

**January 2024**

China's growing political influence within the EU and on the global stage as well as its widespread efforts to promote authoritarian models of governance through economic statecraft, disinformation and clampdowns on pro-democracy forces have increasingly been perceived in the EU as systemic competition between two fundamentally different political models. In 2019 the EU published a [joint communication](#) defining China as a cooperation partner with whom the EU has closely aligned objectives, a negotiating partner with whom the EU must find a balance of interests, an economic competitor in the pursuit of technological leadership, and a rival promoting alternative governance models.

The EU-China comprehensive agreement on investment agreed in principle in 2020 has been put on ice. In May 2021, China imposed sanctions targeting, among others, Members of the European Parliament for [criticising](#) human rights violations in China. The majority of resolutions on China adopted by Parliament in 2022 and 2023 refer to human rights abuses by the Chinese regime, including violations of fundamental freedoms in [Hong Kong, Xinjiang and Tibet](#) and actions against [Taiwan](#). At the end of 2023, Parliament voted a report on [EU-China relations](#).

Following the 20th Congress of China's Communist Party, General-Secretary XI Jinping's mandate has given an even higher priority to 'security' and maintaining 'stability', which experts argue augurs badly for human rights. China continues to play an ambiguous role with regard to Russia's war on Ukraine. In her 2023 speech on the [state of the Union](#), President von der Leyen announced that the Commission would launch an [anti-subsidy investigation](#) into electric vehicles from China, [stressing](#) that a level playing field for EU businesses is key to EU-China relations.

Taiwan: 2024 elections

'At a glance' note by Gisela Grieger, January 2024

On 13 January 2024, voters in Taiwan will go to the polls to cast their votes for a successor to Tsai Ing-wen, the current independence-leaning Democratic Progressive Party president, who is term-limited, and for 113 members of the Legislative Yuan. Alongside the future of cross-strait relations and regional peace and stability amid growing US-China strategic competition, Taiwan's economic vulnerabilities, reliance on energy imports, high youth unemployment, stagnant wages and high housing costs have taken centre stage in the campaign.

EU-China relations

'At a glance' note by Ulrich Jochheim, December 2023

Even before the EU's 2019 EU-China strategic outlook defined China as a partner, competitor and systemic rival, China's behaviour had become more assertive, not only in terms of domestic security and economic policies, but also in its posture at the international level. The Parliament is set to debate and vote on an own-initiative report on EU-China relations. The plenary debate follows the EU-China summit planned for 7-8 December in Beijing.

Relations ahead of the 24th EU-China summit

'At a glance' note by Ulrich Jochheim, December 2023

On 7 and 8 December 2023, Charles Michel and Ursula von der Leyen participated in the 24th EU-China Summit. This note, published before the summit, discusses relevant topics including bilateral relations, Russia's war against Ukraine, the situation in the Middle East, climate change, global health and pandemic preparedness.

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EU anti-subsidy probe into electric vehicle imports from China

'At a glance' note by Gisela Grieger, October 2023

On 4 October 2023, the European Commission published a notice of initiation of EU anti-subsidy investigations into EU imports of electric vehicles from China. President von der Leyen announced the investigation during her State of the Union address on 13 September 2023. The probe comes after a surge in EU imports of electric vehicles from China, which has outstripped other Chinese export markets. The probe may result in the Commission levying countervailing tariffs on EU imports of BEVs from China to offset state subsidies and to level the playing field.

Question Time: EU-China trade relations

'At a glance' note by Ulrich Jochheim, September 2023

As political relations between the EU and China have encountered increasing challenges, including in the context of China's ambiguous position on Russia's war on Ukraine, the trade deficit of the EU with China has risen substantially. The EU has reacted by taking measures to improve its economic security and ensure a level playing field, including launching an anti-subsidy investigation into electric vehicles coming from China. Since September 2023 three Commissioners – including the Vice-President in charge of trade – have visited China, and the High Representative, Josep Borrell, visited China in mid-October to co-chair the EU-China Strategic Dialogue.

Chinese investments in European maritime infrastructure

Study by Ghiretti et al, Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies, September 2023

This study looks at Chinese investments in maritime infrastructures through the lens of 'de-risking'. It provides a comprehensive overview of Chinese investments in the European maritime sector over the past two decades and weighs the associated risks. The study addresses five major threat areas: EU-level dependency risk, individual dependency risk, coercion/influence risk, cyber/data risk and hard security risk. Risks remain insufficiently understood by Member States, despite their high likelihood and/or impact.

Mapping threats to peace and democracy worldwide: Normandy Index 2023: chapter on China

Study by Elena Lazarou and Branislav Stanicek, August 2023 (French)

Since last edition of the Normandy Index, China has advanced 22 positions to rank 46th, and is no longer more at risk than the Asia-Pacific average. Since the start of economic reforms in 1978, China has become the world's second largest economy in terms of nominal GDP. There are, however, increasing signals that rising structural challenges to China's economy will imply a (much) more moderate growth performance in the medium-term.

Future Shocks 2023: Anticipating and weathering the next storms

Study by EPRS with the Directorates-General for Internal Policies (IPOL) and External Policies (EXPO), July 2023

The 2023 edition highlights 15 risks related to geopolitics, climate change, health, economics and democracy that could occur in the coming decade, and 10 policy responses to address or enhance governance capacity, including options from the European Parliament, other EU institutions, think tanks and stakeholders. See chapters: *China's assertive foreign policy and Taiwan unification ambitions* (pp. 26-33) and *Rising challenges to China's growth performance* (pp. 81-86).

Future of Sino-Afghan relations: Impacts on EU interests and strategic autonomy

Briefing by Kjeld Van Wieringen with Julie Claustre, July 2023

After two decades of military involvement and trillions of dollars invested, it is unlikely that Western governments will have the capacity or political will to invest in Afghanistan beyond providing humanitarian assistance. This leaves the door open for other players, including China. Expanded Chinese investment in Afghanistan would strengthen the Chinese monopoly on rare earth material and infrastructure networks in Central Asia. Conversely, restrained Western involvement could limit economic and political development in the country, opening the door for transnational terrorist groups to flourish and threaten international security.

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Security implications of China-owned critical infrastructure in the European Union

In-depth analysis by Frank Jüris, Policy Department for External Relations, June 2023

This paper analyses the involvement of China state-linked entities in selected critical sectors to identify threats to the EU's strategic sovereignty. Entities linked to the Chinese party-state can gain access to and exert influence on assets vital to Europe's security and defence, including transport infrastructure, critical resources and telecommunications networks. Traditional approaches to infrastructure protection based on direct ownership are insufficient as China can obtain access through indirect channels. Infrastructure protection mechanisms must be extended to be able to scrutinise the risks that China's leverage over non-science investors and Chinese state-linked contractors pose to the EU's critical infrastructure.

China-Russia relations: A quantum leap?

Briefing by Ulrich Jochheim, May 2023

Thanks to China's exceptional growth performance and the impact of Russia's war on Ukraine, China's economy is now estimated to be up to 10 times bigger than Russia's. Trade with Russia is not of major economic importance to China, but the high share of raw materials in Russian exports and transfer of Russian military technology are of strategic importance. The relationship has evolved into an informal alliance in the face of what both consider a rising Western threat. China's response to Russia's war on Ukraine has so far been much closer to Russia than when Russia annexed Crimea in 2014. Russia's dependency on China has increased since the war began.

Chinese distant water fishing fleet

Briefing by Frederik Scholaert; Graphics: Stéphanie Pradier, Samy Chahri, May 2023

In recent decades, China has evolved into the world's leading fishing country, holding the largest industrial distant-water fishing fleet (DWF) in the world. This infographic gives a brief overview of this development and compares China's fleet with that of the EU. It complements a study commissioned by the European Parliament's Committee on Fisheries (PECH) to inform an own-initiative report on the implications of Chinese fishing operations for EU fisheries.

Chinese strategic interests in European ports

'At a glance' note by Karin Smit Jacobs, February 2023

China is increasingly investing in key European infrastructure, including ports. This has drawn attention at EU and Member State level, in particular regarding strategic dependency on China and how it affects the EU's economic interests. This short briefing provides an overview of existing, publicly known Chinese interests in EU ports.

Question time: Protecting strategic infrastructure against China's influence

'At a glance' note by G. Grieger, S. Clapp, M. Negreiro, G. Ragonnaud and M. Szczepanski, February 2023

China's full or partial ownership of a large number of strategic infrastructure assets in the European Union has increased the EU's exposure to a country with a track record of weaponising its economic footprint to achieve political objectives. Recent cyber-attacks associated with Chinese hackers have put the EU's critical infrastructure at risk of compromise. Both developments highlight the need to better protect the EU's strategic infrastructure.

EU-China 2030: European expert consultation on future relations with China

Study by Kjeld van Wieringen, December 2022

The EU's relations with China are changing rapidly. What priorities, choices, challenges and opportunities might emerge for the EU in its dealings with China over the next decade? This study presents the results of an expert survey on the future of EU-China relations. 171 China observers took part, drawn from European think tanks, the EU institutions and a China-focused European youth network. A synthesis of the responses reflects the considerations, insights and advice of Europe's China knowledge community on the EU's approach to China looking ahead towards 2030.

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Role and impact of China on world fisheries and aquaculture

Study by Pauly, D. et al. Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies December 2022

This study reviews China's mariculture and marine fisheries with emphasis on the operations of its Distant Water Fleets (DWF). China's DWF are analysed with some emphasis on the subsidies they receive from their government, their illegal, unreported and unregulated catches and practices, and the challenges they represent to international agreements, and to competing fleets from the EU. Finally, the trade of Chinese fishery and mariculture products is reviewed with some emphasis on the import of fish feed by China, which may increasingly impact some food-deficient countries.

China's economic coercion: Evolution, characteristics and countermeasures

Briefing by Marcin Szczepeński, November 2022

Non-military coercion has become an increasingly serious problem for EU governments and businesses. Experts believe that China, traditionally an opponent of economic sanctions, has been deploying coercive economic practices with growing intensity and scope, particularly since the reappointment of Xi Jinping as the country's president in 2018. The EU is currently expanding its toolkit against such practices. Experts suggest creating a dedicated EU resilience office or export bank, and boosting cooperation with countries facing the same problems.

Trade aspects of China's presence in Latin America and the Caribbean

Briefing by Werner Raza and Hannes Grohs, Policy Department for External Relations, November 2022

Over the last 20 years, China has become the second largest trading partner of Latin America & the Caribbean (LAC), and is also a top source of foreign direct investment and finance for the region. China has also used soft power to expand its influence. The long-term implications of the LAC countries' dependence on China remain unclear. The EU should offer LAC a strategic partnership based on fair and sustainable trade and on intensified technological and political cooperation. Raw-material partnerships based on human rights and environmental sustainability should be supported. Finally, the two regions could join forces to promote a new multilateralism.

China's climate change policies: State of play ahead of COP27

Briefing by Gregor Erbach and Ulrich Jochheim, October 2022

China was responsible for more than a quarter of global greenhouse gas emissions in 2019. China's per-capita emissions of 9 tonnes CO₂ equivalent in 2019 were well above EU levels and far above the global average. This is one of a series of EPRS briefings that looked at the climate policies of major economies outside the EU in the run-up to the November 2022 COP27 United Nations climate change conference.

China's 20th Party Congress

Briefing by Ulrich Jochheim, October 2022

The 20th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party opened in Beijing on 16 October 2022. This briefing covers collective leadership and Xi's rise, mounting challenges and the official Party line on the period to 2049, and what to expect after the Congress. It also gives details of Xi's political work report on the Party's activities during the previous five-year term.

China's strategic interests in the Western Balkans

Briefing by Branislav Stanicek with Simona Tarpova, June 2022

The six Western Balkan countries have substantial economic potential, but quality investments are scarce and often come with conditions. China has endeavoured to portray itself as an investor who does not intervene in internal political affairs. An early focus on transport infrastructure has expanded to industry, energy and communications. Loans and investments further enhance China's position and create dependency. An increasing number of Balkan countries are now concerned regarding public procurement, environmental protection, human rights violations and promotion of the authoritarian model, all of which limit cooperation and impact EU accession prospects.

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Stresses and contradictions in the Chinese economy in the early 2020s

In-depth analysis by Jacob Funk Kirkegaard, May 2022

In this paper, Jacob Funk Kirkegaard, Senior Fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics and the German Marshall Fund of the United States, looks at the state of the Chinese economy, and at the various factors likely to influence its evolution in the coming years. He argues that Chinese growth will slow to below the levels of the past decades, but that a devastating financial crisis is unlikely. Nevertheless, the changing pressures felt domestically will also influence China's foreign economic policy vis-à-vis other major economies, including the EU.

US Congress and trade policy tackling China

'At a glance' note by Gisela Grieger, March 2022

In the first year of the 117th US Congress (2021-2022), members of both the House and the Senate saw an urgent need both for a trade policy offensive specifically for the Indo-Pacific region to maintain US leadership in setting international standards and norms, and to upgrade defensive trade policy tools to better address China's unfair trade practices. Congressional initiatives have coincided with debates in the European Parliament on the EU's Indo-Pacific strategy and on legislative proposals set to expand the EU's toolbox of autonomous trade measures.

US Congress approach to US-Taiwan relations

'At a glance' note by Gisela Grieger, March 2022

The first year of the 117th US Congress (2021-2022) saw strong bipartisan support for shaping closer security, economic and political ties with Taiwan. Perceiving Taiwan as a vibrant democracy worth protecting to secure peace and security in the Indo-Pacific region, the Biden administration invited Taiwan to the 2021 US Summit for Democracy, defining shared values, rather than statehood, as the criterion for participation. However, like the Trump executive, Biden's administration has not delivered on Congress's call to start talks with Taiwan on a free trade agreement, but has rather embraced an alternative framework for engagement.

US approach to research cooperation with China

'At a glance' note by Gisela Grieger, March 2022

China's meteoric economic and military rise, authoritarian political system and non-market economic model, and growing US-China strategic competition have had a significant impact on how bilateral research ties are perceived in the US. This EPRS publication discusses research cooperation between the US and China, including how the US Congress and the Trump and Biden administrations have shaped the US research ecosystem in response to China's 'Thousand Talents' programme.

Further reading/viewing

China: Economic Indicators and Trade with the EU

Globalstat infographic by Gyorgyi Macsai (EPRS) and Raffaele Ventura (EUI), November 2023

What Think Tanks are thinking – China-US global rivalry and the EU

Briefing by Marcin Grajewski, June 2023

EU-China relations: future trajectories and trends

Online Policy Round Table, EPRS, 14 April 2023

Xi Jinping's third mandate: What next for China?

Online Policy Round Table, EPRS, 10 November 2022

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Global disorder: Can the G 20 rise to the challenge?

Online Policy Round Table, EPRS, 24 October 2022

China: Europe-East Asia interaction

EPRS Chronicles, by Ulrich Jochheim, 26 July 2022

China: Urban elite v rural workers

EPRS Chronicles, by Ulrich Jochheim, 19 July 2022

Is China's economy in decline? Long-term trends, vulnerabilities, reform agenda

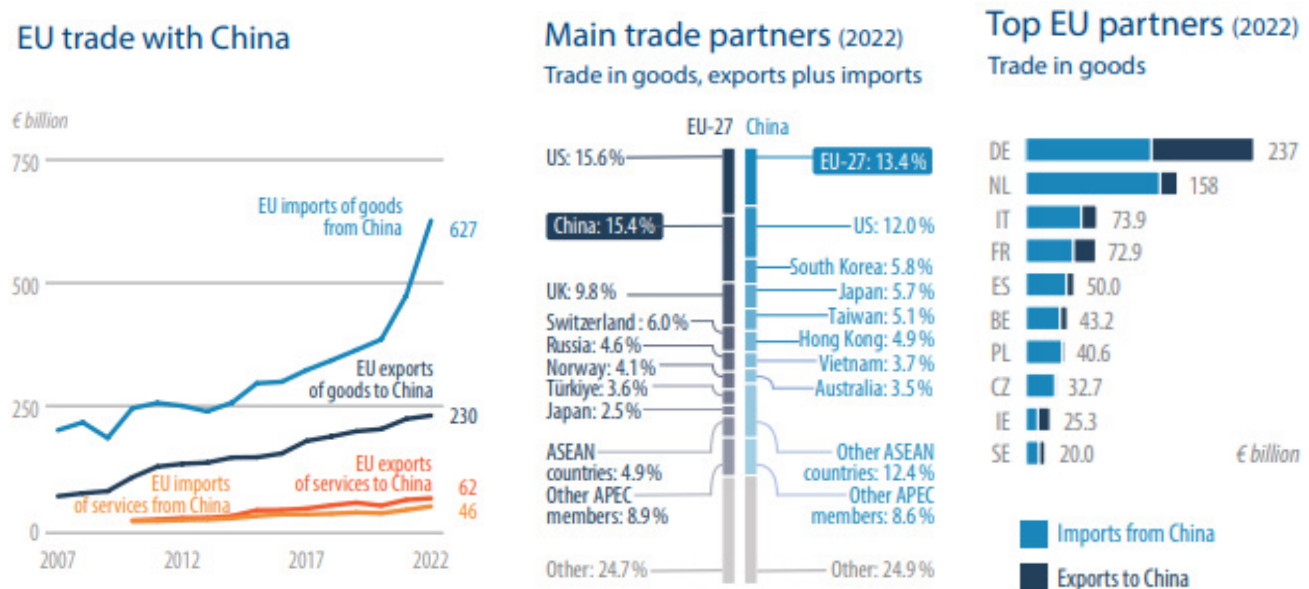
Online Policy Round Table, EPRS, 18 July 2022

China's demographic challenge

EPRS Chronicles, by Ulrich Jochheim, 12 July 2022

What Think Tanks are thinking – EU-China ties and Russia's war on Ukraine

Briefing by Marcin Grajewski, March 2022



Source: China: Gyorgyi Macsai (EPRS) and Raffaele Ventura (EUI), Economic Indicators and Trade with the EU, Globalstat infographic, November 2023.

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