
Foreword

It is a geopolitical cliché to observe that China will be one of the principal architects of events in the century that lies ahead.

This is not just because of economics, though we know that China will be in due course the largest economy in the world, as it has been for 18 of the last 20 centuries. It is true of political issues as well. While China is not a military superpower like the USA, it nevertheless has enormous and growing political influence. It is very difficult to think of a big issue on the international agenda that can be solved without China's active participation.

I have never myself believed that we should regard the ascent of China — or of India for that matter — as a threat to the transatlantic community. The growth and material improvement in the quality of life in these two great Asian countries is an opportunity for the whole world.

I very much hope that Europe will build on its historic links with China to create a partnership that can encompass economic as well as political issues. One area where we could start would be in recognizing the shared interest we have in enhancing free trade and preventing a resurgence of protectionism. We should also work hard together to help the development of poorer countries, for example in Africa, and increase our cooperation on the environment including in particular global warming and climate change. If we in Europe and in China can thicken up our relationship, it will not only be good for our citizens, but for the whole world.

Chris Patten