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The fiftieth anniversary of diplomatic ties between the European Union and the People's Republic of China invites both retrospection and a critical re-evaluation. Over the past five decades, this relationship has significantly deepened, shaping developments across politics, economics, technology, trade, security, human rights, culture, and beyond. As the world navigates mounting uncertainties—from the United States' retreat from the rules-based trading order and the rise of disruptive technologies to broader geopolitical uncertainties—the EU-China relationship has reached a critical juncture. It does not exist in a silo; it is necessary to grasp the far-reaching implications of this relationship in order to address asymmetries and foster constructive engagement in face of uncertainty.

This analysis comes at an inflection point in EU-China relations. The EU has characterized China as a “partner for cooperation, an economic competitor, and a systemic rival,” setting the stage for a more complex and calibrated engagement (European External Action Service, 2023). At the same time, relations have fluctuated, particularly as China has engaged in a diplomatic charm offensive to expand its influence globally following the election of President Donald Trump. Against this backdrop, it is vital for the EU to adopt a strategic and balanced approach—one that prioritizes European values and interests, balances engagement with the U.S., and pursues mutually beneficial collaboration with China.

Through this journal, we aim to present a diverse array of perspectives that not only reflect the depth and breadth of the EU-China relationship but also comment on its potential trajectory amid global uncertainty.

Title: EU-China at 50: Cooperation, Competition, and Shifting Paradigms

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