements have attracted significant attention from the Western world, leading to increased scrutiny of its academic collaborations. While it is often assumed in China that European higher education institutions, with their long-standing traditions of academic autonomy, remain insulated from political pressures (Cai & Zheng, 2024) , recent developments suggest otherwise. European universities are increasingly adjusting their policies on partnerships with China in response to government-driven geopolitical concerns, seeking to mitigate potential reputational and security risks (Shih et al., 2024) .

This shift is particularly visible in STEMM disciplines. As Xia (2024) points out, the EU and China diverge in their approaches to generative AI due to differences in core principles, ethical regulations, and the relationship between government and industry. However, despite these differences, shared concerns: such as disinformation, data sovereignty, and responsible AI development could create opportunities for dialogue and collaboration. The intersection of

higher education and international politics is thus not only a site of conflict but also a potential space for strategic engagement and knowledge exchange.

Rethinking relationships in global academic collaboration

For many Chinese students who choose to pursue higher education in Europe, the region has long been regarded as a stable and attractive destination. However, in recent years, shifting political dynamics, together with increasingly stringent visa regulations and heightened screenings, have introduced new and often unexpected barriers to international academics. These challenges have contributed to a "chilling effect" on academic mobility and collaboration, making it more difficult for scholars to move freely across borders in pursuit of research and learning. As these shifts occurs, many students studying abroad finds themselves navigating decisions that are not merely practical but also deeply personal. They are forced to seek stability in their academic and professional trajectories while simultaneously managing concerns about their life prospects.

Sustained scientific collaboration, however, should be able to surpass the fluctuations of political landscapes and some can even endure across generations. Chinese scholars studying in Europe are not merely individuals adapting to an increasingly complex geopolitical environment; they also play a key role in sustaining and strengthening international scientific linkages. Their contributions extend beyond personal academic achievements, they actively initiate, nurture, and shape research networks, serving as bridges that connect diverse academic cultures and institutions. At the heart of these collaborative efforts lies a fundamental element: trust. This trust is not limited to confidence in scientific knowledge itself but extends to broader interpersonal and institutional domains. Trust in academic collaboration is not merely an abstract ideal or a product of individual goodwill. It is shaped and constrained by broader social, political, and economic realities (Delhey & Newton, 2003). Given these complexities, establishing common ground is essential. The process of building and maintaining trust, whether between individual colleagues, collaborating institutions, or international partners, is not just beneficial but fundamental to the scientific

enterprise. It is the foundation for advocating inquiry and preserving the healthy ecosystem of our global academic community. This point is powerfully articulated by historian of science, Steven Shapin (2008), who reminds us that the very authority of knowledge is inseparable from these social bonds:

> *"We cannot understand how various scientific and technological knowledges are made, and made authoritative, without appreciating the roles of familiarity, trust, and the recognition of personal virtues" (p. 1).*

References

Bilecen, B., & Faist, T. (2015). International doctoral students as knowledge brokers: Reciprocity, trust and solidarity in transnational networks. *Global Networks*, 15(2), 217–235.

Borrell, J. (2024). Visit of Josep Borrell Fontelles, Vice-President of the European Commission, to the United Kingdom: Dahrendorf Lecture: Europe faced with two wars. https://audiovisual.ec.europa.eu/en/video/I-256530

Bounds, A. (2023). *Dutch government to screen Chinese tech students on security risks*, Financial times, Retrieved from https://www.ft.com/content/8609b715-aa2b-41b3-a0db-d0269bb6bd25

Brattberg, E., & Le Corre, P. (2020). *The EU and China in 2020: more competition ahead*. Carnegie Endowment For International Peace. Retrieved from: https://carnegie-production-assets.s3.amazonaws.com/static/files/1-31-20_Brattberg_Le_Corre_EU_China.pdf

Brinza, A., Bērziņa-čerenkova, U. A., Le corre, P., Seaman, J., Turcsányi, R., Vladisavljev, S. (2024 March). *EU-China relations: De-risking or de-coupling − the future of the EU strategy towards China.* European Parliament Think Tank. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EXPO_STU(2024)754446

Cai, Y., & Zheng, G. (2024). Navigating Shifts in Europe-China Higher Education Cooperation: An Institutional Logics Perspective. *Journal of Studies in International Education*. https://doi.org/10.1177/10283153241296209

Chen, K., Zhang, Y., & Fu, X. (2019). International research collaboration: An emerging domain of innovation studies? *Research Policy*, 48(1), 149–168.

Chen, Y., Assimakopoulos, D., Xie, H., & Chi, R. (2013). Evolution of regional scientific collaboration networks: China-Europe emerging collaborations on nano-science. *International Journal of Technology Management*, 63(3-4), 185-211.

Clark, R. (November 2023). *The Strategic Dependence of UK Universities on China – and where should they turn next?.* Institute for the Study of Civil Society. Civitas: Institute for the Study of Civil Society. Retrieved from: https://www.civitas.org.uk/content/files/The-Strategic-Dependence-of-UK-Universities-on-China-.pdf.

Chinese Scholarship Council (2022). Retrieved from: https://www.csc.edu.cn/about

Chinese Scholarship Council (2025). Retrieved from: https://www.csc.edu.cn/article/3409#

Corson, J. J., & Ben-David, J. (1972). American Higher Education: Directions Old and New. *The Journal of Higher Education (Columbus)*, 43(7), 575-.

Dahrendorf Lecture and Colloquium (2024). Retrieved from: https://www.sant.ox.ac.uk/european-studies/european-studies-centre/dahrendorf-programme/dahrendorf-lecture-and-colloquium

Delhey, J., & Newton, K. (2003). Who trusts?: The origins of social trust in seven societies. *European Societies*, 5(2), 93–137. https://doi.org/10.1080/1461669032000072256

Freeman, R. B., & Huang, W. (2015). Collaborating with people like me- Ethnic coauthorship within the United States. *Journal of Labor Economics*, 33(S1), S289-S318.

Garcia-Herrero, A, Wolff, G., Xu, J., Poitiers, N., Felbermayr, G., Langhammer, R., Liu, W., Sandkamp, A. (2020). *EU-China trade and investment relations in challenging times. EU-China trade and investment relations in challenging times*, the INTA committee, Directorate General for External Policies of the Union, Policy Department of European Parliament, PE. Retrieved from: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EXPO_STU(2020)603492

Geeraerts, G. (2019). The EU-China partnership: Balancing between divergence and convergence. *Asia Europe Journal*, 17(3), 281–294. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10308-019-00554-2

Goulard, S. (2020). The Impact of the US–China Trade War on the European Union. *Global Journal of Emerging Market Economies*, 12(1), 56–68. https://doi.org/10.1177/0974910119896642

Haliżak, E., & Jarczewska, A. (2023). The United States, the European Union, and China: A Global Triangle of Rivalry and Cooperation. *Issues & Studies*, 59(03), 2350007.

Hogan, S., The PIE news, (2023a). *China Scholarship Council – prestigious or precarious?* https://thepienews.com/china-scholarship-council-prestigious-precarious/

Hogan, S., The PIE news, (2023b). *Chinese students signing "loyalty" pledges before arrival in Sweden*. https://pielegacy.spinmeaweb.co.uk/news/chinese-students-signing-loyalty-pledges-arrival-sweden/

Huang, Y., Nature Comment, (2024 July). *Why US–China relations are too important to be left to politicians*. Retrieved from: https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-024-02385-7

Juška, Ž. (2024). Soft Power Pillars of the European Union: An Overview. *Soft Power of the European Union: Mastering the Language of Power Politics*, 5-39.

Karkanis, D. (2018). EU-China trade: Geography and institutions from 2001 to 2015. *Journal of Economic Integration*, 33(1), 1158-1175.

Kim, T. (2009). Shifting patterns of transnational academic mobility: a comparative and historical approach. *Comparative Education*, 45(3), 387–403. https://doi.org/10.1080/03050060903184957

Maher, R. (2016). The elusive EU-China strategic partnership. *International Affairs*, 92(4), 959-976.

Marginson, S., Nyland, C., Sawir, E., & Forbes-Mewett, H. (2010). *International Student Security (1st ed.)*. Cambridge University Press.

Marx, K., & Sitton, J. F. (2010). *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy: Part One Preface*. In Marx Today (pp. 91–94) (Original work published 1859). Palgrave Macmillan US. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230117457_5

Medalis, C. (2012). The strength of soft power: American cultural diplomacy and the fulbright program during the 1989-1991 transition period in Hungary. *AUDEM: The International Journal of Higher Education and Democracy*, *3*(1), 144-163.

Mok, K. H., Shen, W., & Gu, F. (2024). The impact of geopolitics on international student mobility: The Chinese students' perspective. *Higher Education Quarterly*, e12509.

Nye, J. S. (1990). *Bound to lead: the changing nature of American power*. Basic books.

Peng, D. (2024). South China Morning Post. *Swiss university's not-so-neutral policy to restrict applications from Chinese students*. Retrieved from: https://www.scmp.com/news/china/science/article/3284843/swiss-universitys-not-so-neutral-policy-restrict-applications-chinese-students

Perthes, V. (2021). Dimensions of rivalry: China, the United States, and Europe. *China international strategy review*, 3(1), 56-65.

Ross, R. S. (Ed.). (2011). *US-China-EU relations: Managing the new world order*. Routledge.

Scott-Smith, G. (2020). Exchange programs and public diplomacy. In *Routledge handbook of public diplomacy* (pp. 38-49). Routledge.

Scott, D. (2007). China-EU convergence 1957–2003: towards a 'strategic partnership'. *Asia Europe Journal*, 5(2), 217-233.

Shapin, S. (2008). *The scientific life: A moral history of a late modern vocation.* University of Chicago Press.

Sharma, R. (2024). The EurAsian Times. *China's 'Army Of Spies' Horrifies Germany; Report Cautions Against Massive Influx Of Chinese Students*. https://www.eurasiantimes.com/china-cranking-up-espionage-activities-in-germany/

Sharma, Y. (2020). *Europe sets out what are 'safe' research links with China. University World News*. Retrieved from https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20201106110010775

Sharma. Y., (2023). University Worlds News. *German university ends ties with China scholarship scheme*. Retrieved from: https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20230720113914406

Sharma. Y., (2024). University Worlds News. *Universities urged to plan for loss of China's PhD students*. Retrieved from: https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20240321003823472

Shen, W., Wang, C., & Jin, W. (2016). International mobility of PhD students since the 1990s and its effect on China: a cross-national analysis. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 38(3), 333–353. https://doi.org/10.1080/1360080X.2016.1174420

Shih T., Chubb A., Cooney-O'Donoghue D. (2024). Scientific collaboration amid geopolitical tensions: A comparison of Sweden and Australia. *Higher Education*, 87(5), 1339–1356. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-023-01066-0

Stuen, E. T., Mobarak, A. M., & Maskus, K. E. (2012). Skilled immigration and innovation: Evidence from enrolment fluctuations in U.S. doctoral programmes. *The Economic Journal*, 122(565), 1143–1176. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0297.2012.02543.x

Sun, Y., & Cao, C. (2023). *The political economy of science, technology, and innovation in China: policymaking, funding, talent, and organization* (First edition.). Cambridge University Press.

U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission. *Annual Report to Congress*. (2023). Retrieved from: www.USCC.gov

Wu, S. (2019). China: How science made a superpower. *Nature*, 574(7776), 25–28. https://doi.org/10.1038/d41586-019-02937-2

Xia, L.Q. Diplomatic relationship-building in the age of generative AI: the European Union and China. *Place Brand Public Diplomacy* (2024). https://doi.org/10.1057/s41254-023-00321-6

Xinhua News. (2024). *Xi concludes Europe trip with clear message on fortifying cooperation*. https://english.news.cn/20240511/df95648039ca4194be41e7261615b4ce/c.html

Yu, J. (2018). The belt and road initiative: domestic interests, bureaucratic politics and the EU-China relations. *Asia Europe Journal*, 16, 223-236.