



CONCEPT

Beijing's growing assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific and "decisive enabling" of Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine have fuelled Europe's perception of China as a geostrategic challenge. Moreover, China's industrial overcapacity and increasing resort to "economic statecraft" continue to raise concerns across Europe. Relatedly, while China has become an increasingly important topic of discussion in transatlantic debates, recent United States (US)-China trade negotiations send confusing signals to Europeans about the direction of America's China policy.

While the European Union (EU) continues to define China as a 'strategic partner, economic competitor and systemic rival', EU trade policy has changed substantially. Greater attention is being paid to geopolitical considerations and supply chain security. At the same time, frictions in transatlantic economic relations – and the spectre of US abandonment in Ukraine and Europe – have led some in Europe to call for a less antagonistic approach towards China. Beijing is all too eager to exploit such frictions. In this regard, the forthcoming EU-China summit in July 2025 will provide a useful barometer of the future of the EU-China relationship. Relatedly, as the US encourages Europeans to focus their strategic efforts on Europe, there are questions about the future of NATO's China and Indo-Pacific agendas.

Against this backdrop, this expert workshop will zoom in on the economic and security dimensions of Europe-China relations. The workshop will bring together experts from the Centre for Security, Diplomacy and Strategy (CSDS), the Centre for China Analysis (CCA) of the Asia Society Policy Institute and policymakers to reflect on the following questions:

- at a time of uncertainty in transatlantic relations, what are the risks and opportunities associated with European "engagement" with China?
- To what extent can Europe and China reconcile their systemic differences in order to foster deeper economic cooperation and alignment on shared foreign policy priorities?
- What does the EU intend to achieve at the forthcoming July Summit in Beijing?
- What future is there for NATO's China and Indo-Pacific agendas after the summit in The Hague?

PROGRAMME

Expert Workshop

09:30 – 09:45

WELCOME REMARKS

Luis Simón

Director, Centre for Security, Diplomacy and Strategy – VUB

Jing Qian

Co-founder and Managing Director, Centre for China Analysis (CCA), Asia Society

09:45 – 10:45

PANEL I: WHAT TYPE OF COMPETITOR HAS CHINA BECOME?

Moderator

Eva Pejsova

Japan Chair, Centre for Security, Diplomacy and Strategy – VUB

Speakers

Neil Thomas

Fellow on Chinese Politics, Center for China Analysis, Asia Society

Eva Valle

Head of Far East Unit, DG Trade, European Commission

10:45 – 11:00

BREAK

11:00 – 12:00

PANEL II: STRATEGIC PARTNER OR STRATEGIC RIVAL?

Moderator

Giulia Tercovich

Deputy Director, Centre for Security, Diplomacy and Strategy – VUB

Speakers

Lyle Morris

Senior Fellow on Foreign Policy and National Security, Center for China Analysis, Asia Society

Luis Simón

Director, Centre for Security, Diplomacy and Strategy – VUB

12:00

END & LIGHT LUNCH

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