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## Decoding Diplomacy: External Indicators of Deepening Sino-EU Ties

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### Abstract

*This article highlights the evolution of Sino-EU relations, emphasising the multifaceted partnership that extends beyond mere economic transactions to encompass significant political, security, and environmental collaborations. Since the inception of their formal relationship in 1975 and the establishment of the Sino-EU Strategic Partnership in 2003, both entities have increasingly recognised the importance of cooperation in addressing global challenges, particularly in the post-9/11 context, where issues such as terrorism and climate change have taken centre stage. This research analyses the key historical milestones, including their joint opposition to the Iraq War and collaborative energy, security, and climate initiatives. It explores how these events have reinforced their alliance. This paper also examines the effects of the United States' weakening power on world politics, portraying China and the EU as key actors in promoting a multipolar global structure. On international issues like the Kyoto Protocol, China, and the EU have also worked together, frequently challenging US unilateralism. Their interests in the Middle East are aligned; the EU prioritises stability, while China depends on the region for oil. In favour of trade and diplomacy over military might, both advocate for a multipolar world. In contrast to the United States, which views China as a competitor, Europe has prioritised trade and commercial relations. China and the EU have gradually contested American dominance. As global dynamics change, their close cooperation can potentially change world governance and diminish Western power. This study illustrates the vital role of Sino-EU*

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*relations in shaping regional stability and oversight in the context of current geopolitical factors by analysing how they interact in various sectors.*

**Keywords:** EU-China partnership, Global challenges, Kyoto Protocol, Unilateralism, Energy cooperation, Globalization, Western power.

## **Introduction**

The complicated strategic partnership between the European Union and China is not merely bound to trade and investment. It tackles significant international political and security challenges. This collaboration offers multiple benefits to both sides and the global community. Two of recent history's most important international developments are Europe's integration and China's unexpected economic prosperity. Their cooperation promotes and strengthens a multipolar world. For China, Europe is an undeniable economic opportunity; meanwhile, China's growth is an opportunity for Europe's progress. As an old Chinese saying goes, "Nothing can separate people with common goals and ideals, not even mountains and seas"<sup>1</sup>. This formal yet crucial relationship began in 1975 and deepened with initiatives like the Sino-EU Strategic Partnership, established in 2003. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in 2013 further boosted cooperation and connectivity. That same year, the China-EU 2020 Strategic Agenda aimed to support political reforms, economic development, and global stability, proving the long-term commitment to a shared future. Over the years, their collaboration has expanded beyond trade and investment to handle international political, economic, environmental, social, and security challenges. These debates' divergent perspectives on the roles of economics and diplomacy align with the two categories of economic diplomacy introduced by Yi Lu, a China Foreign Affairs University professor. He believes the first focuses on economic ties in the state's foreign relations, while the latter sees economic tools as the means to achieve particular political goals or diplomatic or strategic targets. The state is supposed to resolve economic problems, correct and coordinate economic policy, protect its rights in its external economic contacts, and advance national economic interest by cultivating its economy and depending on diplomatic methods. Stated differently, economic diplomacy serves political goals and diplomatic strategy in addition to advancing

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<sup>1</sup> Keynote Speech by H.E. Xi Jinping at 5<sup>th</sup> BRICS Leaders Meeting, Durbin. "Work Hand in Hand for Common Development", FMPRC, 27 March 2013. [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/xw/zyjh/202405/t20240530\\_11340562.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/xw/zyjh/202405/t20240530_11340562.html).

national economic interests. China's growing economy strength gives it more clout in economic diplomacy and allows it to maneuver against the EU policies that go against its national interests. Economic and political interests in China are typically tightly related. The easing of the arms embargo and the EU-China market economy status, for instance, are complex topics. It is difficult to exclusively characterise its nature as political or economic when attempting to resolve these problems. Consequently, China frequently targets political and commercial goals in its economic diplomacy<sup>2</sup>.

The relationship between the EU and China is vital to the business world. Its unstable and often changing nature results from the current environment, which is characterised by geopolitical changes, economic interdependence, and technological rivalry.

This article documents significant events and turning points that influenced EU-China relations in this timeline.

### **Sino-EU Political Engagements in the Post- 9/11 Era**

With the end of the Cold War and the dawn of the 21st century, the security landscape worldwide shifted dramatically. The global arena not only came across new opportunities for cooperation but also faced rising threats and challenges like terrorism, radicalism, climate change, and environmental degradation. Traditional power struggles with non-traditional threats made international security a hassle, pressuring major global players to offer a hand of collaboration.

Right after the 9/11 attacks, China swiftly condemned terrorism as a global threat, calling it a “common fight” for the international community.<sup>3</sup>

At the Fifth EU-China Summit in 2002, both sides emphasised that the efforts against terrorism required greater coordination and a commitment

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<sup>2</sup> Antoine Sautenet, “Europe and China: Cooperation with Complex Legal Dimension,” *Asie Visions*, no. 3 (Paris: IFRI, May 2008): 3-4.

<sup>3</sup> Chinese President Jiang Zemin Expressed Condolences by Telegraph over Terrorist Attacks on America and Talked with President Bush on Telephone to Show China's Position against Terrorism, Press Release, (13 September 2001). [https://un.china-mission.gov.cn/eng/chinaandun/securitycouncil/thematicissues/counterterrorism/200109/t20010913\\_8417406.htm](https://un.china-mission.gov.cn/eng/chinaandun/securitycouncil/thematicissues/counterterrorism/200109/t20010913_8417406.htm).

to international law. They reassured their support for the UN's role in achieving global security and agreed that, in the wake of 9/11, international collaboration and peacekeeping were more critical than ever. Apart from security, they also worked together to maintain global peace and stability, particularly in conflicting regions like the Korean Peninsula and the Middle East.

These efforts helped the China-EU partnership strengthen beyond economic relations, reinforcing their mutual responsibility in addressing global challenges and achieving a more secure, better world<sup>4</sup>.

### **The Multipolarity Debate and Sino-EU Resistance to the 2003 Iraq War**

After the fall of the Soviet Union, a significant debate in International Relations rose; should the world be unipolar, dominated by the US, or multipolar, where multiple powers share power and influence? The bipolarity and multipolarity debate were crucial in all respects<sup>5</sup>.

In the early 21st century, rising players like China, a resurgent Russia, and even the EU (despite being allied with the US) were seen as possible competitors and threats to American dominance. The 2003 Iraq War exacerbated this debate, marking a significant fracture in transatlantic relations when the EU opposed the US-led invasion. Some scholars even argued that Europe's rising economy would eventually become a cause for attracting global influence, leading to intense competition with the US. Amidst this crisis, the European Council reaffirmed its commitment to the UN as the cornerstone of the international order. It maintained that the UN should handle Iraq's disarmament, promoting a peaceful resolution rather than military intervention<sup>6</sup>. Following public opinion, the EU leaders maintained that force should only be a last resort.

Javier Solana, the EU's foreign policy chief, insisted that, according to UN Resolution 1483, Iraq should be governed by its people. China also opposed

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<sup>4</sup> "EU – China 2020 Strategic Agenda for Cooperation Released at 16th China-EU Summit," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, 23 November 2013. [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zy/gb/202405/t20240531\\_11367275.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zy/gb/202405/t20240531_11367275.html).

<sup>5</sup> Javier Solana, "Europe's Smart Asian Pivot," *Project Syndicate*, 17 September 2013, <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/the-eu-s-strategic-advantages-in-asia-by-javier-solana>.

<sup>6</sup> Extraordinary European Council Brussels, 17 February 2003, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/20895/extraordinary-european-council-brussels-17-february-2003.pdf>.

the invasion, warning that bypassing the UN and ignoring Resolution 1441 would violate Iraq's sovereignty. Instead, Beijing pushed for a diplomatic solution, fearing war would cause a humanitarian crisis and instability across the region<sup>7</sup>. This mutual opposition to the Iraq War strengthened China-EU relations, showing their commitment to a global order with rules and peaceful conflict resolution.

### **Sino-EU Convergence on Maintaining Global Peace and Stability**

The EU recognised China's key role in global security as early as 1995, accepting its influence as a nuclear power and a UN Security Council member. This led to the 2003 Sino-EU Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, strengthening their cooperation beyond trade to peace and security. By 2004, both sides worked together on nuclear non-proliferation, and in 2013, the EU-China Strategic Agenda backed their mutual commitment to global stability. Their collaboration spread to peacekeeping, anti-piracy missions, cybersecurity, and arms control, including efforts to curb weapons of mass destruction, particularly in the Korean Peninsula region. China considered the EU a key partner in acknowledging security challenges like sustainable development, poverty, environmental protection, and counterterrorism. To get approval and support, the EU has created and reinforced several bilateral and intra- and interregional cooperation structures on connectivity. Above all, the EU has had bilateral discussions about connectivity at multiple levels with key powers, including China, which promotes the Belt and Road Initiative. As already stated, in its policy towards China, the EU aims to encourage China's BRI to adhere to international standards and norms and to find enterprises and regions where collaboration would be attainable while simultaneously keeping the BRI generally open<sup>8</sup>. In this case, the EU and China launched a Connectivity Platform in 2015 to foster and strengthen collaborations between China's Belt and Road Initiative and the EU's programs such as the broadened Trans-European Transport Networks and the Investment Plan for the European Union<sup>9</sup>.

Through high-level dialogues, both were involved in security efforts across Latin America, Africa, and Asia. They worked together on stability in the

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<sup>7</sup> Javier Solana, "Europe's Smart Asian Pivot."

<sup>8</sup> "EU-China 2020 Strategic Agenda."

<sup>9</sup> "China-EU Summit Joint Statement," June 30, 2015. [https://eu.china-mission.gov.cn/eng/zywj/zywd/201506/t20150630\\_8301600.htm](https://eu.china-mission.gov.cn/eng/zywj/zywd/201506/t20150630_8301600.htm).

Middle East, including Iran's nuclear issue, and remained committed to disarmament, non-proliferation, and control of arms trade. Amid some differences, their cooperation was heightened by mutual interests, economic interdependence, and a mutual goal of achieving global stability<sup>10</sup>. China was never a threat to the EU but a strategic partner for mutual handling of global challenges.

### **Sino-EU Energy Cooperation**

China and the EU have been working together on energy since 1981, making it one of their earliest areas of institutionalised collaboration. Over the years, their partnership has grown stronger, focusing on shared challenges like climate change, energy security, and shifting to clean energy<sup>11</sup>. At the 9th EU-China Summit, both sides highlighted the importance of their energy cooperation, recognising global energy security as crucial for economic growth, stability, and development. To validate their efforts, they set four key priorities:

- smart grids
- clean technologies
- renewable energy
- energy efficiency

China and the EU aimed to develop a long-term cooperation roadmap and improve international energy governance to address global energy concerns. They coordinated with global organisations like the UN Sustainable Energy for All Initiative, the IEA, and the G20 for effectiveness<sup>12</sup>. They are also committed to following globally recognised energy standards and policies, ensuring alignment with global treaties. The use of renewable energy is becoming more and more significant in this regard. Additionally, both sides have lately increased their sustainability goals, with China and the EU aiming for near-complete decarbonisation. Consequently, the EU-China relationship is becoming more and more

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<sup>10</sup> "Fifth EU-China Summit Copenhagen, Joint Statement, Council of the European Union, (24 September 2002), 2. [https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/press\\_data/en/er/72250.pdf](https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/press_data/en/er/72250.pdf).

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Megan Richards. "EU-China energy cooperation benefits economies and societies," 26 Nov 2018. <https://www.friendsofeurope.org/insights/eu-china-energy-cooperation-benefits-economies-and-societies>.

characterised by challenges directly related to the renewable energy industry, and it appears that both good and negative consequences of renewables on the bilateral relationship are equally possible<sup>13</sup>.

Therefore, studies on China's interactions with other nations should focus on energy. According to literature on EU-China relations, there is hope for cooperation between the two polities following the United States' exit from the Paris Agreement<sup>14</sup>. Some scholars claim that, despite their typically distinct beginnings, Chinese and the EU energy policy ideas have gained similarity over the past decade. One factor contributing to this alignment was renewables.

Renewable Energy (RE) deployment is considered an essential element for both policies to meet their goals. Despite their mutual dependence, both domestic policy frames are mainly functioning concurrently. It might be necessary to make costly adjustments to the other party's policy framework when one party (China or the EU) changes its domestic renewable energy policy framework. Analysis of the structure of these interdependencies permits the determination of the significance of RE policies for the more important political interaction between the two parties<sup>15</sup>. The EU has begun to note and support China's increasing value as an important player for preserving global stability.

### **Peacekeeping Operations**

Regarding the significance of peacekeeping operations, China and the EU contribute significantly to maintaining world peace.

This suggests that as China and the European Union work together, they intend to scale via their security measures. The EU and China can cooperate to maintain peace and prevent wars. To assist the UN in preserving peace, Chinese officials hope to establish an ongoing armed

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www.adelphi.de/en/publication/geopolitics-decarbonisation>.

<sup>14</sup> A.M. Bocse. "The EU and China: Prospects of Cooperation on Climate and Energy Europe", *Europe Now* (June 2018). <https://www.europenowjournal.org/2018/06/04/the-eu-and-china-prospects-of-cooperation-on-climate-and-energy>.

<sup>15</sup> Chao Zhang. "The EU-China Energy Cooperation: An Institutional Analysis," *European Institute for Asian Studies*, Briefing Paper, (February 2017), 11. [https://www.eias.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/EIAS\\_Briefing\\_Paper\\_EU\\_China\\_Energy\\_Cooperation\\_2017.02.pdf](https://www.eias.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/EIAS_Briefing_Paper_EU_China_Energy_Cooperation_2017.02.pdf).

force of 8,000 people<sup>16</sup>. The African Union's efforts to maintain peace have had the full support of Europe. The two sides prepared to combat pirates off the African coast. Chinese efforts to maintain stability in Mali have demonstrated its renewed commitment to collaborating with the UN on security and policing. This is an important incident. It is the first instance where Chinese military forces are aiding in safeguarding foreign personnel<sup>17</sup>. China and the EU started corresponding at the vice-ministerial level on regional and global security issues towards the end of 2005. After being invited and accepted by the UN Security Council, China started to assist in leading missions along the Gulf of Aden and Somalia in 2009<sup>18</sup>.

In the EU's pursuit of an economy that is more sustainable, free from taxes, an array of policy choices is accessible to enhance the reliability of the supply of CRMS, such as creative substitution, stockpiling, encouraged and required recycling, and progressive market-driven supply variation. It is possible to achieve the goals of getting involved in ongoing discussions on safety and defence policy, broadening available training exchanges, and significantly raising the scope of EU-China cooperation and exchanges on protection and defence while progressing toward more appropriate coordination. The high level of bilateral communication between China and the EU is an uncommon way to improve cooperation. The results of the November 2013 China-EU summit were reinforced in a subsequent Joint Statement, which was issued in March 2014 during President Xi's visit to Europe and contained sessions with executives of EU institutions<sup>19</sup>.

In order to bring together and oversee the China-EU interaction, China delivered the European Union its second Policy Document in 2014,

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<sup>16</sup> M. Martina and D. Brunnstorm. "China's Xi says to commit 8,000 troops for U.N. peacekeeping force," *Reuters*, 29 September 2015. <https://www.reuters.com/article/world/chinas-xi-says-to-commit-8000-troops-for-un-peacekeeping-force-idUSKCN0RS1Z1/>. See also [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/316522468\\_The\\_EU's\\_Peace\\_and\\_Security\\_Narrative\\_Views\\_from\\_EU\\_Strategic\\_Partners\\_in\\_Asia\\_The\\_EU's\\_peace\\_and\\_security\\_narratives\\_in\\_Asia](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/316522468_The_EU's_Peace_and_Security_Narrative_Views_from_EU_Strategic_Partners_in_Asia_The_EU's_peace_and_security_narratives_in_Asia).

<sup>17</sup> Nicolas Chapuis. "EU-China Relations in the Time of COVID-19," *Asia Europe Journal* 18, No. 2 (2020): 201 - 03. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10308-020-00572-5>.

<sup>18</sup> Susanne Kamerling and F. Van Der Putten. "An Overseas Naval Presence without Overseas Bases: China's Counter-piracy Operation in the Gulf of Aden," *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 4 (2011). <https://d-nb.info/1024415813/34>.

<sup>19</sup> Joint Statement. Deepening the China-EU Comprehensive Strategic Partnership for mutual benefit, [https://eu.china-mission.gov.cn/eng/zywj/zywd/201501/t20150113\\_8301574.htm](https://eu.china-mission.gov.cn/eng/zywj/zywd/201501/t20150113_8301574.htm).



expanding the China-EU Integrative Strategic Partnership for the Common Benefit and Win-win collaboration. This document's content is in complete accordance with the EU-China 2020 Strategic Agenda for Cooperation, which specifies the intended objectives and demands placed on Chinese legislators in talks with Europe, including cybersecurity<sup>20</sup>. Brutal tactics such as national security and the armed forces, along with soft features like local, budgetary, and ecological security, are usually called "security" studies. Efforts to maintain peace are yet another outstanding example of China-EU security cooperation. The European Union has begun to take note and back China's growing contribution to preserving international peace. Given the importance of law enforcement efforts, China and the European Union have become important players in global security, stressing their shared goals to improve coordination and policing capabilities<sup>21</sup>. The EU and China's peacekeeping and conflict prevention cooperation holds great potential.

The European Union is a major supporter of the African Union and its peacekeeping initiatives. In conjunction, the two sides are ready to deal with illegal activity off the coast of Africa. Through its efforts to maintain peace in Mali, China has shown its renewed support for UN peacekeeping and security cooperation. This step is significant because it is the first time Chinese peacekeeping troops have provided protection services to foreign troops. However, a vice-ministerial interaction connecting China and the EU regarding global and regional safety concerns was underway by the latter part of 2005. Beijing substantially resumed engaging in transit efforts throughout Somalia and the Gulf of Aden in late 2008 and early 2009, for instance, as agreed and validated by the UNSC<sup>22</sup>.

Additionally, there is no precedence amongst the policy sectors reviewed by this research. Consequently, even if the connections between trade/investment and manufacturing remain relatively small, the effects of

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<sup>20</sup> China's Policy Paper on the EU: Deepen the China-EU Comprehensive Strategic Partnership for Mutual Benefit and Win-win Cooperation, (April 2014). [https://eu.china-mission.gov.cn/eng/zywj/zywd/201404/t20140402\\_8301597.htm](https://eu.china-mission.gov.cn/eng/zywj/zywd/201404/t20140402_8301597.htm).

<sup>21</sup> A. Erickson and A.M. Strange. "China's Blue Soft Power", *Naval War College Review* 68, No.1 (2015). <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1182&context=nwc-review>.

<sup>22</sup> UN hails naval escorting operations by China in Gulf of Aden, Somali waters, (December 2008). [https://lr.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng//majorevents/200812/t20081223\\_6258461.htm](https://lr.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng//majorevents/200812/t20081223_6258461.htm).

these shifts must be carefully weighed. Global cost reductions in sectors like renewables may be driven mainly by industrial strategy. Though it could promote the blending between economic and climatic agendas, these outcomes frequently get viewed as possible threats amid the broader framework of trade and investments. Hence, negotiations regarding trade can take precedence over energy and climate policy, and lead to tensions and differences. In order to determine if energies bring the EU and China closer or further apart in the global arena, subsequent studies ought to utilise a methodical view into how both nations intersect in the domains mentioned. A component of the bilateral connection may be leading policy change in one policy area, whereas the other part may be driving policymaking change in another. Future research needs to consider the four pertinent policy spheres' shared dependence at the national level for an improved grasp of the partnership's evolving character.

### **Sino-EU Relations in Globalisation**

Historically, border disputes have made China's ties with neighbouring countries like India and Russia tense. In contrast, its relationship with the EU remained neutral, shaped more by ideological differences than full-fledged conflicts. During the Cold War, Europe was not China's primary focus, but post-Cold War, economic globalisation and shifting international politics brought them closer and deepened their partnership<sup>23</sup>. By the mid-1990s, trade and cultural exchanges strengthened, exceeding China's partnerships with other major powers. Globalisation has created both opportunities and challenges for China and the EU<sup>24</sup>. Their cooperation deepened through mutual goals, including economic growth, job opportunities, and social stability. The EU's principles like multilateralism and strong governance are aligned with China's vision of a "community of common destiny." However, the 2008 crisis also exposed challenges to their economic ties, showing that neither could fully handle financial challenges alone. Despite the challenges and setbacks, both recognised the need for mutual efforts at bilateral and multilateral levels to strengthen

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<sup>23</sup> "China's Position on the US War in Iraq," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, March 26, 2003. [https://un.china-mission.gov.cn/eng/chinaandun/securitycouncil/regionalhotspots/mideast/yjk/200902/t20090214\\_8417803.htm](https://un.china-mission.gov.cn/eng/chinaandun/securitycouncil/regionalhotspots/mideast/yjk/200902/t20090214_8417803.htm).

<sup>24</sup> European Commission, Communication on EU-China Relations, 1995. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:51995DC0279>.

global economic governance and ensure long-term stability in an advanced interconnected world<sup>25</sup>.

### **Multilateralism and Global Cooperation**

As the world becomes more interconnected, economies rise, cultural diversity increases, and technological advancements occur, challenges like financial crises, global conflicts, and inequality continue to threaten peace. Multilateral cooperation is needed to address these issues. China and the European Union (EU) are major international players, working together to create a more stable and balanced world order. China's foreign policy relies on multilateralism, inspired by its Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence<sup>26</sup>. It believes that global collaboration avoids conflicts driven by national interests. The EU recognises China's rising global influence and encourages it to share global responsibilities. Both support multilateral organisations for effective decision-making. The EU strengthens cooperation through institutions, while China benefits from global economic systems. When US President Donald Trump opposed multilateralism, Beijing and Brussels took a stand for it and defended it, emphasising the UN and WTO's role in stability. They also back the G20 for economic collaboration and uphold WTO rules for fair trade<sup>27</sup>.

### **EU-China Partnership in The United Nations**

China and France, as permanent members of the UN Security Council, offer a foundation for EU-China cooperation on international issues. Both have been major players in shaping the post-World War II world order, supporting international laws and agreements to maintain peace and stability<sup>28</sup>. The EU and China support UN reforms to address the current and modern challenges. They work with UN bodies like the Peacebuilding Commission and Human Rights Council and have backed peace efforts, including resolutions on the Middle East and Iran's nuclear program. Both prioritise diplomacy over military action and consider the UN necessary for conflict resolution. Their 2003 policy paper reflects a mutual commitment

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<sup>25</sup> Bernardo Mariani, Presentation at the EU-China Think Tank Dialogue, (Beijing, April 6–7, 2016). <https://www.saferworld-global.org/downloads/pubdocs/enhancing-eu-china-cooperation-on-peace-and-security.pdf>.

<sup>26</sup> FMPRC, "Carrying Forward the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence and Jointly Building a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind," (28 June 2024). [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/xw/zyjh/202406/t20240628\\_11443852.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/xw/zyjh/202406/t20240628_11443852.html).

<sup>27</sup> "EU-China 2020 Strategic Agenda," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC.

<sup>28</sup> Bernardo Mariani, presentation at the EU-China Think Tank Dialogue, 2016.

to global peace, democracy, and sustainable development<sup>29</sup>. They support UN-led peacekeeping and fair international justice. They called for peaceful solutions based on international law in the context of the Russia-Ukraine war. Both have vowed to uphold multilateralism and international rules and order<sup>30</sup>.

### **Climate Change and Global Environmental Cooperation**

Environmental concerns were overlooked for years due to politics and economics, but climate change is now a global priority, impacting economies, security, and daily lives. While the US has denied some commitments, China and the EU have been responsible for resolving climate issues. Despite their differences, both recognise the importance of climate action<sup>31</sup>. They helped establish the IPCC and have worked together since 2005 on renewable energy, sustainable cities, and emissions cuts. As major polluters, both play key roles in climate discussions: China was important in the Paris Agreement, while the EU enforces strong environmental policies<sup>32</sup>. Their 2017 climate partnership strengthened after the US withdrew from the agreement. Together, they push for green technology, less dependence on fossil fuels, and support for developing countries<sup>33</sup>.

### **The US Decline as a Superpower**

The continuously changing global power balance has tensed US-China relations, where the US sees China as a significant threat to its dominance. Meanwhile, the EU views China as a strategic partner rather than an enemy or competitor. During the Cold War, the US allied with China against the Soviet Union, but after the USSR's fall, the US began seeing China as a

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<sup>29</sup> [https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/en/er/77802.pdf](https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/er/77802.pdf).

<sup>30</sup> "Xi calls on China, EU to provide more stability, certainty for world through steady, sound bilateral relations," The State Council News, 24 July 2025. [https://english.www.gov.cn/news/202507/24/content\\_WS6881d46cc6d0868f4e8f4641.html](https://english.www.gov.cn/news/202507/24/content_WS6881d46cc6d0868f4e8f4641.html).

<sup>31</sup> "Statement: EU and China Issue Joint Climate Statement," World Resource Institute, 24 July 2025. <https://www.wri.org/news/statement-eu-and-china-issue-joint-climate-statement>.

<sup>32</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, China's Policy Paper on the EU: Deepen the China-EU Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, (2014).

<sup>33</sup> "China and EU strengthen promise to Paris deal with US poised to step away," *The Guardian*, 1 June 2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/may/31/china-eu-climate-lead-paris-agreement>.

competitor<sup>34</sup>. Meanwhile, China and the EU have strengthened economic ties, becoming key players in a multipolar world. The EU relies on the US for military security but is deeply tied to China economically. While the US builds alliances through military power, China focuses on economic strength and cooperation through projects like the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). Despite US objections, several European nations support and participate in the AIIB, reflecting shifts in global finance<sup>35</sup>.

### **Sino-EU Global Political Convergence and Connectivity Amid Divergence**

China and the EU have also collaborated on international issues, such as the Kyoto Protocol, often opposing US unilateralism. In the Middle East, their interests are mutual. China depends on the region for energy, while the EU prioritises stability. Both support a multipolar world, favouring trade and diplomacy over military power. While the US sees China as a rival and a competitor, Europe has focused on trade and economic ties. Over time, China and the EU have challenged US dominance through multilateral institutions, financial partnerships, and cooperation in energy and climate. Their intense collaboration can alter international governance and lower Western influence as global dynamics shift.

### **Conclusion**

The Sino-EU partnership began with trade cooperation and has now evolved into a strategic alliance addressing global security, economic stability, climate change, and multilateral governance. Ups and downs will mark relations between the EU and China in the upcoming years. As already stated, the summit is the highest level of institutional arrangement between the EU and China. Such institutional interactions, however, are frequently ineffective. Following China's cancellation of the 2008 summit because Sarkozy had a scheduled meeting with the Dalai Lama, the Europeans used the severe euro crisis as justification to call off the 2010 summit that was planned in Tianjin. Due to global interconnectedness, China and the EU are undoubtedly closer and more dependent on one another. Addressing global concerns is the shared duty of the two most

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<sup>34</sup> Salvatore Finamore, "Normative Differences in Chinese and European Discourses on Global Security: Obstacles and Opportunities for Cooperation," *Chinese Political Science Review* 2 (2017): 165. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s41111-017-0049-z>.

<sup>35</sup> Wang Yi. "AIIB's devt, co-op should be free from political interference of certain countries," 23 June 2025. <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202506/1336804.shtml>.

significant stakeholders in the present world leadership framework. As a means to attain the objectives of shared interest and minimise the costs associated with doing it via sharing the load, this fosters partnership beyond the sphere of economics. Growing economic and security interdependence between the EU and China is essential to the growth of cooperation. However, it also shows differences in how sensitive the security connections are for each party. Over time, the EU and China's total trade volume grew, strengthening their economic ties and increasing the possible costs of non-cooperation. Additionally, the number of bilateral and multilateral channels whereby the EU and China communicate and interact has increased, as has the various discussion formats in which they discuss security and other subjects.

This approach seems to point to specific issues that require institutional attention, even though the EU may not have done so as part of a tit-for-tat plan. The two sides have common and divergent interests on various topics due to their respective political and economic advancements and shifts in international relations over the twenty-first century. Although such cooperation may have challenges and issues, establishing a long-term partnership serves their national interests. Their mutual interests and commitment to a multipolar world, diplomacy, and global cooperation have strengthened their ties amid challenges. As the US influence in the world order shifts, China and the EU are key players in shaping international politics, paving the way towards a balanced and interconnected world.