

**Viktor ESZTERHAI – Zoltán VÖRÖS:
The EU-China Summit: No More Illusions of Partnership¹**

Executive Summary

- Donald Trump's second presidential term's foreign policy opened the way for the recalibration of EU-China relations; the 2025 EU-China summit became an indicator of this.
- The meeting did not bring a breakthrough. At its center were trade imbalances, Chinese overcapacity, pro-Russian Chinese foreign policy, and the EU's transatlantic commitment. The limited effectiveness is well indicated by the fact that the parties adopted only a joint climate policy statement.
- Beijing continues to view the EU as an important economic partner, but increasingly considers it less capable of making independent strategic decisions.
- The EU's value-based approach narrows the scope of foreign policy actions based on transactional logic. The current strategy does not result in any significant progress against China, either economically or geopolitically. The declared goal is strategic autonomy, but the practical conditions are still lacking.
- The summit has dispelled the illusion that changes in the international environment, particularly in U.S. foreign policy, could bring the EU and China closer together again.

The EU-China summit held on July 24, 2025, simultaneously served to celebrate the 50th anniversary of bilateral diplomatic relations and to strategically adjust to the changed geopolitical environment. The meeting took place amidst a significant shift in American foreign policy, which created new opportunities for the European Union and China to rethink their relationship. The study analyzes the structural factors that influenced the preparation and conduct of the meeting, and evaluates the extent to which the summit could indicate a strategic shift in the bilateral relationship. The analysis points out: mutual distrust, differing logics of interest assertion, and the value-based European foreign policy approach limited substantive progress. The summit ultimately did not bring any relief, but it provided a clear picture of the limitations of EU-China relations, as well as the dilemmas of the European foreign policy aimed at strategic autonomy, yet burdened with contradictions.

1. Introduction

The summit between the European Union and China took place on July 24, 2025, which also served to celebrate the 50th anniversary of bilateral diplomatic relations. The event was not only

symbolically significant but also undeniably strategic in the current international environment. The increasingly substantial shift in foreign policy under the new American administration has significantly transformed global relations, thereby opening up new opportunities for the European Union and China to reposition their relations.

The Trump administration's policy represented a radical break from the Biden administration's alliance-based, multilateral approach. The unilateral actions of the new American administration – whether it be

¹ Viktor ESZTERHAI (eszterhai.viktor@uni-nke.hu), Head of the China and Indo-Pacific Region Research Program at the John Lukacs Institute for Strategy and Politics, Ludovika University of Public Service; Zoltán VÖRÖS (voros.zoltan@uni-nke.hu), Senior Research Fellow, China and Indo-Pacific Region Research Program at the John Lukacs Institute for Strategy and Politics, Ludovika University of Public Service; Associate Professor at the Department of Political Science and International Studies, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Pécs.



the transformation of the trade system or the open rejection of the international rules-based order – have prompted European and Chinese decision-makers to rethink their long-term strategies. In this rearranging power dynamic, the possibility of stabilizing and developing bilateral relations has increasingly gained importance, so that the parties can more effectively assert their interests in the uncertain and unpredictable world order.

The aim of this analysis is to answer the question of whether a turning point in bilateral relations is emerging through the examination of the EU-China summit. The analysis aims to evaluate, as a kind of indicator examination, in which direction the European-Chinese relations might shift in the near future and what factors could shape the dynamics of these changes.

2. Historical Background: EU-China Relations and the American Influence

The relationship between Europe and China since World War II has fundamentally been shaped by the foreign policy of the United States. At the beginning of the Cold War, most European countries did not establish diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China and recognized Taiwan as China's official representative. A turning point was Richard Nixon's visit to China in 1972, which opened the way for European-Chinese relationship building as well.

The European Economic Community established diplomatic relations with mainland China on May 8, 1975,² and in the following years, particularly from 1978 onwards, with the introduction of the 'reform and opening-up' policy, the relationship between the two parties intensified, which on the European side primarily meant supporting steps towards economic openness.

The possibilities for economic cooperation particularly unfolded between the 1990s and 2010s, when the United States ensured the stability of the international order and thus the framework for global trade. During this period, both the EU and China primarily focused on economic interests, while value-based differences took a back seat – although issues primarily related to human rights and values did emerge and re-emerge, complicating the strategic deepening of relations, whether we consider the Tiananmen Square events or the Hong Kong protests. For China, the EU represented an important market as well as a source of capital and technology; while the EU saw competitive manufacturing conditions and a growing consumer market in China. Particularly Germany played a prominent role, whose manufacturing value chains established increasingly close cooperation with Chinese partners.

Although the United States' China policy gradually shifted after the 2008 crisis and increasingly treated Beijing as a challenger, European policy did not follow this direction for a long time. China has become increasingly significant in the European market alongside the American one – not only as a consumer market but also as a manufacturing base and investor. The global economic crisis further strengthened this process, and European states waiting for investors swung their doors wide open to Beijing: "annual inflows of foreign direct investment (FDI) from China into the EU multiplied by almost 18 between 2010 and its peak in 2016."³

The first Trump administration's Cold War rhetoric, the trade war, and the restrictions on Chinese technology, however, brought about a change in Europe as well. But it should not be forgotten that the otherwise dominant⁴ trade relationship in Europe had already given rise to numerous critical opinions and issues by this time, primarily highlighting China's trade practices, the restrictions on entering the Chinese

² BROADBENT, K. P.: China and the EEC: The Politics of a New Trade Relationship. *The World Today*, 32(5), 1976. pp. 190-198.

³ GAENSSMANTEL, Frank: China-EU economic relations–new perspectives on decision-making, mutual understanding and effects – introduction to the special issue. *Asia Europe Journal*, 21 (2023), pp. 401–412.

⁴ European Council: [EU-China trade: facts and figures](https://consilium.europa.eu/en/eu-china-trade-facts-and-figures/). *consilium.europa.eu*, 2025.07.24. [online, 2025.07.26.]

market, the growing deficit, and the Chinese technologies threatening European manufacturers (e.g., solar panels⁵).⁶ It was in 2019 that the currently preferred approach emerged, stating that China is simultaneously a partner, competitor, and systemic rival.⁷ Its formulation was a clear signal to Washington: the EU is aware of geopolitical changes. However, the weight of the economic partnership remained decisive even then, as evidenced by the fact that in the final days of the Trump administration, the parties conceptually accepted the framework of the Comprehensive Agreement on Investment (CAI)⁸ – which is considered a joint success of European heavy industry and the European Commission.

The Biden administration exerted even greater pressure on its allies. It built its foreign policy on the confrontation between authoritarian regimes and free democracies, and expected its partners to reduce their dependence on China (decoupling), as excessive exposure, according to Washington, poses a security risk.⁹ The COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the Russian-Ukrainian war, has reinforced this narrative – especially among the Western middle class, which has become a politically decisive factor. In Germany, under the ‘traffic light coalition’ – complemented by the strengthening geopolitical ambitions of EU institutions – the increasing politicization of relations has become widespread, which is well reflected in the 2023 China Strategy. The document, while reinforcing the European multifaceted approach to China, does highlight reservations about decoupling, but makes risk reduction (de-risking) the central element of its approach towards China.¹⁰

At the same time, China’s foreign policy has also become more assertive. The ‘wolf warrior diplomacy’¹¹ during the pandemic, as well as increasingly confrontational behavior on the international stage, further intensified distrust. The downward spiral quickly began: in response to the European sanctions imposed due to the Xinjiang situation¹², China reacted with harsh measures¹³ – considered disproportionate by European standards – which led to a significant deterioration of relations. Although Beijing has tried to maintain economic cooperation, it has not been willing to make significant concessions. Chinese direct investments in the EU have significantly declined,¹⁴ and stricter control mechanisms have been introduced in certain strategic sectors. The policy of ‘de-risking’ has become increasingly dominant.

The second Trump administration’s China policy also poses a challenge for the EU, but the situation is novel in two respects. On the one hand, the American government increasingly prefers bilateral pressure

⁵ European Commission: [EU imposes definitive measures on Chinese solar panels, confirms undertaking with Chinese solar panel exporters](https://ec.europa.eu/press/2019/12/02/eu-imposes-definitive-measures-on-chinese-solar-panels-confirms-understanding-with-chinese-solar-panel-exporters). *ec.europa.eu*, 2013.12.02. [online, 2025.07.26.]

⁶ European Commission: [EU-China – A strategic outlook](https://commission.europa.eu/press/2019/03/12/eu-china-a-strategic-outlook). *commission.europa.eu*, 2019.03.12. [online, 2025.07.26.]

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ European Commission: [EU and China reach agreement in principle on investment](https://ec.europa.eu/press/2020/12/30/eu-and-china-reach-agreement-in-principle-on-investment). *ec.europa.eu*, 2020.12.30. [online, 2025.07.28.]

⁹ CHUANYING, Lu – LUYAO, Zhang: Managing U.S.-China Technological Decoupling A Chinese Perspective. *China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies*, 7(4), 2021, pp. 409-431.

¹⁰ The Federal Government of Germany: [Strategy on China](https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/strategy-on-china). *auswaertiges-amt.de*, 2023. [online, 2025.07.26.]

¹¹ “Wolf warrior diplomacy” refers to China’s increasingly assertive and confrontational foreign policy style, in which diplomats vigorously – and often provocatively – defend the country’s interests and respond to external criticism, particularly through social media and public forums. See: YUAN, Shaoyu: [Tracing China’s diplomatic transition to wolf warrior diplomacy and its implications](https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-023-01118-1). *Nature*, 2023.11.18. [online, 2025.07.25.]

¹² The EU sanctioned four Chinese citizens and one organization (Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, XPCC) on March 22, 2021, which it linked to the persecution of the Uyghur ethnic minority and mass detentions. European Parliament: [Chinese counter-sanctions on EU targets](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/press/2021/05/eu-sanctions-chinese-citizens-and-organization). *europarl.europa.eu*, 2021.05. [online, 2025.07.26.]

¹³ China responded the same day and banned organizations, politicians, and analysts from entering China. Among those banned were members of the European Parliament’s Subcommittee on Human Rights, as well as German research institutions. European Parliament: [Chinese counter-sanctions on EU targets](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/press/2021/05/eu-sanctions-chinese-citizens-and-organization). *europarl.europa.eu*, 2021.05. [online, 2025.07.26.]

¹⁴ ZENGLEIN, Max J. – SEBASTIAN, Gregor: [Chinese foreign direct investment in Europe: the downward trend continues](https://www.industrial-analytics.com/en/chinese-foreign-direct-investment-in-europe-the-downward-trend-continues). *Industrial Analytics Platform*, 2022.12. [online, 2025.07.26.]

over multilateral negotiations, while cutting back the benefits it previously provided – such as NATO defense guarantees or free access to the American market. On the other hand, the relative capacities and global influence of the United States have declined. This is well illustrated by the rapid decreasing of the renewed American-Chinese trade tensions – within just five weeks – which shows that Washington is also unable to maintain a prolonged confrontation.¹⁵

This new geopolitical environment could theoretically create an opportunity for the EU to expand its maneuvering space – either through renegotiations with the United States or by developing its own, more realistic China policy.

3. The Immediate Events Leading up to the Summit: Bad Omens

The 2025 EU-China summit has already become a strategically significant event in the early stages of its organization, primarily due to the first foreign policy steps of Donald Trump's second presidential term. This included further protectionist pressure targeting China, the extension of trade tariff measures, as well as a diplomatic opening towards Moscow. This change in the international environment has made it urgent for the European Union and China to recalibrate their relations.

Since the previous summit took place in China in 2023, it was a natural expectation from the European side that this time the EU would be the host, but finally China ultimately became the venue for the summit. Several strategic and symbolic factors were behind the choice of location. It was suggested that Xi Jinping's European visit might be timed to coincide with the Moscow Victory Day celebrations on May 9, 2025. This possibility has caused serious concern in several EU capitals: it would have been politically difficult to accept that the Chinese president would arrive at the European Union summit immediately after appearing alongside Vladimir Putin.¹⁶ Thus, it seemed more favorable for both parties for Beijing to be the host: China could demonstrate strength by having one of the world's largest economic blocs "make a pilgrimage" to the Chinese capital, while the EU could avoid the delicate political situation.

The official announcement of the summit took place on April 11, 2025, when the spokesperson for the President of the European Council, António Costa, publicly confirmed that the event would be held in China in the second half of the year.¹⁷ The specific date was announced on June 12, 2025, by Politico, citing EU diplomats:¹⁸ the meeting was scheduled for July 24-25, with the planned locations being Beijing and the city of Hefei. The Chinese side had originally envisaged a two-day summit. The official political talks would have taken place in Beijing, while Hefei – a hub of the Chinese electric vehicle industry and an important site for German-Chinese automotive cooperation – would have hosted the economically focused second day. The choice of location was further symbolically significant because Ursula von der Leyen's father, Ernst Albrecht, also played a role in the development of Hefei during the early period of German-Chinese relations.¹⁹

However, the plan was modified: the Chinese side ultimately canceled the Hefei program, and the summit was shortened to a single session. According to the official explanation, the change was necessitated by other commitments of Chinese Prime Minister Li Qiang, but it is likely that diplomatic tensions

¹⁵ See: VÖRÖS, Zoltán – ESZTERHAI, Viktor: [The price of retreat – the lesson of the US-China trade agreement](#), *Analyses on Global Affairs*, 2025/6. [online, 2025.07.27.]

¹⁶ LIBOREIRO, Jorge: [Signs of EU-China reset intensify as Xi Jinping arrives in Moscow for Victory Day](#). *Euronews*, 2025.05.07. [online, 2025.07.28.]

¹⁷ THE BRUSSELS TIMES: [EU-China summit expected to take place in July](#). *brusselstimes.com*, 2025.04.11. [online, 2025.07.26.]

¹⁸ VERHELST, Koen - GIJS, Camille: [EU and China eye July 24-25 for summit](#). *Politico*, 2025.06.12. [online, 2025.07.26.]

¹⁹ NIEDERSACHSEN: [Partnerschaft zwischen Niedersachsen und Anhui \(VR China\)](#). *Niedersächsische Staatskanzlei*, 2024. [online, 2025.07.28.]

also contributed to the decision. The most important meeting prior to the summit took place on July 2, 2025, in Brussels, within the framework of the 13th EU-China Strategic Dialogue.²⁰ Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Kaja Kallas reviewed the structural challenges in bilateral relations.²¹ Wang Yi confirmed that preparations for the July summit are progressing well, with the aim of "steering the relations in the right direction".²² At the same time, Wang Yi's visit to Brussels also highlighted the underlying tensions. In her July 8 statement, Ursula von der Leyen accused China of flooding the global market with its overcapacities and de facto enabling the survival of Russia's war economy.²³ Although a few days later, in another post, she adopted a more conciliatory tone and described the summit as an opportunity to "promote and balance the relationship", value-based criticisms regarding China's position on the Ukraine war remained prominent. It also strained the overall atmosphere that China restricted the export of rare earth metals in the spring of 2025, particularly towards technology sectors critical to the EU, which was perceived as covert pressure on the continent. The further weakening of bilateral economic trust was also indicated by the fact that several EU member states began to tighten the national security screening of Chinese investments, particularly in the technology and infrastructure sectors. At the preparatory meeting in Brussels, Kaja Kallas reiterated Ursula von der Leyen's criticisms regarding support for Russia. According to some diplomatic leaks, Wang Yi admitted in closed-door meetings that it is unacceptable for China to see Russia defeated, as this would be contrary to Beijing's strategic interests, but of course, he rejected the European accusations.²⁴

In light of the European reactions, the Chinese side ultimately decided to hold the summit in a one-day format, exclusively in Beijing – many believe this was not only a logistical but also a political compromise. The decision foreshadowed that the summit would not take place in a cheerful atmosphere.

Alongside the European-Chinese dialogue, the development of European-American relations was also an important precursor. In a previous analysis, we already highlighted that the relationship with Washington had become increasingly critical,²⁵ moreover, the European direction, the strategic autonomy in foreign policy, envisioned a Europe even more independent from the United States. In that analysis, we already highlighted that "European states, no matter how optimistic they are about their own security capacities and their development, are not ready to detach from Washington, they still depend on NATO, and this dependency will continue to define the community's foreign policy options in the coming years"²⁶ and all this became a reality at the NATO summit held in June 2025: European states agreed to the 5 percent defense spending,²⁷ essentially accepting Donald Trump's proposal. It has thus become clear that a strategically independent European foreign policy remains a dream, while also signaling to the world and China that Europe is still unable to break away from Washington. All this also determined the course of the summit: while China sees an opportunity, Europe sees a risk in the United States' global withdrawal.

²⁰ MFA CHINA: [MFA Statement on 13th China-EU Strategic Dialogue](#). Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2025.07.03. [online: 2025.07.24.]

²¹ EEAS: [China: High Representative/Vice-President Kaja Kallas holds EU-China Strategic Dialogue with Foreign Minister Wang Yi](#). European External Action Service, 2025.07.02. [online, 2025.07.24.]

²² LEBLOND, Clément: [China, EU 'should not seek confrontation', FM Wang says](#). France24, 2025.07.03. [online, 2025.07.24.]

²³ VERHELST, Koen - DAHL, Jordyn: [Von der Leyen sets stage for contentious China summit](#). Politico, 2025.07.08. [online, 2025.07.27.]

²⁴ LI, Jevans: [China tells EU it cannot afford Russian loss in Ukraine war, sources say](#). South China Morning Post, 2024.07.23.

²⁵ ESZTERHAI, Viktor – VÖRÖS, Zoltán: [EU-China détente: A strategic shift or just a return to pragmatism?](#), *Analyses on Global Affairs*, 2025/4. [online, 2025.07.27.]

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ NATO: [Defence expenditures and NATO's 5% commitment](#). NATO, 2025.06.27. [online, 2025.07.24.]



4. The Summit

At the Summit the European Union was represented by Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, António Costa, President of the European Council, and Kaja Kallas, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. The Chinese delegation was represented by President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Li Qiang. The meeting received a quiet public reception in China as well, considering its significance and timing. This was in line with previous expectations and the one-day reduced program as well.

The statements about the negotiations were mainly made public through the Chinese press, originating from official Chinese communications. The Chinese side's call for the EU to "stick to open cooperation and properly handle differences and tensions" can be interpreted as a response to European messages that, while emphasizing the importance of maintaining dialogue, increasingly demanded changes from China – particularly in terms of reducing support for Russia and addressing trade imbalances.²⁸

The EU emphasized that the bilateral trade balance has severely tilted: in 2024, the EU's trade deficit with China reached a historic high of 305.8 billion euros. According to von der Leyen: "As our cooperation deepened, so have imbalances".²⁹ The European side indicated that it would be reasonable to expect China to curb overcapacity – particularly in the fields of green technologies and electric vehicles – and to ensure greater market reciprocity.³⁰

The Chinese side responded on multiple levels. On the one hand, Beijing emphasized that the EU's economic difficulties do not stem from China, but from internal structural problems and economic pressure exerted by the United States. They denied that state support was behind the overcapacity and rejected the notion that China played a role in distorting competition. At the same time, they warned that the application of protective tariffs does not mean a solution, but rather, it can create new trade conflicts. The possibility of a trade war was mentioned by the Chinese side as a veiled threat, which was interpreted as such by European public opinion as well – especially in light of the fact that the issue is receiving increasing government attention within China.

Chinese responses to global challenges also remained cautious. Xi Jinping stated that the parties should "strive for joint action" – particularly against global turbulence, which was actually a veiled reference to coordinated action against the United States. During the same period, the EU was engaged in advanced negotiations with the United States on a trade agreement, and eventually reached an agreement on July 27, 2025, which included a 15% general tariff rate on EU export products—thus avoiding the much stricter 30% punitive tariff threatened by the Trump administration.³¹ This development understandably not only diminished the priority of strategic dialogue with China, but also provided an opportunity to incorporate the China dimension into the broader framework of negotiations with the United States.

At the closing of the summit, Ursula von der Leyen stated, "We have reached an inflection point", and urged China to "come forward with real solutions". The wording carried a clear message: the EU expects change while also moving towards an increasingly pragmatic stance. Nevertheless, neither the European nor the Chinese side made clear and concrete gestures to improve relations. The Chinese side's remark

²⁸ GLOBAL TIMES: [China-EU Summit shows Beijing's strength in diplomacy](#). *Global Times*, 2025.07.24. [online, 2025.07.24.]

²⁹ CHEN, Laurie – LEE, Liz – CHEN, Xiuhao: [China's Xi calls for proper handling of frictions at tense summit with EU officials](#). *Reuters*, 2025.07.24. [online, 2025.07.24.]; GAN, Nectar: [China's Xi urges Europe to make 'the right strategic choice' amid global trade turbulence at key summit](#). *CNN*, 2025.07.24. [online, 2025.07.27.]

³⁰ European Council: [25th EU-China summit - EU press release](#). *consilium.europa.eu*, 2025.07.24. [online, 2025.07.26.]

³¹ GRAY, Andrew – SHALAL, Andrea: [US, EU avert trade war with 15% tariff deal](#). *Reuters*, 2025.07.28. [online, 2025.07.28.]



that the EU should follow the “right direction” came across more as a veiled warning than a constructive cooperation proposal from the EU’s perspective.³²

The subdued atmosphere and substantive lack of results at the summit were also reflected in the fact that the parties issued only a single joint press statement – on the necessity of action against climate change.³³ However, they failed to reach a common ground on geopolitical and trade issues. This clearly reflects that EU-China relations are currently in a deep trust and structural crisis.

5. Summary

The strategic significance of the 2025 European–Chinese summit is undeniable, yet it ultimately became marginal in terms of political outcomes – partly due to the value-based foreign policy approach chosen by European leadership, and partly due to the opposing stance towards changing global processes. The European Union’s consistent moral stance – particularly regarding China’s pro-Russian policies and human rights concerns – limits its room for maneuver in applying a pragmatic foreign policy toolkit, in addition to the traditionally existing economic divergences. Thus, the ‘Chinese card’ does not become a significant tool for the EU in strengthening its position against the United States.

Maintaining a values-based approach – which is built on transatlantic loyalty, as opposed to raw interests – has resulted in disillusionment in Beijing. China increasingly perceives that the EU is unwilling to make independent strategic decisions, and thus considers it a less relevant partner in the geopolitical space. Although China is not interested in further deteriorating relations – especially since the EU still represents a key market for its economic modernization goals – the opportunities have visibly narrowed.

Although China expected to engage with a Europe capable of making autonomous decisions in a changed international environment, it ultimately found itself facing an actor that—driven in part by transnational loyalties and the expectations of electorates accustomed to the liberal world order—continues to align itself with the strategic preferences of the United States. Xi also emphasized the importance of openness, cooperation, and stability in his speech. Although he did not explicitly mention Washington, he implicitly pointed to the directions Europe should consider as an actor independent of current U.S. foreign policy. This vision not only addresses present instability, but also aligns with China’s expectations and interests—namely, the advancement of a multipolar world order—once again highlighting the differing ways in which the two sides respond to changing global circumstances.

If the EU wants to achieve real results with China (and other global players), its approach should be based on transactional logic. The model that sets principled requirements as conditions – such as a fundamental rethinking of Sino-Russian relations – does not work, as Beijing is neither able nor willing to meet them. If the EU wants to be effective in trade matters or geopolitical pressure, then it needs concrete, reciprocal, and proportional offers. This highlights the greatest contradiction of the current European China policy: it is unable to deliver substantial results while simultaneously escalating tensions. The summit itself serves as a testament to this trend: tension-raising, virtue-signaling, ignoring consequences – all within a foreign policy that proclaims strategic autonomy but lacks the conditions to achieve it.

The contradiction goes beyond specific foreign policy decisions and points to the structural limitations of the EU’s global role perception. The EU’s declared goal is to build strategic autonomy, meaning it aims to become capable of shaping global processes as an independent, sovereign actor. At the same time, this effort is closely intertwined with maintaining the alliance relationship with the U.S., which in the current international system based on transactional logic can easily lead to vulnerability and a loss of maneuvering

³² CHEN, Laurie – LEE, Liz – CHEN, Xiu hao: [China’s Xi calls for proper handling of frictions at tense summit with EU officials](#). *Reuters*, 2025.07.24. [online, 2025.07.24.]

³³ European Council: [25th EU-China summit - EU press release](#). *consilium.europa.eu*, 2025.07.24. [online, 2025.07.26.]



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space. Strategic autonomy thus becomes more of a symbolic rhetorical tool, which not only loses its reality but can also weaken negotiating positions against Washington. Beijing is aware that the balance of relations is increasingly shifting in favor of China, yet it does not aim to alienate the EU. The union remains an important economic partner. Nevertheless – as the threat of rare earth export restrictions in the spring indicated – Beijing is prepared to use pressure tactics if it perceives that the EU is becoming too critical.

Ursula von der Leyen's statement that "the relationship has reached an inflection point" reflects reality, as it dispels the illusion that changes in the international environment, particularly in U.S. foreign policy, could once again push the EU and China closer together. The EU will likely continue to align itself with the U.S.'s geopolitical strategy, which is a politically stable direction in the short term, as it meets the expectations of the European political elite and the majority of voters. In the long term, however, this could have painful consequences: the European Union is practically giving up on seeing China not only as a challenger but also as a potential partner for strengthening its competitiveness and global position. Based on the lessons learned from the summit, it seems that the era in which China was simultaneously treated as a partner, a competitor, and a systemic rival has definitively come to an end – and now only open great power competition remains.



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© Author(s)

Publisher's contact information:

1441 Budapest, P.O. Box 60.

Address: 1083 Budapest, Ludovika tér 2.

Tel: +36 1 432-9000

Email: jli@uni-nke.hu