

# 大变局下的中欧关系：调适与发展

中国社会科学院欧洲研究所“中欧关系”课题组

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# **China-Europe Relations Amid Great Changes: Adjustments and Development**

*Project Group on “China-Europe Relations”,  
Institute of European Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences*

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# 大变局下的中欧关系：调适与发展

中国社会科学院欧洲研究所“中欧关系”课题组\*

**内容提要：**世界百年未有之大变局下，中欧关系正在经历新的调适与发展。作为世界主要力量之一的欧洲，在内外因素的共同作用下，其政治正变得愈加碎片化，经济在历经数次危机重创后转向保护主义，对外政策则日益受到地缘政治因素的影响。在对华关系方面，过去几年，欧洲总体对华认知发生变化，更加突出对华竞争的一面，中欧关系发展遭遇挑战。但总体来看，中欧互惠大于互斥、合作大于竞争、共识大于分歧的基本面没有变，而挑战中也蕴含机遇。2025 年是中国与欧盟（欧共体）建立外交关系 50 周年。中国与欧盟双方应总结建交 50 年来的主要经验，以交流对话增进理解，以扩大合作应对竞争，以积极谈判化解经贸摩擦，以扩大开放回应“去风险”，保持中欧关系发展的稳定性。

**关键词：**中欧关系 百年大变局 地缘政治 “去风险” 民粹主义

世界百年未有之大变局正在加速演进。受新冠疫情、地区冲突、全球气候变化、中美战略博弈、新科技革命等因素交织叠加的影响，世界局势变得异常错综复杂，国际社会面临罕见的多重挑战与风险。在此背景下，欧洲政治极化、碎片化日趋严重，经济增长乏力，对外关系打上地缘政治的深刻烙印。在对华关系方面，欧盟“不适应”中欧关系的平等化，地缘

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\* 该课题由冯仲平研究员主持、设计和统稿。涉及政治的部分由贺之杲副研究员撰写；经济部分由孙彦红研究员撰写；欧洲对外关系部分由赵晨研究员撰写；涉及中欧关系新发展的部分由冯仲平研究员、张超副研究员撰写。

政治和价值观外交色彩加重，并强调中欧在经济领域的竞争性和意识形态领域的差异性。俄乌冲突延宕不息，以及美国拜登政府拉拢欧盟的“巧实力”外交等外部因素，加重了欧盟和欧洲一些国家对中国的疑虑和负面认知。2024年11月，特朗普再次当选美国总统，世界政治经济和中欧关系面临新的挑战 and 机遇。

2025年1月，习近平主席应约同欧洲理事会主席科斯塔通电话。习近平主席指出，中欧是“相互成就的伙伴……国际形势越是严峻复杂，中欧越要秉持建交初心，加强战略沟通，增进战略互信，坚持伙伴关系定位。中国对欧盟抱有信心，希望欧盟也能成为中方可以信任的合作伙伴”。<sup>①</sup> 2025年是中国与欧盟（欧共体）建立外交关系50周年，中欧关系发展迎来承前启后的关键节点。面对当前错综复杂的国际形势，中欧应总结建交50年来的重要经验，摒弃竞争对抗叙事，锚定合作共赢基础；超越双边关系范畴，应对人类共同挑战。中欧应携手以交流对话增进理解互信、以磋商谈判化解摩擦争端、以扩大开放反对“去风险”，推动双边关系持续、稳定、向好发展，为中欧人民创造更多福祉，为世界和平繁荣做出更大贡献。

## 一 大变局下的欧洲

近年来，随着世界经历百年未有之大变局，在内外各种错综复杂因素的作用下，欧洲政治、经济和对外关系发生显著变化。具体而言，大变局下的欧洲呈现三大特征，即政治日趋碎片化，经济发展面临严峻挑战，对外关系日益地缘政治化。

### （一）欧洲政治愈加碎片化

欧洲政治深受世界政治格局和思潮演变的影响。近年来，在逆全球

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<sup>①</sup> 《习近平同欧洲理事会主席科斯塔通电话》，新华网，2025年1月15日，<http://mrdx.xinhuanet.com/20250115/46c162b48eab41efad1955558596025b/c.html>。

化、地缘政治回归和大国竞争加剧等外部因素的影响下，叠加政治生态碎片化、政治共识弱化、治理效能下降等内部因素的塑造，欧洲变化的强度和烈度均在上升。2024 年的欧洲议会选举，在右翼民粹主义、保守主义、进步主义和绿色主义等思潮交锋下上演“左右互搏大戏”，呈现出欧洲政治思潮的多样性、变动性和竞争性等特征，勾勒出欧洲政治生态的“底色”。随着各国政治制度、政党格局和政治思潮的交织和变化，欧洲政治不断极化、共识趋于弱化、其领导力遭受冲击。

### 1. 欧洲“右转”强化政治保守思潮

近年来，欧洲政治“右转”趋势愈益明显，成为欧洲政治思潮和政党结构之变的最显著特征。欧洲“右转”既体现为中右翼势力保持相对优势地位，也体现在右翼民粹主义政党支持率显著上升，以及右翼保守主义力量和民粹主义力量的部分合流上。

具体而言，欧洲中右翼势力保持相对优势地位。自第二次世界大战结束以来，传统的中右翼保守主义主导欧洲乃至西方政治，在经济政策、社会文化和生活方式等方面持相对保守立场。<sup>①</sup> 目前，中右翼政党仍占据欧洲政党结构中的重要位置。2024 年的欧洲议会选举并未改变议会党团的既有权力格局，亲欧的中间派力量——欧洲人民党党团、社会民主党党团、复兴欧洲党团和绿党党团的议席之和为 454 席，占比超过欧洲议会总席位的 60%。<sup>②</sup> 其中，中右翼的欧洲人民党党团拥有 188 个席位，比 2019 年增加 12 个。欧洲人民党党团的“领衔候选人”冯德莱恩成功连任欧盟委员会主席，意味着欧盟内政外交的大方向仍将将由以欧洲人民党党团为核心的中间派联盟所掌控。

然而，右翼民粹主义政党逐渐从边缘进入欧洲政治主流。尽管右翼民粹主义在法国、德国以及中东欧国家的缘起发展、执政表现存在较大差

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① François Hublet, Mattéo Lanoë and Johanna Schleyer, “Spelling out the European Center-right’s Dilemma: Renewal of the Grand Coalition or National-Conservative Alliance?” Groupe d’études géopolitiques, June 19, 2023, <https://geopolitique.eu/en/2023/06/19/spelling-out-the-european-center-rights-dilemma-renewal-of-the-grand-coalition-or-national-conservative-alliance/>.

② European Parliament, “2024 European Election Results,” July 23, 2024, <https://results.elections.europa.eu/en/>.

异，但其崛起已然成为“全欧现象”。从经济原因来看，2008年国际金融危机尤其是欧债危机以来，欧洲内部贫富差距扩大，中产阶级缩水，民众的相对获得感下降。从文化原因来看，欧洲各国普遍担心难民、移民特别是非法移民的涌入会深刻改变人口结构，冲击欧洲身份认同。总体而言，恐惧感成为右翼民粹主义崛起的社会心理根源。在2024年的欧洲议会选举中，欧洲右翼民粹主义政党的支持率上升明显。右翼民粹主义政党共获得187席，分布于欧洲主权国家党团、欧洲爱国者党团、欧洲保守与改革者党团，合计超过欧洲议会席位的25%。其中，欧洲保守与改革者党团拥有78个席位，比2019年增加9个；欧洲主权国家党团获得25个席位；新成立的欧洲爱国者党团拥有84个席位，成为欧洲议会第三大党团。<sup>①</sup> 特朗普重返白宫无疑会对欧洲右翼民粹主义政党产生提振作用，尤其会提升欧洲爱国者党团的地位。

尽管几十年来阻止极右翼政党在欧洲政坛产生实际影响的“防火墙”仍然有效，但欧洲主流政党不得不在议题设置和政治参与方面回应右翼民粹主义的诉求。在右翼民粹主义势力的压力下，欧盟及其成员国主流政治保守化与右倾化趋势不断强化，进而推动成员国在政治和经济上的“内顾”。欧洲国家立场偏好的分歧上升到欧盟层面，进一步加大了欧盟和成员国领导人一致决策的难度，欧洲理事会的决策掣肘增多。例如，匈牙利领导人欧尔班遵循“民族保守主义”的理念<sup>②</sup>推进欧洲一体化进程，重建欧洲右翼统一战线，力图重塑欧洲政治文化。这导致欧洲内部分化加重，各国“内顾”倾向上升，欧洲一体化举步维艰。总之，欧洲政治“右转”致使欧洲社会保守倾向加剧，欧洲国家的民族主义和保护主义情绪进一步上涨。

## 2. 欧洲“极化”导致政治碎片化

与右翼民粹主义势力崛起同时发生的是欧洲国家传统政党实力下降。欧盟和成员国均面临政党政治格局变化的挑战，共同之处是长期执政的中

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<sup>①</sup> 该党团衍生于身份与民主党团，相比2019年，席位增加35个。参见 European Parliament, “2024 European Election Results”。

<sup>②</sup> Viktor Orbán, “We Need Change in Brussels,” National Conservatism, April 16–17, 2024, <https://nationalconservatism.org/natcon-brussels-2/presenters/pm-viktor-orban/>.

间派政党衰落，具有民粹主义色彩的政党崛起。政党政治极化、碎片化、不稳定似乎成为欧盟及其成员国的共同趋势。欧盟政党格局的碎片化与成员国政府组成的碎片化相互叠加，彰显了欧盟与成员国政治力量的互动，其结果是欧洲政治体系持续分裂以及多数欧洲国家政党的两极分化，欧洲在世界上的领导力遭受冲击。

第一，欧洲政治的分界线正在重塑。右翼民粹主义政党的兴起在很大程度上改变了欧洲二战后形成的政治版图。欧洲政党谱系中的冲突主线正在从政治经济上的左右分裂转向亲欧派和民族主义之间、自由派和民族主义之间基于价值观的分裂。欧洲议会选举暴露出欧洲议会党团的多元化，从 2019 年的七个议会党团增加到 2024 年的八个议会党团，<sup>①</sup> 议员席位的分配也变得更加离散，而不是集中于中左翼和中右翼领导的大联合政党组合。同时，欧洲右翼民粹主义类型多样、政策立场也有差异，例如欧洲议会中的保守与改革者党团、欧洲爱国者党团在诸多议题上未能达成一致。2024 年第十届欧洲议会选举结果显示，欧洲政治格局碎片化、极化趋势有增无减。

第二，欧洲政治稳定性整体下降。近年来，欧洲国家的大联合政府正在转向多党联合政府，且组阁难度越来越大，政府垮台的概率也越来越高。受 2024 年欧洲议会选举的影响，法国总统马克龙决定提前举行立法选举。从选举结果来看，法国国民议会席位分布在三个规模几乎相等、政治取向截然不同的集团之间，尤其是左翼联盟“新人民阵线”获得 182 个席位，右翼民粹主义政党国民联盟拿到 143 席，后者比 2022 年选举增加了近 75%。<sup>②</sup> 法兰西第五共和国通过塑造强大的中间派以巩固领导人权力的做法已难以为继，长期保持政治相对稳定的局面已经结束。在 2024 年欧洲议会选举中，德国最大在野党联盟党和右翼民粹政党德国选择党分别以

① European Parliament, “8 Political Groups,” <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/portal/en>.

② 《法国内政部宣布国民议会选举最终结果》，新华网，2024 年 7 月 8 日，<https://www.news.cn/world/20240708/a60901a1758a4bfcabd9554de30cd67d/c.html>。



30.3%和15.6%的得票率超过执政联盟的三个政党,<sup>①</sup>进一步暴露“交通灯”联合政府的“过渡”性质。2024年11月,德国总理朔尔茨将财政部长林德纳解职,宣告“交通灯”联合政府的解体。法德两国的政治变局正是欧洲政治稳定性下降的清晰写照。

第三,欧洲权力中心出现多元化趋势。法德引擎的作用有所下降。德国总理朔尔茨正努力应对经济停滞和右翼民粹主义势力的崛起,而法国总统马克龙在努力摆脱国内政治危机,特别是政治光谱左右两端的“极限施压”。鉴于“法德轴心”陷入政治领导力不足的困境,并导致欧盟政治领导力出现“权力真空”,客观上为欧盟委员会的权力扩张创造了条件,也为其推进自己的议程留下更大的空间。一方面,随着欧盟委员会和欧洲议会的深度捆绑,欧盟委员会主席冯德莱恩成为欧盟事实上的“领导者”;另一方面,随着地缘政治博弈的外溢,“新欧洲”和“老欧洲”的分歧不断扩大。部分中东欧国家不愿向欧盟让渡过多权限,尤其是面对“法德轴心”的领导地位,不甘于充当“二等国”角色;同时,中东欧国家也想借助外部力量平衡欧盟内部秩序以及其他大国的影响,如借助外部力量抵御欧盟对其国内制度的渗透,尤其是部分中东欧国家期待在特朗普第二任期内与美国开展更多的双边外交。

## (二) 欧洲经济历经四次危机遭受重创

欧洲经济自2008年以来连续四次遭受重大打击,分别是2008年的国际金融危机、2011年至2012年的主权债务危机、2020年的新冠疫情,以及2022年因俄乌冲突而陷入的能源危机。期间,欧元区与欧盟经济先后经历了2008年的“跳崖式衰退”和2012年主权债务危机导致的“二次探底”,直到2013年才开始缓慢复苏。2020年,在新冠疫情冲击下,欧元区和欧盟经济增长率分别大幅下滑了6.4%和6.2%,此后于2021年有所反弹。然而,在2022年发生的能源危机的冲击下,欧元区和欧盟经济再度

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<sup>①</sup> European Parliament, “Constitutive Session,” July 23, 2024, <https://results.elections.europa.eu/en/germany/>.



陷入疲弱态势，2023 年的经济增长率仅微弱增长 0.4%。<sup>①</sup> 需要看到，历经上述四次危机，欧盟所受的冲击不仅仅停留于经济层面，由经济长期低迷造成的社会与政治层面的连锁反应还在不断发酵。即便在经济层面，欧元区和欧盟经济复苏的基础也并不牢固，尤其是在中长期仍存在诸多不确定性和限制因素。更值得关注的是，经济、社会、政治等多领域多层次的新变化和新矛盾交织在一起，令欧盟面临前所未有的新挑战。

### 1. 危机动摇欧洲一体化基础

国际金融危机爆发以来的长期经济低迷至少从两个方面动摇了欧洲一体化的基础。其一，历次危机导致欧盟成员国经济表现进一步分化，经济竞争力差距拉大，围绕欧盟层面推行的主流经济政策（尤其是主权债务危机后实行的财政紧缩政策）产生的分歧和矛盾不断加剧，欧盟内部凝聚力明显下降，甚至在欧洲一体化进程中一直发挥主导作用的法国和德国也难以就“一体化将向何处去”达成基本共识；其二，国际金融危机和主权债务危机造成整个欧盟范围内持续的高失业问题，在受冲击严重的南欧和部分中东欧国家尤甚，而且由此引发的贫困和社会不满并未因近两年失业率逐步回落<sup>②</sup>而明显减弱，这导致积极推动欧洲一体化且从中获益的精英群体与难以从中受益进而越来越对一体化持怀疑甚至反对态度的底层民众之间的对立逐步凸显。与此同时，持反对欧洲一体化主张的民粹主义政党在欧盟多国强势崛起，并且在个别成员国通过选举上台执政。上述两方面矛盾的持续累积导致欧洲一体化陷入低谷，而英国通过公投最终退出欧盟的结果更是令一体化的前景“雪上加霜”。

### 2. 危机对欧洲经济社会模式造成强烈冲击

虽然欧盟内部并不存在统一的经济社会模式，但是自二战后启动一体化进程起，欧盟（欧共体）始终致力于塑造相对一致的欧洲经济社会模

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<sup>①</sup> 此处欧盟和欧元区经济增长数据均来自欧盟统计局网站，<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat>。

<sup>②</sup> 自 2013 年以来，欧盟及其主要成员国失业率逐步回落，主要是因为人口老龄化加速导致劳动人口绝对数量逐年下降，失业人数相对于劳动人口的比例也随之下降。此外，新冠疫情暴发以来，欧盟成员国普遍通过补贴方式支持企业保护就业岗位，也对就业形成了支撑效应，但由此造成企业冗员现象加剧的问题。

式，以增进成员国和民众对一体化的认同。欧盟（欧共体）并未对欧洲经济社会模式做出明确界定，但是仍可由欧盟条约的相关内容梳理出其核心要素。经《里斯本条约》修订后的《欧洲联盟基础条约》第3条对欧盟的使命和价值观做出了明确规定，其中第3款和第4款聚焦于经济社会领域，列举了欧盟要实现的各项经济社会目标。<sup>①</sup> 长期研究欧洲一体化的意大利学者卡洛·阿尔托蒙特（Carlo Altomonte）曾根据条约内容将欧盟的经济社会目标归结为三点：增长、稳定、凝聚，并相应地将欧洲经济社会模式界定为“增长—稳定—凝聚模式”。<sup>②</sup> 若进一步将环境领域囊括进来，则可将欧洲模式简单归结为兼顾经济活力、社会凝聚力和环境可持续性的平衡发展模式。总体而言，自20世纪90年代至2008年国际金融危机爆发前，欧盟的经济增长虽然落后于美国，但表现差强人意，同时在经济稳定与社会凝聚方面获得较大成功，在节能环保领域更是取得显著成绩，欧洲经济社会模式的内核因而得以不断强化，而且越来越多地获得外部世界的认可。然而，国际金融危机爆发以来，特别是近几年，上述核心要素平衡发展的相对稳态一步步被打破，不仅经济增长与社会凝聚力受到严重冲击，实现环境与气候目标的投资来源也受到抑制，欧洲经济社会模式的发展前景不容乐观。

### 3. 危机导致欧盟在落实新的经济增长理念与目标时困难重重

2010年，为重振遭受国际金融危机冲击的欧洲经济，同时也为了明确“后里斯本战略时代”的发展方向，欧盟提出了面向未来十年新的经济发展战略，即“欧洲2020战略”（Europe 2020）。该战略提出了支撑未来欧盟经济增长的三大核心理念：智慧型增长、可持续增长与包容性增长。<sup>③</sup> 要落实上述增长理念与目标，离不开公共和私人部门在研发创新、教育、能源转型、基础设施等领域的大规模投资。然而，接踵而至的国际金融危

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① 《欧洲联盟基础条约——经〈里斯本条约〉修订》，程卫东、李靖堃译，社会科学文献出版社2010年版，第33页。

② Carlo Altomonte and Mario Nava, *Economics and Policies of an Enlarged Europe*, Edward Elgar Publishing, 2005, pp. 17–25.

③ European Commission, “EUROPE 2020: A Strategy for Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth,” COM (2010) 2020 final, Brussels, March 3, 2010.

机、经济危机和主权债务危机导致成员国可用的公共财政资源极为有限，也持续打击着私人投资者的信心，导致投资严重不足，智慧型增长和可持续增长所需资金存在较大缺口，而一些成员国失业率长期处于高位也严重威胁到包容性增长目标的实现。2019 年年底，冯德莱恩委员会上任后提出要加快推进绿色和数字“双转型”，将“绿色协议”和数字战略作为其首要工作任务。然而，由于新冠疫情导致的经济衰退、俄乌冲突引发能源危机致使投资不足、欧洲单一市场建设进展缓慢、前期数字化人才储备不足、绿色和数字基础设施建设滞后等因素制约，截至 2024 年年底，欧盟“双转型”还难言成功。此外，2022 年发生能源危机后，欧盟的能源成本大幅飙升，虽然至 2024 年年底已显著回落，但是能源价格仍比 2010 年至 2019 年的平均水平高出 40%，<sup>①</sup> 经济要实现可持续增长仍面临诸多挑战。

#### 4. 危机削弱欧盟国际竞争力，导致其国际经济地位持续下滑

早在国际金融危机爆发之前，欧盟的经济竞争力问题就比较突出。从衡量一国（或地区）经济表现和竞争力的关键性指标——劳动生产率上看，自 20 世纪 90 年代中期起，欧盟整体及德国、法国、意大利等主要成员国的劳动生产率增速开始明显低于美国，且呈现下滑态势。正是在这一背景下，欧盟于 2000 年提出了“里斯本战略”。然而，该战略的推进并不顺利，尤其是快速提高劳动生产率的努力多年未取得明显成效。伴随着欧盟和欧元区经济竞争力的疲弱，欧盟在全球经济中的地位也进入持续下滑的轨道。根据国际货币基金组织的数据，2008 年至 2023 年，欧盟 GDP 占全球 GDP 的比重由 24% 一路下降至 17.3%。<sup>②</sup>

2024 年 9 月，欧洲中央银行前行长马里奥·德拉吉牵头的一个工作组发布了《欧洲竞争力的未来》的报告（亦称为“德拉吉报告”）。<sup>③</sup> 据该报

① 根据欧盟统计局公布的欧元区能源价格指数走势，将 2015 年设定为 100，2010 年至 2019 年的均值为 102，2024 年 11 月为 145，比 2010 年至 2019 年的均值高出不止 40%，<https://tradingeconomics.com/euro-area/energy-prices>。

② IMF, “World Economic Outlook: Steady but Slow: Resilience amid Divergence,” April 2024, <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/Issues/2024/04/16/world-economic-outlook-april-2024>。

③ “The Future of European Competitiveness—Part A | A Competitiveness Strategy for Europe,” September 2024, [https://commission.europa.eu/topics/eu-competitiveness/draghi-report\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/topics/eu-competitiveness/draghi-report_en)。

告分析，2002 年欧盟和美国之间的 GDP 差距是 15%，到了 2023 年，则扩大到 30%。这一差距的 70% 来自两大经济体之间劳动生产率的差异：1995 年，欧盟的生产率几乎是美国的 95%，到 2023 年这一比例已降至 80% 以下。导致欧盟生产率下降的原因很多，“德拉吉报告”认为，最重要的原因之一就是欧盟在数字化革新方面远远落后于美国，甚至赶不上中国，即“欧盟在推动增长的新兴科技方面处于弱势”。例如，当前在全球最顶尖的 50 家科技公司中，只有 4 家是欧洲公司；自 2008 年以来，30% 的欧洲独角兽公司（即估值超过 10 亿美元的初创公司）已经离开欧盟，前往美国发展；欧洲没有一家市值超过 1000 亿欧元的公司是在过去 50 年里创立的，而美国有 6 家市值超过 1 万亿美元的公司都是在这一时期创建的。该报告指出，如果欧盟不能在创新、基础设施和技术投资等方面迅速采取行动，欧洲将逐渐失去其全球竞争力。

### （三）欧洲对外政策不断地缘政治化

自 2016 年英国通过脱欧公投和特朗普当选美国第 45 任总统以来，逆全球化和泛政治化、泛安全化的风潮在欧美愈演愈烈，地缘政治在时代主题中的色彩越来越浓厚。美国政治时评家法里德·扎卡利亚（Fareed Zakaria）将此归纳为继 15 世纪欧洲国家崛起、19 世纪末美国工业化完成后世界上第三次地缘政治革命。<sup>①</sup> 国家政府而不是跨国公司和国际组织，重新成为国际关系的绝对主角；国家竞争特别是大国竞争，以及零和博弈、结盟勾连变成比以联合国为中心的治理型协商更为主流的国际社会成员间的互动方式；武装斗争和军事冲突层出不穷，屡见不鲜，国际法失去权威和信誉。这些地缘政治的明显特征在新冠疫情结束之后，不仅没有消退，反而更加清晰、更加频繁地一再向世界亮出其现实主义的面目。2024 年 11 月，特朗普再次赢得美国总统大选，一个高举着关税大棒和“孤立主义”的美国，将使欧洲和世界面临更大的地缘政治和经济安

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<sup>①</sup> Fareed Zakaria, *Age of Revolutions: Progress and Backlash from 1600 to the Present*, Allen Lane, 2024, p. 274.

全风险。

### 1. “地缘政治”欧盟委员会的诞生

第二次世界大战后，欧洲通过地区一体化避免内部再次发生大规模战争，享受了长久的和平红利，成为世界上发达国家最为集中的地区。冷战结束后，在经济全球化浪潮中，以德国高端制造业为代表的欧洲经济依赖来自俄罗斯的廉价稳定的油气供应、中国改革开放形成的高利润市场和有序高效的全球分工体系，甚至在 21 世纪初，GDP 总量超越美国变为世界第一。欧洲的代表——欧盟是当今世界一体化程度最高的地区性组织，它依赖成员国自主让渡主权和开放经济社会管制得以形成与发展。可以说，无论欧洲还是欧盟，其发展都深度依赖经济全球化和自由贸易，欧洲各国自身也深嵌于以自由开放为特征的全球治理体系之中。地缘政治回归在逻辑与实践上都与欧盟成立与发展的规律和历史相悖，但它又需要努力适应，因此提出以“开放性战略自主”来定义欧盟的贸易政策，<sup>①</sup> 寻求在相互依赖与自主性之间的平衡，<sup>②</sup> 以“地缘政治欧洲”和建设欧洲防务联盟来应对地缘政治变局。冯德莱恩在 2019 年成为欧盟委员会主席后，宣布所领导的委员会为“地缘政治委员会”。2024 年 7 月，她在作为新一届欧盟委员会主席候选人发表的《政治纲领》中进一步指出，“世界将进入一个地缘政治敌对的时代”，需要以“欧洲防务联盟项目”来应对俄乌冲突。<sup>③</sup>

### 2. 俄乌冲突加剧欧洲地缘政治紧迫感

2022 年 2 月爆发的俄乌冲突，成为二战后欧洲地区最大的地缘政治危机。面对俄乌冲突，欧盟和法德等欧洲国家改变了 2014 年克里米亚危机发生时，以“诺曼底模式”协调俄乌关系、限制冲突烈度和范围的政策，转为同美国深度协作，在军事上和经济上援助乌克兰，以经济和外交手段

① European Commission, “Trade Policy Review—An Open, Sustainable and Assertive Trade Policy,” COM (2021) 66 final, Brussels, February 18, 2021, [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:5bf4e9d0-71d2-11eb-9ac9-01aa75ed71a1.0001.02/DOC\\_1&format=PDF](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:5bf4e9d0-71d2-11eb-9ac9-01aa75ed71a1.0001.02/DOC_1&format=PDF).

② 丁纯、张铭鑫：《欧盟对外经济依赖与“开放性战略自主”》，载《复旦学报（社会科学版）》，2024 年第 1 期，第 166—181 页。

③ Ursula von der Leyen, “Europe’s Choices: Political Guidelines for the Next European Commission 2024 – 2029,” July 18, 2024, [https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/e6cd4328-673c-4e7a-8683-f63fbb2cf648\\_en?filename=Political%20Guidelines%202024-2029\\_EN.pdf](https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/e6cd4328-673c-4e7a-8683-f63fbb2cf648_en?filename=Political%20Guidelines%202024-2029_EN.pdf).



制裁和遏制俄罗斯。欧盟不仅突破战时不向冲突参与方提供武器的历史惯例，大量向乌克兰转让军械和军用物资，而且迅速出台了一系列前所未有的对俄经济、社会、文化和体育制裁措施，冻结俄罗斯外汇储备，没收俄富商在欧资产，将部分俄银行踢出 SWIFT 金融交易系统，宁可挨冻也要停止进口俄罗斯煤炭、石油和天然气，把俄罗斯排挤出欧洲委员会、联合国人权理事会，禁止俄运动员和代表队参加冬残奥会、花样滑冰世锦赛和足球世界杯预选赛，甚至连俄罗斯的猫都难逃欧美主导下的猫科国际动物联合会的制裁。目前正在进行的俄乌冲突实际上存在两个不同性质的战场：正面战场在乌克兰，交战双方是俄罗斯和乌克兰，这是一场常规武装冲突；幕后第二战场，上演的则是不流血、无硝烟的经济战和舆论战。美欧已结成紧密的援乌反俄同盟，一方面向乌克兰紧急提供其所需的武器和经济援助，使其在战场上不至于“落败”；另一方面挥舞制裁“大棒”，对俄罗斯国民经济和重点人物实施严厉制裁。同时，美欧在外交领域，利用多边和双边外交活动，以媒体造势的方式，对中国施加压力，力图让中国与俄罗斯疏离。

### 3. 欧洲安全秩序面临重塑

欧洲普遍认为，俄乌冲突挑战了冷战后的欧洲安全秩序。德国总理朔尔茨在 2022 年 2 月 27 日的德国联邦议会演讲中指出：“普京‘武装入侵’乌克兰的目的，不仅仅是想把一个独立的主权国家从世界地图上抹去，这场战争的目的也是试图推翻建立在 1975 年《赫尔辛基最后文件》原则之上、已经存在近半个世纪之久的现有欧洲安全秩序。”<sup>①</sup> 这一安全秩序其实就是美国和西欧在所谓的“人权”“自由”和“民主”理念引导下，向后苏联空间不断扩展西方意识观念，并在冷战后以北约和欧盟双东扩作为制度形式所塑造的欧美主导下的“和平”。当制裁俄罗斯成为“政治正确”

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<sup>①</sup> Olaf Scholz, “Policy Statement by Olaf Scholz, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany and Member of the German Bundestag, 27 February 2022 in Berlin,” The Federal Government, <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-en/news/policy-statement-by-olaf-scholz-chancellor-of-the-federal-republic-of-germany-and-member-of-the-german-bundestag-27-february-2022-in-berlin-2008378>.

之后，欧洲放弃了远比美俄关系密切的欧俄经济相互依赖关系，德国放弃了耗资近百亿欧元修建、年输气量达 550 亿立方米的“北溪-2”天然气管道，欧洲整体转向购买价格更高、运输时间更长的美国船装液化天然气。欧盟多数成员国在乌克兰问题上缺乏中长期欧洲安全制度框架安排，只是坚持“无论多久，都会向乌克兰及其人民提供坚定的政治、财政、经济、人道主义、军事和外交支持”。<sup>①</sup> 随着特朗普重返白宫，欧洲开始面临如果美国停止对乌军援和经援，它能否独力支撑乌克兰财政和军事开支的“灵魂之问”。

## 二 中欧关系：挑战与机遇

中欧都是全球重要的政治、经济和文明力量。面对世界百年未有之大变局，中欧在总体保持对话与合作势头的同时，也面临一些问题和挑战。与此同时，世界之变也为中欧关系的新发展提供了机遇。

### （一）中欧关系面临的挑战

#### 1. 欧洲对华认知加速调整

随着欧洲之变的烈度持续上升，欧洲对华政策也深受其政治、经济和外交变化的影响。欧盟认为：“欧洲正处于一个深刻变革时代，不稳定、失落感和不安全感在上升。”<sup>②</sup> 在欧洲各类思潮激烈碰撞的时刻，中国成为欧洲精英和民众的一个舆论焦点。尤其是中欧正常的经贸和外交关系受到欧洲政治思潮交锋的影响，不断被“政治化”乃至“安全化”。欧盟对华立场也深受欧盟中国观的影响，而中国观的变化与欧洲内部各类政治思潮的碰撞密切相关，既有欧盟政治制度和领导人选变化的因素，也有横亘中

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<sup>①</sup> European Council, “European Council Conclusions on Ukraine, Enlargement and Reforms,” December 14, 2023, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2023/12/14/european-council-conclusions-on-ukraine-enlargement-and-reforms/>.

<sup>②</sup> Ursula von der Leyen, “Europe’s Choice, Political Guidelines for the Next European Commission 2024 – 2029”.



欧之间的诸多外部因素。欧盟中国观呈现出对华认知多样与政策趋于统一、实用主义与价值观外交共存、自主认知与受美裹挟并存等特点。

#### （1）欧洲对华认知多样性态势持续

近年来，欧盟机构之间、欧盟各国之间以及欧盟机构与成员国政府之间的政策偏好和立场呈现共识与分歧共存的趋势，欧洲对华政策更加多元。其一，“对手、竞争和合作”三重定位<sup>①</sup>成为欧盟对华认知的主基调。欧洲对华认知在合作伙伴、谈判伙伴、经济竞争者、制度性对手之间“游走”。欧洲国家国内政治趋于激进化、极端化和碎片化，支持对华理性务实合作的声音受到“压制”，也使得部分国家对华态度的两面性愈加明显。近期，部分欧洲智库人士“炒作”中国“安全威胁”，妄图将中欧拉入对抗的泥潭。<sup>②</sup>

其二，欧盟及其成员国内外政策优先事项不同。贸易、技术和安全挑战之间日益紧密的联系将不可避免地导致欧盟及其成员国之间的分工发生变化。为建设单一市场和公平竞争的环境设立的规则，大大限制了成员国在国家层面部署产业政策的能力。在一个公共投资需求、人口压力和经济波动更大的时代，欧洲围绕福利国家政府支出的限制和优先事项将出现激烈的争论。据此，对于欧盟是否应该在对华立场上与美国保持一致、加强协调的问题，欧洲内部观点并非“一边倒”。<sup>③</sup>部分成员国对维护和改善中欧关系仍然抱有积极态度，当然也存在部分成员国持“倚美抗华”心态。

其三，欧盟与成员国对华政策的“温差”增大。一方面，欧盟委员会

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① European Commission, “EU-China—A Strategic Outlook,” March 12, 2019, <https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2019-03/communication-eu-china-a-strategic-outlook.pdf>.

② Gunnar Wiegand, Natalie Sabanadze and Abigaël Vasselier, “China-Russia Alignment: A Threat to Europe’s Security,” GMF, June 26, 2024, <https://www.gmfus.org/news/china-russia-alignment-threat-europes-security>.

③ Philippe Etienne, “The European Union between the United States and China: Should We Choose between Equidistance and Following?” Foundation Robert Schuman, October 8, 2024, <https://www.robert-schuman.eu/en/european-issues/763-the-european-union-between-the-united-states-and-china-should-we-choose-between-equidistance-and-following>; Margot Schüller, “Disengagement from China: United States and European Union Policies Compared,” GIGA, No. 1, 2023, <https://www.giga-hamburg.de/en/publications/giga-focus/disengagement-from-china-united-states-european-union-policies-compared>.

在对华政策上的地位突显，并且希望延续对华强硬立场来强化其决策地位。同时，在对华政策立场上，欧盟委员会可能与欧洲议会加大协调力度。另一方面，欧洲理事会对华政策可能受到欧盟成员国之间的立场差异以及欧盟成员国内部分歧的影响而更加分化，也不排除为了迎合内部政治经济诉求来统一对华立场。整体看，欧盟对华政策将呈现欧盟委员会、欧洲议会和欧盟成员国之间博弈和妥协的态势。

## （2）欧盟力求对华政策的统一

一个内部极化和碎片化的欧盟将无力在全球秩序变革中掌握主动权乃至发挥影响力，因此，欧盟希望进一步加强内部的政治整合，提供有效的解决方案。在地缘政治动荡时期，欧盟领导人普遍意识到高层团结比以往任何时候都更加重要。加强团结是欧盟机构在对华政策上的重要目标，<sup>①</sup>以确保对中国立场和行动达成一致。

欧洲对华的认知和政策深受中欧关系的内生性影响。随着中欧综合实力的变化，尤其是中国快速发展和欧洲相对下降形成鲜明对比，欧洲对华认知深陷“经济竞争力焦虑”。欧方对欧中贸易逆差不满，将其归咎为双方市场准入不对等、中国“滥用补贴”破坏公平竞争，干扰欧盟市场秩序，并积极推动对华商品尤其是电动汽车的反补贴调查等。由于欧盟及其成员国对华政策走向更趋“内顾”与保守，欧盟对华打着“防御”的旗号来实施“保护主义”目标。欧盟机构包括欧盟委员会和欧洲议会不仅基于自身利益来强化欧洲单一市场和应对国家主义优先立场，还希望重新定义欧盟在全球经济中的角色，强调环境和劳工标准，努力塑造公平、可持续和繁荣的全球经济环境。

欧洲对华认知还受到俄乌冲突延宕和中美战略博弈的影响。据此，欧盟力图以统一的方式对中国表明立场和采取行动，推行对华政策的“欧洲化”。自2022年2月以来，俄乌冲突对中欧关系产生了负面影响。随着冲

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<sup>①</sup> European Commission, “Speech by President von der Leyen on EU-China Relations to the Mercator Institute for China Studies and the European Policy Centre,” March 30, 2023, [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/speech\\_23\\_2063](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/speech_23_2063).

突的持续，欧盟机构和一些成员国基于所谓“中俄轴心”的逻辑<sup>①</sup>来观察欧洲与中国的关系，将双方关系与俄乌冲突挂钩，在欧洲与俄罗斯关系全面恶化的同时，其对华排斥心理加剧。与此同时，中欧关系的走向亦深受美国因素的影响。2021年拜登政府上台后，美欧加强对华政策协调，对华战略趋同性上升。俄乌冲突的爆发进一步拉近了欧美关系，尤其在地缘政治和安全议题上，欧洲国家更易受到美国战略的影响。进一步而言，欧洲对华关系受到美国霸权主导的国际秩序的束缚，欧洲对华强硬势力的增长既是美国施加影响的结果，也是美国塑造中美战略竞争的一种表现。尽管特朗普回归对国际社会尤其是欧美关系带来极大的不确定性，但可以肯定的是，美国仍将继续成为影响欧洲对华认知和政策的重要因素。

## 2. 欧洲对华经济政策趋于保守

2023年6月20日，欧盟委员会和欧盟外交与安全政策高级代表联合发布了《欧洲经济安全战略》，这也是欧盟开启欧洲一体化以来首次提出经济安全战略。<sup>②</sup>该战略基于当前欧盟面临的一系列经济风险，设计了保障欧盟经济安全的一整套政策架构，并且制定了欧盟及其成员国加快落实的具体行动计划。

经济安全战略的提出标志着欧盟首次将经济安全置于战略地位，其内外经济政策的底层逻辑正在由“效率至上”转为“效率与安全并重”，在某些领域甚至是“安全至上”。这一转变体现出，当前的欧盟正深陷风险与竞争力焦虑。具体而言，四个方面的变化及其影响是促使欧盟出台经济安全战略的主要因素：其一，新冠疫情令欧盟意识到在极端状况下其内外部供应链面临的风险；其二，俄乌冲突进一步加剧了欧盟的对外依赖风险焦虑；其三，在新一轮科技与产业革命中的相对落后令欧盟承受巨大的竞争压力；其四，中美关系持续紧张令欧盟对待与中国经贸合作的态度趋于

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<sup>①</sup> Michał Bogusz, Jakub Jakóbski and Witold Rodkiewicz, “The Beijing-Moscow Axis: The Foundations of an Asymmetric Alliance,” OSW, November 15, 2021, <https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/osw-report/2021-11-15/beijing-moscow-axis>.

<sup>②</sup> European Union, “European Economic Security Strategy,” JOIN (2023) 20 final, Brussels, June 20, 2023.

谨慎保守。

在经济安全战略中，欧盟设计了一套包括提升、保护、合作三条路径的整体架构。“提升”指提高欧盟的竞争力，促进经济增长，加强欧洲经济韧性，夯实欧盟的技术和工业基础。“保护”指通过一系列政策和工具来维护经济安全，必要时采取有针对性的新工具。“合作”则是指在全世界范围内建立合作伙伴关系。简言之，欧盟试图通过积极主动地提升自身经济实力来化解风险，通过加强防御和自我保护来防范风险，通过建立更广泛的经贸联系来分散风险，从而达到全面“去风险”的目的。<sup>①</sup>

值得注意的是，《欧洲经济安全战略》通篇并未提及中国，但是考虑到该战略围绕欧盟委员会主席冯德莱恩 2023 年 3 月底对华关系讲话中提出的“去风险”概念设计了整体架构，而且诸多工具直接或间接地涉及中国，毋庸置疑，该战略的确带有降低对华依赖、加强对华竞争的意味。鉴于欧盟长期是中国的第一大技术来源地，也是中国最重要的贸易伙伴之一，其收紧高技术领域对外合作必然会对中欧科技与经贸合作造成负面冲击。事实上，欧盟及其成员国在经济安全战略框架下采取的一些行动已经对中国产生了重要影响。2023 年 6 月 30 日，荷兰政府正式颁布了有关先进半导体设备的出口管制新条例，并于 2023 年 9 月 1 日正式生效。根据新规，为确保国家安全，荷兰的半导体设备厂商必须为某些类型的先进半导体制造设备的出口申请许可证，包括 EUV 光罩保护膜及生产设备、EUV 光刻机等。由于目前荷兰企业阿斯迈尔（ASML）几乎独家垄断全球的 EUV 光刻机市场份额，因此，这一新规必然给作为光刻机及相关设备重要进口方的中国带来挑战，特别是将导致中国芯片产业难以获取最新的制程技术和设备。不容忽视的是，荷兰出台这一新规在很大程度上也是美国施压的结果。<sup>②</sup>这也表明，不论是主动向美国“看齐”，还是被动与美国配合，欧盟落实其经济安全战略都难以摆脱美国在科技与产业上全面打压中

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① 孙彦红：《欧盟经济安全战略及对华影响解析：从“开放性战略自主”到全面“去风险”》，《俄罗斯东欧中亚研究》，2024 年第 2 期，第 29 页。

② Michael Race, “Dutch to Restrict Chip Equipment Exports amid US Pressure,” BBC News, June 30, 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-66063594#>.

国这一地缘政治背景。此外，欧盟委员会于 2023 年 10 月决定对自中国进口的纯电动载人汽车发起反补贴调查，并且在结束调查后决定自 2024 年 10 月 31 日起征收为期五年的最终反补贴税。

## （二）中欧关系存在的机遇

### 1. 中欧互需大于互斥

自 1975 年中国与欧盟（欧共体）建交以来，欧盟对华战略一直坚持以“接触与合作”为主。中欧共同面对全球秩序与世界经济体系的变化，应对全球和地区层面的挑战和不确定性。虽然中欧之间存在较大的竞争性，在规则制定、数字和技术、观念规范等领域竞争大于合作，但是，随着中欧互动的加强以及国际格局的变化，双方之间的相互需要远远超出竞争带来的排斥。

从历史和未来发展来看，中欧互需大于互斥。欧洲在中国外交战略布局中的地位稳步上升，同时，中国在欧盟及其成员国对外战略中的重要性与日俱增。欧盟指出“印太地区已成为决定世界未来的决定性地区”，<sup>①</sup> 中国对欧盟的重要性不言而喻。中欧之间没有直接的地缘政治和军事安全冲突，虽然地缘政治的竞争性因素近年来有所增加。欧盟和英国、法国、德国等欧洲国家与中国关系中的竞争成分增多，但主要还是经济、观念以及规则层面的竞争，并非全方位的地缘战略竞争或冲突。欧洲对华政策既有经济利益的考虑，也有所谓“规范”层面的考量。目前看来，欧盟对华政策受到经济利益偏好分歧，以及欧盟内部多元化政策带来的碎片化、不连贯和不一致的影响，导致中欧全面战略伙伴关系发展受限。

长期以来，中国致力于构建以合作共赢为核心的新型国际关系。<sup>②</sup> 作

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<sup>①</sup> European Commission, “The EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific,” JOIN (2021) 24 final, Brussels, September 16, 2021, [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/jointcommunication\\_2021\\_24\\_1\\_en.pdf](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/jointcommunication_2021_24_1_en.pdf).

<sup>②</sup> 《构建以合作共赢为核心的新型国际关系——外交部长王毅在中国发展高层论坛午餐会上的演讲》，中华人民共和国外交部，2015 年 3 月 23 日，[https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq\\_676201/gjhdqzz\\_681964/sgwyh\\_682446/zyjh\\_682456/201503/t20150323\\_9384756.shtml](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq_676201/gjhdqzz_681964/sgwyh_682446/zyjh_682456/201503/t20150323_9384756.shtml)。

为最大的发展中国家和最大的发达国家联合体，中欧战略合作事关国际格局走向和世界和平、稳定与繁荣。正如中国共产党二十大报告指出，“世界又一次站在历史的十字路口，何去何从取决于各国人民的抉择。”<sup>①</sup> 当前，大国竞争日趋激烈，新冷战阴云不散，中欧战略合作与国际格局呈现相互塑造的态势。一方面，中欧携手将有利于世界多极化和全球化的发展；另一方面，稳定包容发展的世界也将为中欧战略合作提供更大机遇。习近平主席多次强调，在当前动荡加剧的国际形势下，中欧关系具有战略意义和世界影响，关乎世界和平、稳定、繁荣。<sup>②</sup> 作为推动多极化的两大力量、支持全球化的两大市场、倡导多样性的两大文明，中欧战略合作将有助于一个平等有序的多极化和普惠包容的全球化时代的到来。

中国式现代化已进入开局起步的关键时期，欧洲一体化也迎来发展的重要时期，这是中欧合作的历史性机遇期。全面推进中欧战略伙伴关系符合双方根本利益。成为多极世界中独立一极是许多欧洲国家的“欧洲梦”。冯德莱恩坦言“未来五年将决定欧洲在未来五十年的世界地位”。<sup>③</sup> 欧洲与美国在未来国际秩序设想上存在明显的差异。美国极力维护自身霸权和单极世界，欧洲则没有护持“霸权”的考量，而是接受多极世界，看重多边主义。

## 2. 中欧合作大于竞争

中欧经济上高度互补且利益深度交融，在应对气候变化、保护生物多样性、维护有效的多边主义等方面拥有许多共同关切。对此，欧盟及其主要成员国领导人都有清晰的认识。法国总统马克龙、德国总理朔尔茨均公开反对对华“脱钩”，冯德莱恩本人也明确表示与中国“脱钩”既不可行，也不符合欧洲的利益。欧盟 2023 年 6 月夏季峰会专门讨论了经济安全战略和对华“去风险”，并在峰会结论中强调，欧盟仍视中国为重要经贸

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① 习近平：《高举中国特色社会主义伟大旗帜 为全面建设社会主义现代化国家而团结奋斗——在中国共产党第二十次全国代表大会上的报告（2022 年 10 月 16 日）》，人民出版社 2022 年版，第 60 页。

② 《为世界提供更多稳定性 为发展提供更多推动力》，《人民日报》，2023 年 12 月 8 日，第 3 版。

③ European Commission, “Statement at the European Parliament Plenary by President Ursula von der Leyen, Candidate for a Second Mandate 2024 – 2029,” July 18, 2024, [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/statement\\_24\\_3871](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/statement_24_3871).



伙伴，将逐步降低在战略性领域对华依赖，但无意对华“脱钩”。<sup>①</sup> 实际上，根据欧盟委员会 2021 年和 2022 年发布的战略依赖调查报告，当前欧盟对中国存在高度依赖的商品的进口额占自中国进口总额的比重不足 1%，<sup>②</sup> 欧方不应夸大所谓的“对华依赖”风险。

自 2022 年年底以来，中欧领导人互访互动频繁，双方正着力修复疫情期间以及俄乌冲突爆发以来出现的交流赤字和信任赤字。2023 年 9 月之后，中欧在经贸、数字、环境领域的面对面交流再度重启。在 2023 年 9 月 25 日举行的第十次中欧经贸高层对话上，双方就宏观经济政策协调、产业链供应链合作、改善营商环境、世界贸易组织改革、金融业双向开放和监管合作等达成一系列成果和共识。<sup>③</sup> 特别是双方讨论了建立中欧原材料供应链预警机制，同意建立出口管制领域对话机制，还就欧盟近两年推出的国际采购工具、外国政府补贴审查等政策进行了深入坦诚的交流，而这都是在直接或间接地回应欧盟的风险关切及其经济安全战略。上述新进展表明，虽然中国和欧盟对彼此和对中欧关系的看法存在差距，但是双方都有加强对话合作的强烈愿望，并致力于建立和完善对话磋商的机制，旨在有效管控分歧与矛盾，这将为双方最大限度地求同存异、加强务实合作提供保障。

### 3. 中欧共识大于差异

2022 年出台的美国《国家安全战略》报告宣称“后冷战时代已经终结”，美国要在战略上“竞胜”（out-compete）地缘政治竞争对手。<sup>④</sup> 新形势下，中美两国竞争从经济技术、军事安全扩散到意识形态和价值规范等关键领域。

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① European Council, “European Council Meeting (29 and 30 June 2023) —Conclusions,” Brussels, June 30, 2023.

② European Commission, “Strategic Dependencies and Capacities,” Commission Staff Working Document, SWD (2021) 352 final, Brussels, 5 May 2021; European Commission, “EU Strategic Dependencies and Capacities: Second Stage of in-depth Reviews,” SWD (2022) 41, Brussels, 22 February 2022.

③ 《第十次中欧经贸高层对话达成一系列成果和共识》，新华网，2023 年 9 月 26 日，[https://www.news.cn/world/2023-09/26/c\\_1129886053.htm](https://www.news.cn/world/2023-09/26/c_1129886053.htm)。

④ The White House, “National Security Strategy,” October 2022, <https://bidenwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/8-November-Combined-PDF-for-Upload.pdf>.



与美国不同，欧盟和欧洲国家并不愿意走上“新冷战”之路。2023年4月7日，法国总统马克龙访华期间，中法双方发表联合声明，称中法双方“寻求在多极世界里强化以联合国为核心的多边国际体系”。<sup>①</sup> 欧洲的企业虽然受到欧盟委员会和一些欧洲国家政府所谓“去风险”叙事的影响，但中国超大市场、完整产业链和供应链所带来的比较成本优势，以及中国高水平对外开放的决心都促使它们“用脚投票”，选择继续加大对华投资和增加与中国的贸易往来。美国彼得森国际经济研究所2024年8月发布的报告指出，2018年至2023年，欧盟与中国之间的经济相互依赖程度不降反升，中国购买欧洲生产的旅行用品、手袋、鞋类和服装数量更多，欧洲对来自中国的制成品，特别是电池和电动汽车配件的进口大幅增长。<sup>②</sup>

在地理位置上，中国和欧洲分居于亚欧大陆的东、西两端，地缘上并不接壤，而且在1999年澳门回归后彻底解决了殖民时代遗留的领土问题，双方并不存在直接同地理相关的地缘政治问题。例如，对于发生在欧洲和东亚之外中东地区新一轮巴以冲突，中欧双方均能从维护和平和减少人道主义灾难的人类命运共同体精神出发，主张政治解决优先于军事方案，客观理性看待巴以冲突的结果和综合成因。除了是否承认哈马斯为恐怖主义组织外，中国与西班牙等欧洲国家在巴以问题上的立场几乎一致。欧盟、欧洲国家政府和中国都是巴勒斯坦民族权力机构的重要援助方，在中国和广大发展中国家承认巴勒斯坦国之后，有越来越多的欧洲国家开始考虑不再同美国保持一致，认为应该直接单方面承认巴勒斯坦国。2024年5月至6月，挪威、爱尔兰、西班牙和斯洛文尼亚陆续宣布承认巴勒斯坦国。至此，承认巴勒斯坦国的欧盟成员国数量已达到12个，接近欧盟27个成员国的一半。

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① 《中华人民共和国和法兰西共和国联合声明》，新华社，2023年4月7日，[https://www.gov.cn/yaowen/2023-04/07/content\\_5750444.htm](https://www.gov.cn/yaowen/2023-04/07/content_5750444.htm)。

② Mary E. Lovely and Jing Yan, “While the US and China Decouple, the EU and China Deepen Trade Dependencies,” Peterson Institute for International Economics, August 27, 2024, <https://www.piie.com/blogs/realtime-economics/2024/while-us-and-china-decouple-eu-and-china-deepen-trade-dependencies>.

### 三 探索中欧关系的新发展

习近平主席指出，“中国始终从战略高度和长远角度看待中欧关系，将欧洲作为中国特色大国外交的重要方向和实现中国式现代化的重要伙伴”。<sup>①</sup> 面向未来，中欧双方应坚持以政治互信为根本引领、务实合作为重要动力、多层次对话为关键渠道，不断夯实中欧关系发展基础，培育新的合作增长点。

#### （一）树立正确认知，夯实中欧政治互信

##### 1. 坚持元首外交引领，为中欧关系发展定向把舵

2022年年底以来，中欧领导人频繁会晤，在增进共识、推进合作方面取得一系列重要成果。2023年4月，法国总统马克龙和欧盟委员会主席冯德莱恩同期访华；12月，第二十四次中国—欧盟领导人会晤在北京成功举办。2024年4月，德国总理朔尔茨访华，中德双方达成多项合作共识。5月，习近平主席成功访问法国、塞尔维亚和匈牙利，为进一步稳定和发展中欧关系注入强劲动力。此外，西班牙、意大利、波兰等欧洲多国领导人也纷纷到访中国，展现强烈的对华合作意愿。元首外交的高频度展开，有助于中欧在当前变乱交织的国际形势下及时澄清误解、沟通立场、深化共识、协调行动，为中欧关系持续稳定发展指引方向。

##### 2. 坚持中欧伙伴定位，为世界和平繁荣注入“中欧力量”

中国应坚持对欧总体工作思路，统筹做好对欧工作和外交全局工作，锚住维护世界和平、促进共同发展的外交政策宗旨，以“三增进”夯实中欧战略关系之基：一是增进共同利益，善于以利益为纽带拉住稳住欧洲，以共建“一带一路”高质量发展为抓手，加大中国市场化制度化改革和开放力度，持续释放利好；二是增进理念共识，尤其是在价值观方面，既求

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<sup>①</sup> 《习近平同法国总统、欧盟委员会主席进行中法欧领导人三方会晤》，国际在线，<https://news.cri.cn/20240507/9c0ef2da-c474-9024-5fce-e2dac461fc73.html>。

同存异，也要强调民主、自由等是全人类的共同价值，突出多边主义、多极化等中欧“共同理念”；三是增进战略共识，在中国三大“全球倡议”的框架下，与欧洲共同解决地区和全球热点问题，通过中欧合作持续推进世界多极化和经济全球化发展。

### 3. 坚持对欧合作基本方向，更加重视中欧合作的双边基础

2024 年美国大选和欧洲议会选举后，美欧政治版图均出现变化和重组。我们既要看到其选举结果的短周期，也要看到制度结构的中周期，更要看到思潮演变的长周期。因此，我们对中欧关系的基本判断是，在政治和军事上，中欧没有地缘政治矛盾，不存在根本战略冲突；在经济和贸易上，双方虽有竞争但互补性仍强，没有根本利益矛盾；在外交上，双方在推动多边主义和世界多极化上有着广泛共识，存在诸多共同利益。这三重判断和定位今后将继续成为推动中欧关系发展的最大底气和最大动力。但是，中国对欧工作要更加重视中国与欧洲国家的双边关系，将中欧关系的基石筑得更牢。

## （二）推动务实合作，拧紧中欧经贸纽带

长期以来，经贸合作一直是中欧关系的重要亮点和增长点。然而，随着近年来中欧经济与科技实力此消彼长、中国在新能源和数字领域竞争力显著提升以及欧盟对华实施“去风险”举措，中欧经贸关系正进入摩擦更频繁的新阶段。特别是冯德莱恩连任欧盟委员会主席后，其第二任期可能会继续推进经济安全战略和对华“去风险”。然而，从多方面看，中欧经贸联系紧密，利益深度融合，欧盟既无意愿也做不到与中国“脱钩”。此外，随着特朗普二次入主白宫，欧洲对于欧美经贸关系的担忧增大，欧盟作为整体在对华经贸合作上会更加积极。因此，未来相当长一段时期内，中欧经贸合作仍有较大发展空间。在更趋复杂激烈的竞争中探寻合作空间将成为中欧经贸关系的新常态。

### 1. 以中欧电动汽车贸易争端谈判为契机，与欧方商讨构建中欧经贸合作新模式

近年来，欧盟针对中国的一系列单边经贸举措更多是因为担忧自身竞

争力下滑而采取的防御行为，中欧亟待构建新的经贸合作模式以照顾双方利益关切。当前中欧仍在围绕电动汽车贸易争端进行谈判，中国应以此为契机与欧方商定建立更多灵活有效的应急磋商机制，确保中欧经贸关系大局稳定。特别是，自2023年启动针对自中国进口的纯电动汽车发起反补贴调查以来，欧方开始抛出并反复强化中国通过产业政策给予本土产业高额补贴进而形成“过剩产能”的叙事。鉴于当前世界贸易组织争端解决机制处于“停摆”状态，同时以美国为首的西方发达国家也纷纷转向以提高行业补贴为主要特征的产业政策，欧盟及其成员国给予产业和企业的补贴金额正在急剧增长，中欧双方若能依托电动汽车贸易争端谈判，围绕产业补贴问题达成基本共识，对于未来减少双边经贸摩擦将大有助益。

## 2. 中国持续推进高水平对外开放将为中欧经贸合作提供新机遇

目前，中国已推出多项持续推进高水平对外开放的具体措施，并进一步扩大鼓励外商投资产业目录，加快落实制造业领域外资准入限制措施“清零”要求，推动电信、互联网、教育、文化、医疗等领域有序扩大开放。中国是唯一拥有联合国产业分类中全部工业门类的国家，在产业配套、基础设施和人力资源、市场规模和成长性等方面具有综合性优势。值得注意的是，虽然近两年来地缘政治因素上升，但是德国对华直接投资却逆势增长，表明德国企业仍看重中国的综合优势，相信中国进一步扩大开放会为中国与欧盟整体的务实合作创造新空间。2024年9月，中国商务部、国家卫生健康委等部门联合发布通知，拟允许在北京、天津、上海等地设立外商独资医院，<sup>①</sup>这无疑为中欧在医疗领域合作创造了新机遇。

## 3. 加强在绿色转型等领域的合作

在绿色转型方面，虽然中欧之间存在竞争，但是双方在原材料、技术、市场、资金、人才等方面互补性仍然很强，未来合作空间十分广阔。为促进中欧在新能源领域形成良性竞合态势，中国可鼓励具备实力的企业（新能源汽车和新能源电池企业等）赴欧投资。若进行全资绿地投资，应

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<sup>①</sup> 《商务部 国家卫生健康委 国家药监局关于在医疗领域开展扩大开放试点工作的通知》，中华人民共和国商务部，2024年9月8日，[https://wzs.mofcom.gov.cn/zcfb/art/2024/art\\_c56c2fb9cf0b48dcb138d3cc13b14bff.html](https://wzs.mofcom.gov.cn/zcfb/art/2024/art_c56c2fb9cf0b48dcb138d3cc13b14bff.html)。

全面深入研究欧盟《外国补贴条例》的潜在影响，在投资之初即做好合规工作，将投资风险降至最低。在全资绿地投资存在困难的情况下，可综合考虑技术路线和市场前景等因素，与欧盟车企以合资方式合作，生产中欧联名品牌的电动汽车。

### （三）加强对话沟通，促进中欧求同化异

#### 1. 在乌克兰问题上共同发挥建设性作用

俄乌冲突爆发之后，中国政府发布《全球安全倡议概念文件》，倡导“大国带头讲平等、讲诚信、讲合作、讲法治，带头遵守《联合国宪章》和国际法”。<sup>①</sup> 中国外交部发布的《关于政治解决乌克兰危机的中国立场》，内含十二点方案中的第一条即为“尊重各国主权。公认的国际法，包括联合国宪章宗旨和原则应该得到严格遵守，各国主权、独立和领土完整都应该得到切实保障”。<sup>②</sup> 2022年11月4日，习近平主席在接见德国总理朔尔茨时强调，“共同反对使用或威胁使用核武器，倡导核武器用不得、核战争打不得，防止亚欧大陆出现核危机”。<sup>③</sup> 此后在会见欧洲领导人时，中方多次提出支持欧方为劝和促谈发挥重要作用，支持构建均衡、有效、可持续的欧洲安全框架。此外，中国还多次向乌克兰和摩尔多瓦提供人道主义援助，并强调将根据需要继续向乌克兰提供力所能及的援助。中国的立场和行动既体现了一个负责任大国的担当，也符合欧洲各国的长远利益。尽早和平解决俄乌冲突问题，是中欧双方的共同期盼。欧方应认识到中国作为和平贡献者和建设者的角色，与中方一道为政治解决俄乌冲突问题而努力。

#### 2. 弥合地缘政治观点分歧，以互通增加共识

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① 《全球安全倡议概念文件》（全文），新华社，2023年2月21日，[https://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2023-02/21/content\\_5742481.htm](https://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2023-02/21/content_5742481.htm)。

② 《关于政治解决乌克兰危机的中国立场》，中华人民共和国外交部，2023年2月24日，[https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/zyxw/202302/t20230224\\_11030707.shtml](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/zyxw/202302/t20230224_11030707.shtml)。

③ 《习近平会见德国总理朔尔茨》，新华社，2022年11月4日，[https://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2022-11/04/content\\_5724700.htm](https://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2022-11/04/content_5724700.htm)。

在俄乌、中东等地缘冲突热点问题上，中国与欧盟的立场存在一定的差异，归纳起来有三点：其一，中方主张不结盟，独立自主决定本国外交立场，尊重各国主权，而欧盟和主要欧洲国家在俄乌冲突问题上与美国深度协调，实质性介入地区冲突和本地区之外争端，以联盟形式追求自身利益和绝对安全；其二，中方认为安全不可分割，一国的安全不能以损害他国安全为代价，地区安全不能以强化甚至扩张军事集团来保障，各国的合理安全利益和关切都应得到重视和妥善解决，而欧盟在乌克兰问题上忽视作为军事集团的北约不断东扩带给俄罗斯的战略压力，不考虑历史积累形成的俄乌之间深层结构性矛盾，没有从历史角度动态理解该问题的复杂性；其三，中方主张以和平方式解决争端，无论是在俄乌冲突还是在巴以问题上，都积极促成尽早停火，但欧盟在俄乌冲突问题上却突破自己的底线，向乌克兰方面援助高精尖重武器，提供情报和后勤培训支持，其对俄罗斯的经济封锁扰乱了全球经济秩序，间接延长了俄乌冲突时间，造成更多伤亡和人道主义灾难。尽管如此，中欧双方均认为，有必要维护以联合国为核心的现有国际秩序，尊重国际法的权威。在以色列与哈马斯、黎巴嫩和伊朗冲突问题上，中国与西班牙等欧洲国家共同捍卫联合国安理会相关决议，共同谴责哈马斯和以色列袭击平民、以色列在加沙地带制造人道主义灾难、袭击联合国维和部队等践踏国际人道法的行径。中欧的地缘政治观存在较大重叠之处，可以通过理性对话化解疑虑，增进共识。

### 3. 加强人文交流，厚植中欧友好民意基础

习近平总书记强调，“国之交在于民相亲，民相亲在于心相通。”<sup>①</sup>民心相通是中欧关系的压舱石，是中欧关系持久向好发展的根本动力。新冠疫情和俄乌冲突的相继发生，不仅阻断了中欧人文交流的良好势头，也导致中欧民间巨大的认知赤字和信任赤字。中国高度重视加快恢复中欧人文往来。2023年12月，中国宣布单方面对法国、德国等五个欧盟成员国公民实施15天免签入境政策。此后，中国多次升级免签政策，惠及欧洲多

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<sup>①</sup> 习近平：《携手推进“一带一路”建设——在“一带一路”国际合作高峰论坛开幕式上的演讲》，新华社，2017年5月14日，<https://news.cri.cn/20170514/d26860b6-4eb7-db10-7546-ee55ef4af55.html>。



国。截至2024年年底，中国已对几乎所有欧盟成员国以及瑞士、挪威、黑山等欧洲国家免签，并将免签入境时间延长至30天。2024年5月，习近平主席在访问法国期间提出，推动未来3年法国来华留学生突破1万人、欧洲青年来华交流规模翻一番的重要倡议（“3年1万，欧洲翻番”倡议），体现了中国对促进中欧人文交流特别是青少年交流的真诚意愿。<sup>①</sup> 欧盟应与中方相向而行，在推动中国公民赴欧便利化等方面推出更多实质性举措，为夯实双边关系人文基础做出积极贡献。

## 四 结语

2024年1月，习近平主席在会见比利时首相德克罗时强调，面对变乱交织的国际形势，中欧之间需要架更多的“桥”。德克罗首相则表示，习近平主席10年前访问比利时，在布鲁日发表精彩演讲中有关“桥”的生动阐述令人印象深刻。习近平主席在那次演讲中以“桥”为喻，全面阐述中国对欧政策，认为要建设“和平稳定之桥”“增长繁荣之桥”“改革进步之桥”和“文明共荣之桥”。10年来，中国对欧政策一以贯之。<sup>②</sup> 中国支持欧洲一体化进程，欧洲也应当尊重中国人民的选择，避免将自己的价值观和发展模式强加于对方。只有中欧双方相互尊重，增进政治互信，尊重彼此的核心利益，中欧合作才能进一步深化与发展。

党的十八大以来，在习近平外交思想的指引下，中欧加强文明互鉴，倡导多样性，坚持友好、互信、合作大方向，打造具有战略定力的双边关系。<sup>③</sup> 特别是塞尔维亚与中国共同构建命运共同体，中国与匈牙利的全面战略伙伴关系提升为新时代全天候全面战略伙伴关系，在事关各自主权、安全、发展等核心利益问题上相互支持，为中国与其他欧洲国家关系未来发展树立了先行典范。正如习近平主席所说，中欧关系的独立自主与相互尊重是双方关系健康发展的基石，“中欧关系不针对、不依附、不受制于

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① 《中法教育交流的“双向奔赴”》，《光明日报》，2024年6月20日，第14版。

② 国纪平：《在构建人类命运共同体的光辉旗帜下》，《人民日报》，2024年3月23日，第1版。

③ 《习近平会见西班牙首相桑切斯》，《人民日报》，2023年4月1日，第1版。



第三方”。<sup>①</sup> 中国支持欧洲一体化进程和欧洲战略自主，期待欧洲成为世界多极化进程中的重要一极。

展望未来，中国一如既往地希望欧盟和欧洲国家能够独立自主地成为多极化世界中的一极，维护现行全球治理机制和多边规则，维持经济全球化趋势和世界秩序的稳定，但在新形势下也需与欧盟寻找新的合作亮点，通过沟通和磨合建立新的合作机制，增进互信，互谅互让，实行三方合作，培育共同利益。自由贸易和维护国际法权威是中欧双方的共同原则和诉求，中欧之间理应在美国退出国际多边组织、再打贸易战的新形势下迎接多极化时代的真正到来，相互尊重，平等相待，以合作求共赢，共同维护经济全球化和以联合国为核心的国际秩序。

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<sup>①</sup> 《习近平同法国总统马克龙、欧盟委员会主席冯德莱恩举行中法欧三方会晤》，《人民日报》，2023 年 4 月 7 日，第 1 版。

# China-Europe Relations Amid Great Changes: Adjustments and Development

*Project Group on “China-Europe Relations”,  
Institute of European Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences\**

**Abstract:** Amid the great changes unseen in a century, China-Europe relations are undergoing significant adjustments and development. As a major global actor, Europe faces increasing political fragmentation, a resurgence of economic protectionism in response to multiple crises, and a foreign policy increasingly shaped by geopolitical considerations. In recent years, Europe’s perception of China has evolved, with growing emphasis on competition in its China policy, presenting new challenges for bilateral relations. However, the fundamental dynamics of China-Europe relations remain unchanged. Mutual interdependence, extensive cooperation across various sectors, and shared interests continue to outweigh divergences, offering opportunities alongside challenges. The year 2025 marks the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between China and the European Union, providing a crucial moment for both sides to reflect on five decades of engagement. Strengthening mutual understanding through dialogue, expanding cooperation to manage

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\* The research project was chaired, designed, and coordinated by Professor FENG Zhongping. The European politics section was written by Associate Professor HE Zhigao, the European economy section was written by Professor SUN Yanhong, the European foreign relations section was written by Professor ZHAO Chen, and the section concerning the new developments of China-Europe relations was written by Professor FENG Zhongping and Associate Professor ZHANG Chao. This article was originally published in *Chinese Journal of European Studies*, No.1, 2025.

competition, actively negotiating trade and investment disputes, and addressing “de-risking” through greater openness will be essential for fostering stable and enduring China-Europe relations.

**Keywords:** China-Europe Relations, Great Changes, Geopolitics, De-risking, Populism

The world is undergoing profound and accelerating changes unseen in a century. The combined effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, regional conflicts, climate change, China-United States (US) strategic competition, and the rapid advancement of a new round of science-tech revolution have created an increasingly complex global landscape, posing multiple risks and challenges for the international community. Against this backdrop, European politics is becoming increasingly polarized and fragmented, economic growth remains sluggish, and foreign relations are deeply influenced by geopolitical considerations.

In its approach to China, the European Union (EU) has struggled to adapt to the evolving dynamics of China-EU relations on a more equal footing. Its policy toward China is increasingly shaped by geopolitical factors and a values-based diplomatic framework, highlighting both economic competition and ideological differences. The protracted Russian-Ukrainian conflict, along with external influences such as the Biden administration’s strategic efforts to court the EU through “smart-power diplomacy”, has contributed to growing skepticism and negative perceptions of China among the EU and some European nations. The re-election of Donald Trump as US President in November 2024 has further introduced new uncertainties, bringing both challenges and opportunities to global politics, the world economy, and China-EU relations.

In January 2025, President Xi Jinping spoke with European Council President António Costa, emphasizing that China and the EU are “partners that can contribute to each other’s success”. He pointed out that “the

more severe and complex the international situation becomes, the more China and the EU should adhere to the original aspirations of establishing diplomatic relations, strengthen strategic communication, enhance strategic mutual trust, and uphold the positioning of partnership.”<sup>①</sup> The year 2025 marks the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and the EU (formerly the European Community), presenting a critical juncture in their bilateral relationship. In the face of an increasingly intricate and evolving global landscape, both sides should draw lessons from the past five decades, move beyond narratives of competition and confrontation, and solidify their partnership on the foundation of win-win cooperation. China and the EU should deepen mutual understanding and trust through dialogue and exchanges, address frictions and disputes through consultations and negotiations, and counter “de-risking” by expanding openness. These efforts will contribute to the steady, positive, and long-term development of China-EU relations, bringing greater benefits to both sides and making a meaningful contribution to global peace and prosperity.

## **I. Europe Amid Great Changes**

As the world undergoes profound and unprecedented changes, Europe is experiencing significant shifts in its political landscape, economic development, and foreign relations, shaped by a complex interplay of internal and external factors. These shifts are characterized by three key trends: increasing political fragmentation, mounting economic challenges, and a growing geopolitical orientation in its foreign policy.

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<sup>①</sup> “Xi Jinping Has a Phone Call with President of the European Council Antonio Costa,” January 14, 2025, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/xw/zyxw/202501/t20250115\\_11534500.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/xw/zyxw/202501/t20250115_11534500.html).

## **i. Increasing Political Fragmentation**

European politics is profoundly influenced by the evolving global landscape and shifting ideological currents. In recent years, a combination of external factors—including deglobalization, the resurgence of geopolitical tensions, and intensified great power competition—alongside internal challenges such as political fragmentation, weakened consensus and declining governance efficiency, has contributed to heightened political volatility and complexity across the continent. The 2024 European Parliament (EP) elections, marked by intense ideological contestation among right-wing populism, conservatism, progressivism, and environmentalism, underscored the diversity, dynamism, and competition nature of European political thought. These ideological divides have further shaped the fundamental contours of Europe’s political landscape. As national political systems, party structures, and ideological movements continue to interact and evolve, European politics is facing increasing polarization, a weakening of consensus, and growing challenges to effective leadership and governance.

### **1. The Rightward Shift in Europe and the Rise of Political Conservatism**

In recent years, the rightward shift in European politics has become increasingly pronounced, emerging as one of the most significant transformations in the region’s political landscape and party structures. This trend is evident in three key aspects: the continued relative dominance of center-right forces, the growing support for right-wing populist parties, and the partial convergence of right-wing conservatism and populism.

The European center-right forces have been securing a relative advantageous position. Since the end of World War II, traditional center-right conservatism has been a dominant political force in Europe and even the West, advocating relatively conservative positions on economic

policy, socio-cultural issues, and lifestyle values.<sup>①</sup> At present, center-right parties continue to play a key role in Europe's political system. The 2024 EP elections did not significantly alter the power distribution among parliamentary party groups. Pro-European centrist factions—including the European People's Party (EPP), the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats, Renew Europe, and the Greens—secured a combined total of 454 seats, accounting for over 60% of the EP's total seats.<sup>②</sup> Notably, the center-right EPP won 188 seats, an increase of 12 compared to 2019. The successful re-election of Ursula von der Leyen, the EPP's lead candidate, as President of the European Commission (EC) underscores the continued dominance of the centrist coalition in shaping the EU's domestic and foreign policy directions.

However, right-wing populist parties are transitioning from the political margins to the mainstream. While their origins, governance approaches, and electoral dynamics vary across countries such as France, Germany, and those in Central and Eastern Europe, their rise has become a pan-European phenomenon. Both economic and cultural factors contribute to the phenomenon. From an economic perspective, the 2008 global financial crisis and, more notably, the Eurozone debt crisis exacerbated wealth inequality, contributed to middle-class decline, and fueled public dissatisfaction with economic stagnation. From a cultural perspective, widespread concerns over immigration—particularly the influx of refugees and undocumented migrants—have reinforced anxieties about the European identity and the perceived erosion of traditional European values. This pervasive sense of uncertainty and fear

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<sup>①</sup> François Hublet, Mattéo Lanoë and Johanna Schleyer, "Spelling out the European Center-right's Dilemma: Renewal of the Grand Coalition or National-Conservative Alliance?" Groupe d'études géopolitiques, June 29, 2023, <https://geopolitique.eu/en/2023/06/19/spelling-out-the-european-center-rights-dilemma-renewal-of-the-grand-coalition-or-national-conservative-alliance/>.

<sup>②</sup> European Parliament, "2024 European Election Results," July 23, 2024, <https://results.elections.europa.eu/en/>.

has provided fertile ground for the growth of right-wing populism.

In the 2024 EP elections, right-wing populist parties made significant gains, securing 187 seats collectively across three party groups: Europe of Sovereign Nations, European Patriots, and European Conservatives and Reformists, accounting for more than 25% of the total seats in the EP. Specifically, the European Conservatives and Reformists group secured 78 seats, an increase of 9 compared to 2019; the Europe of Sovereign Nations group won 25 seats; while the newly established European Patriots group gained 84 seats, making it the third-largest political group in the EP. The return of Donald Trump to the White House is expected to further bolster right-wing populist forces in Europe, particularly strengthening the influence and political standing of the European Patriots group.

Although the long-standing “firewall” preventing far-right parties from exerting significant influence on European politics remains intact, mainstream European parties have been compelled to respond to right-wing populist demands in both agenda-setting and political participation. Under this pressure, European politics has shifted further to the right, fostering a more conservative policy environment.

This rightward shift has led member states to prioritize domestic affairs over European and global concerns. The increasing divergence in national political preferences has, in turn, complicated decision-making at the EU level. For instance, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has promoted the concept of “national conservatism”<sup>①</sup> as a foundation for European integration, seeking to build a united front of European right-wing forces and reshape European political culture. This approach has intensified internal polarization within Europe, strengthened nationalist tendencies, and posed challenges to the EU’s cohesion. In short, the

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<sup>①</sup> Viktor Orbán, “We Need Change in Brussels,” National Conservatism, April 16-17, 2024, <https://nationalconservatism.org/natcon-brussels-2/presenters/pm-viktor-orban/>.



ongoing rightward shift in European politics has led to a broader conservative turn, characterized by the rise of nationalist and protectionist sentiments.

## 2. Political Fragmentation as a Result of European Polarization

The rise of right-wing populism has been accompanied by a decline in the strength of traditional political parties across European countries. Both the EU and its member states face the challenge of an evolving political landscape, characterized by the weakening of long-established centrist parties, and the rise of parties with populist overtones. Political polarization, fragmentation, and instability have become prevalent trends across the EU and its member states. The interplay between the fragmentation of the EU's party system and the fragmentation of national governments underscores the complex relationship between EU institutions and domestic political forces. This dynamic has contributed to the continued fracturing of the European political system, the polarization of party politics, and, consequently, its impact on European leadership on the global stage.

(1) The fault lines of European politics are being redrawn. The rise of right-wing populist parties has significantly altered the post-World War II political landscape of Europe. The primary axis of political conflict is shifting from the traditional left-right divide in economic and political affairs to a value-based division between pro-European/liberal forces and nationalist movements. The EP elections have revealed the increasing diversification of party affiliations within the EP, which expand from seven parliamentary groups in 2019 to eight in 2024.<sup>①</sup> Furthermore, the distribution of parliamentary seats has become increasingly fragmented, moving away from the dominance of large coalition party groupings traditionally led by the center-left and center-right.

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<sup>①</sup> European Parliament, "8 Political Groups," <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/portal/en>.

At the same time, right-wing populism in Europe is not a monolithic force, as policy divergences exist among different factions. For instance, the European Conservatives and Reformists group and the European Patriots group in the EP have failed to reach consensus on key policy issues. The results of the 2024 EP elections reaffirm an ongoing trend of political fragmentation and polarization across the continent.

(2) Political stability in Europe has deteriorated in recent years. The traditional grand coalition governments of many European countries are increasingly giving way to multi-party coalition governments, making it more difficult to form stable cabinets and increasing the likelihood of government collapse. The 2024 EP elections had a profound impact on domestic politics, particularly in France. Following the elections, French President Emmanuel Macron called for early legislative elections. The results revealed an unprecedented level of political fragmentation: the French National Assembly is now split among three groups of nearly equal size but with stark ideological differences. The left-wing coalition—the “New Popular Front”—secured 182 seats, while the right-wing populist National Rally (formerly National Front) won 143 seats—an increase of nearly 75% compared to the 2022 elections.<sup>①</sup> The long-standing practice of consolidating power through a strong centrist position in France’s Fifth Republic is proving increasingly unsustainable, marking the end of an extended period of relative political stability.

Similarly, in Germany, the 2024 EP elections exposed vulnerabilities in the governing coalition. The opposition center-right bloc (CDU/CSU) and the right-wing populist Alternative for Germany (AfD) outperformed the three governing coalition parties, securing 30.3% and 15.6% of the

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<sup>①</sup> Tang Ji and Xing Jianqiao, “The French Ministry of the Interior Announces the Final Results of the National Assembly Election,” *Xinhuanet*, July 8, 2024, <http://www.xinhuanet.com/world/20240708/a60901a1758a4bfcabd9554de30cd67d/c.html>.

vote, respectively.<sup>①</sup> These results underscored the fragility of the so-called “traffic-light coalition”. By November 2024, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz dismissed Finance Minister Christian Lindner and announced the collapse of the coalition government. The political upheavals in France and Germany exemplify the broader decline in political stability across Europe.

(3) A notable trend in European politics is the diversification of power centers. The traditionally dominant Franco-German axis has weakened, as both countries struggle with internal political and economic challenges. Chancellor Olaf Scholz faces economic stagnation and the rise of right-wing populism, while President Emmanuel Macron is preoccupied with domestic political turbulence and opposition from both the left and right. The erosion of Franco-German leadership has created a political vacuum at the EU level, which, in turn, has provided the EC with greater influence in shaping the EU’s agenda. The EC President Ursula von der Leyen has emerged as a central figure in EU leadership, capitalizing on the deep institutional ties between the Commission and the Parliament.

Additionally, geopolitical tensions have exacerbated divisions between “New Europe” (primarily Central and Eastern European countries) and “Old Europe” (Western European states). Some Central and Eastern European countries resist deepening EU integration, seeking to maintain greater national sovereignty and avoid a perceived second-tier status within the Union where Franco-German leadership has persisted. Simultaneously, these countries have increasingly leveraged external partnerships, particularly with the US, to counterbalance the influence of the EU institutions and Western European powers. This trend is expected to intensify, especially during Donald Trump’s second term as US president.

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<sup>①</sup> European Parliament, “Constitutive Session,” July 23, 2024, <https://results.elections.europa.eu/en/germany/>.

## **ii. The Impact of Successive Crises on the European Economy**

The European economy has endured four significant crises since 2008, each leaving profound effects. These include the global financial crisis originating in the US at the end of 2008, the sovereign debt crisis from 2011 to 2012, the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, and the energy crisis in 2022 triggered by the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. The eurozone and EU economies experienced a sharp “cliff-diving recession” in 2008, and were hit heavily again by the sovereign debt crisis in 2012, which recovered sluggishly in 2023. The economic impact of the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic was severe, with the eurozone and EU economies contracting by 6.4% and 6.2%, respectively, though they rebounded in 2021. However, the energy crisis in 2022 caused further stagnation, resulting in modest growth of just 0.4% in 2023.<sup>①</sup>

It is crucial to note that the consequences of these four crises extend beyond the economic realm, impacting social and political dimensions as well. Even at the economic level, the recovery of the eurozone and the EU remains fragile, with numerous uncertainties and long-term challenges still looming. Moreover, the intertwining of new economic, social, and political changes and contradictions has presented the EU with unprecedented and multifaceted challenges.

### **1. Multiple Crises and the Erosion of European Integration**

The persistent economic downturn following the 2008 financial crisis has undermined the foundations of European integration in at least two significant ways. First, the crises have exacerbated economic disparities among EU member states, deepening the divide in competitiveness across the region. This has intensified existing tensions and disagreements regarding the mainstream economic policies implemented at the EU level, particularly the austerity measures enacted

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<sup>①</sup> Source: Eurostat, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat>.

after the sovereign debt crisis. Consequently, these policies have further eroded European cohesion. France and Germany, traditionally the driving forces of European integration, have increasingly struggled to reach a consensus on the future direction of integration.

Second, the international financial crisis and sovereign debt crisis have resulted in persistent high unemployment throughout the EU, especially in the hard-hit southern and some central and eastern European countries. The resulting poverty and social discontent have not been significantly reduced as a result of the gradual decline in unemployment over the past years.<sup>①</sup> This has led to a growing confrontation between the elites, who are actively promoting and benefiting from European integration, and the underclass, who are increasingly skeptical and even opposed to integration because they have not been able to benefit from it. At the same time, populist parties opposed to European integration have risen strongly in many European countries and have come to power through elections in several member states. The accumulation of these contradictions has led to a downturn in European integration, and the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the EU has made the prospects for integration even worse.

## 2. The Strong Impact of Crises on the European Economic and Social Model

Although there is no singular economic and social model within the EU, the Union has consistently worked toward shaping a relatively

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<sup>①</sup> The unemployment rate in the EU and its major member states has gradually declined since 2013, primarily due to the accelerating aging population, which has led to a year-on-year decrease in the absolute number of the working-age population. As a result, the proportion of unemployed individuals relative to the labor force has also decreased. Additionally, since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, EU member states have generally supported businesses through subsidies to protect jobs, which contributed to employment. However, this has exacerbated the issue of excessive staffing within companies.

unified European economic and social model since the initiation of the integration process after World War II. This model was intended to foster greater acceptance of integration among member states and the public. While the EU has not formally defined a European economic and social model, its core elements can be inferred from the relevant provisions in the EU treaties.

Article 3 of the *Treaty on EU* (revised by the *Lisbon Treaty*), outlines the mission and values of the EU. Paragraphs 3 and 4 specifically address economic and social matters, detailing the objectives the EU aims to achieve in these fields.<sup>①</sup> Carlo Altomonte, an Italian scholar with extensive expertise in European integration, has distilled the EU's economic and social objectives into three primary goals: growth, stability, and cohesion. Accordingly, he has characterized the European economic and social model as the “growth-stability-cohesion model”.<sup>②</sup> If the environmental dimension is incorporated, the European model can be further described as a balanced development approach that considers economic vitality, social cohesion, and environmental sustainability.

From the 1990s until the outbreak of the 2008 global financial crisis, the EU's economic growth consistently lagged behind that of the US, but it still performed relatively well. Meanwhile, the EU achieved significant progress in terms of economic stability, social cohesion, and notable advancements in energy conservation and environmental protection. These accomplishments strengthened the core of Europe's economic and social model, earning broader international recognition. However, since the onset of the 2008 financial crisis, the relative stability of these core elements has gradually eroded. Not only has the EU's economic growth

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<sup>①</sup> “Consolidated Texts of the EU Treaties as Amended by the Treaty of Lisbon,” 2008, p.5, <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7b8b0840f0b645ba3c5004/7310.pdf>.

<sup>②</sup> Carlo Altomonte and Mario Nava, *Economics and Policies of an Enlarged Europe*, Edward Elgar Publishing, 2005, pp.17-25.

and social cohesion been severely impacted, but investments aimed at achieving environmental and climate goals have also been suppressed. As a result, the future prospects of the European economic and social model remain uncertain.

### 3. Crisis-driven Obstacles in the EU's Implementation of its New Economic Growth Visions and Objectives

In 2010, in response to the economic downturn caused by the international financial crisis and to outline a development trajectory for the post-Lisbon era, the EU introduced the “Europe 2020” strategy, a ten-year economic development plan. This strategy was built on three pillars intended to drive future economic growth: smart growth, sustainable growth, and inclusive growth.<sup>①</sup> Achieving these objectives required substantial public and private sector investments in research and development, innovation, education, energy transition, and infrastructure. However, successive crises—including the global financial crisis, economic downturn, and sovereign debt crisis—severely constrained public finances across EU member states and eroded private sector confidence. This resulted in underinvestment and a significant financing gap, particularly in sectors critical to smart and sustainable growth. Furthermore, persistently high unemployment rates in some member states posed serious obstacles to achieving the inclusive growth targets.

At the end of 2019, the von der Leyen Commission took office, prioritizing the acceleration of twin transitions—the green transition and digital transition—with the European Green Deal and its digital strategy at the forefront of its agenda. However, as of late 2024, multiple challenges have impeded progress. The economic recession triggered by the Covid-19 pandemic, the energy crisis resulting from the Russian-

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<sup>①</sup> European Commission, “Europe 2020: A European Strategy for Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth,” COM (2010) 2020, Brussels, March 3, 2010.



Ukrainian conflict, insufficient investment, slow progress in building the European single market, a shortage of digitally skilled labor, and delays in green and digital infrastructure development have all hampered the realization of these transformation goals. Additionally, following the energy crisis of 2022, the EU experienced a sharp rise in energy costs. Although energy prices had significantly declined by the end of 2024, they remain 40% higher than the 2010-2019 average,<sup>①</sup> posing continued challenges to the EU's ability to achieve sustainable economic growth.

#### 4. The EU's Weakened International Competitiveness and a Steady Decline in its Global Economic Position

The issue of the EU's economic competitiveness has been a long-standing concern, predating the outbreak of the global financial crisis. A key indicator of economic performance and competitiveness—labor productivity—has shown a persistent decline in growth rates across the EU. Since the mid-1990s, the EU as a whole, along with major economies such as Germany, France, and Italy, has experienced significantly lower labor productivity growth rates compared to the US, with a continued downward trend. Against this backdrop, the EU introduced the Lisbon Strategy in 2000, aiming to enhance its global economic standing. However, the implementation of this strategy encountered significant challenges, particularly in its goal of boosting labor productivity, where years of efforts failed to yield substantial results. As the EU and Eurozone economies continued to struggle with weak competitiveness, the EU's share in the global economy followed a trajectory of steady decline. According to the International Monetary Fund, the EU's share of global

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<sup>①</sup> According to the energy price index trends for the Eurozone published by Eurostat, with 2015 set as 100, the average from 2010 to 2019 was 102. In November 2024, the index reached 145, exceeding the 2010–2019 average by more than 40%. <https://tradingeconomics.com/euro-area/energy-prices>

GDP fell from 24% in 2008 to 17.3% in 2023, highlighting the bloc's diminishing influence in the global economic landscape.<sup>①</sup>

In September 2024, a working group led by former European Central Bank President Mario Draghi published a report titled *The Future of European Competitiveness*, commonly referred to as the “Draghi Report”.<sup>②</sup> According to the report, the GDP gap between the EU and the US was 15% in 2002, but by 2023, it had widened to 30%. Seventy percent of this gap is attributed to disparities in productivity: in 1995, the EU's productivity level was nearly 95% of that in the US, but by 2023, it had fallen below 80%.

The decline in EU productivity stems from multiple factors, yet the Draghi Report identifies one of the most critical: Europe's lag in digital innovation. The report highlights that the EU trails not only the US but also China in emerging technologies. For instance, among the world's top 50 technology companies, only four are European. Since 2008, approximately 30% of European unicorns (startups valued at over \$1 billion) have relocated to the US. Moreover, none of the European companies with a market capitalization exceeding €100 billion were founded in the past 50 years. In stark contrast, all six US companies with a market capitalization surpassing €1 trillion were established within this period. The report warns that if the EU fails to take decisive action to boost innovation, infrastructure, and technology investment, it risks losing its global competitiveness in the long term.

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<sup>①</sup> International Monetary Fund, “World Economic Outlook: Steady but Slow: Resilience amid Divergence,” April 2024, <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/Issues/2024/04/16/world-economic-outlook-april-2024>.

<sup>②</sup> “The Future of European Competitiveness – Part A|A Competitiveness Strategy for Europe,” September 2024, [https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/97e481fd-2dc3-412d-be4c-f152a8232961\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/97e481fd-2dc3-412d-be4c-f152a8232961_en).

### **iii. The Ongoing Geopoliticization of European Foreign Policy**

Since the 2016 Brexit referendum and the election of Donald Trump as the 45th President of the US, the trends of anti-globalization, hyper-politicization, and securitization have intensified across both Europe and the US. As a result, geopolitics has become an increasingly dominant feature of contemporary international relations. Prominent American strategic scholar Fareed Zakaria has described this shift as the third geopolitical revolution, following the rise of European powers in the 15th century and the completion of American industrialization in the late 19th century.<sup>①</sup> In this new era, nation-states—rather than multinational corporations or international organizations—have returned as the principal actors in global affairs. National competition, particularly among major powers, has increasingly replaced multilateral governance and UN-centered diplomatic consultations. Zero-sum competition and strategic alliances have become the primary modes of interaction within the international community, while armed conflicts and military confrontations have become more frequent. Meanwhile, international law has suffered a decline in authority and credibility. Rather than diminishing, these defining features of geopolitical competition have become more pronounced in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, which has repeatedly exposed the realist nature of global politics. The return of Donald Trump to the US presidency in November 2024 is expected to further amplify these challenges. With the revival of tariff-based economic policies and a resurgence of isolationism, both Europe and the broader international community will likely face heightened geopolitical tensions and economic security risks.

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<sup>①</sup> Fareed Zakaria, *Age of Revolutions: Progress and Backlash from 1600 to the Present*, Allen Lane, 2024, p.274.

## 1. The Geopolitical European Commission

Following World War II, Europe successfully prevented the recurrence of large-scale internal conflicts through regional integration, benefiting from long peace that allowed it to emerge as one of the world's most prosperous and developed regions. After the end of the Cold War, amid the wave of economic globalization, the European economy—led by Germany's high-end manufacturing sector—flourished by leveraging cheap and stable oil and gas supplies from Russia, access to China's high-margin market following its reform and opening-up, and an efficient, globally integrated division of labor. By the early 21st century, these advantages enabled the EU to surpass the US in total GDP, making it the world's largest economic bloc.

As the most deeply integrated regional organization in the world, the EU has developed through the voluntary transfer of sovereignty and the open economic and social governance of its member states. The success of both Europe and the EU has been fundamentally dependent on economic globalization and free trade, with European nations deeply embedded in a liberal, open global governance system.

The resurgence of geopolitics, therefore, is not only conceptually but also historically at odds with the EU's formation and development. Nevertheless, the EU has had to adapt to this shifting reality. To navigate this evolving landscape, the EU has sought to redefine its trade policy within the framework of “open and strategic autonomy”,<sup>①</sup> aiming to strike a balance between interdependence and self-sufficiency.<sup>②</sup> This has also driven efforts to construct a “Geopolitical Europe”, reinforced

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<sup>①</sup> European Commission, “Trade Policy Review-An Open, Sustainable and Assertive Trade Policy,” February 18, 2021, [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:5bf4e9d0-71d2-11eb-9ac9-01aa75ed71a1.0001.02/DOC\\_1&format=PDF](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:5bf4e9d0-71d2-11eb-9ac9-01aa75ed71a1.0001.02/DOC_1&format=PDF).

<sup>②</sup> Ding Chun and Zhang Mingxin, “EU's External Economic Dependency and Open Strategic Autonomy,” *Fudan Journal (Social Sciences)*, Issue 1, 2024, pp.166-181.

through initiatives such as the European Defense Union, designed to enhance Europe's capacity to respond to geopolitical challenges. Upon assuming office as the EC President in 2019, Ursula von der Leyen declared her administration to be a "geopolitical Commission". In July 2024, she emphasized that the world is now defined by adversity and uncertainty, and the EU must establish a "European Defense Union" in response to the Russian-Ukrainian conflict.<sup>①</sup>

## 2. The Russian-Ukrainian Conflict and Europe's Heightened Geopolitical Urgency

The Russian-Ukrainian conflict, which erupted in February 2022, has become the most significant geopolitical crisis in Europe since World War II. In response, the EU, along with France, Germany, and other European nations, has abandoned its previous Normandy Format approach, which was applied during the 2014 Crimean crisis to mediate and contain the conflict. Instead, European countries have aligned more closely with the US, providing Ukraine with military and economic aid, while imposing economic and diplomatic sanctions on Russia. Marking a historic shift, the EU has broken from past practice by directly supplying weapons and military equipment to a party engaged in an ongoing conflict.

Furthermore, Europe has swiftly implemented an unprecedented range of sanctions against Russia, spanning economic, social, cultural, and sports-related measures. These include, for example, freezing Russia's foreign exchange reserves and confiscating the assets of wealthy Russian oligarchs in Europe, expelling several Russian banks from the

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<sup>①</sup> Ursula von der Leyen, "Europe's Choices: Political Guidelines for the Next European Commission 2024-2029," July 18, 2024, [https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/e6cd4328-673c-4e7a-8683-f63ffb2cf648\\_en?filename=Political%20Guidelines%202024-2029\\_EN.pdf](https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/e6cd4328-673c-4e7a-8683-f63ffb2cf648_en?filename=Political%20Guidelines%202024-2029_EN.pdf).

SWIFT financial transaction system, halting imports of Russian coal, oil, and natural gas, excluding Russia from the Council of Europe and the United Nations Human Rights Council, banning Russian athletes and teams from events such as the Winter Paralympics, the World Figure Skating Championships, and FIFA World Cup qualifiers, even extending to sanctions on Russian-bred cats by the International Feline Federation.

The Russian-Ukrainian conflict effectively operates on two distinct battlefields: the frontlines in Ukraine, where Russia and Ukraine are engaged in conventional warfare, and the broader media war and economic battlefield. In the latter, the US and Europe have formed a tight-knit anti-Russian alliance to assist Ukraine through economic aid and military support while enforcing sweeping sanctions on Russia's economy and elites. Additionally, the US and European nations have intensified diplomatic and media efforts to exert pressure on China via bilateral and multilateral diplomatic activities, aiming to distance Beijing from Moscow.

### 3. The Reshaping of the European Security Order

It is widely acknowledged in Europe that the Russian-Ukrainian conflict has profoundly challenged the post-Cold War European security order. In his February 27, 2022 address to the German Bundestag, Chancellor Olaf Scholz asserted: "With the attack on Ukraine, Putin is not just seeking to wipe an independent country off the map. He is demolishing the European security order that had prevailed for almost half a century since the Helsinki Final Act."<sup>①</sup>

This security order, in reality, represents the extension of Western

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<sup>①</sup> Olaf Scholz, "Policy Statement by Olaf Scholz, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany and Member of the German Bundestag, 27 February 2022 in Berlin," <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-en/news/policy-statement-by-olaf-scholz-chancellor-of-the-federal-republic-of-germany-and-member-of-the-german-bundestag-27-february-2022-in-berlin-2008378>.

influence into the post-Soviet space, led by the US and Western Europe under the banners of human rights, freedom, and democracy. After the collapse of Berlin wall, both NATO and the EU expanded eastward, serving as institutional frameworks for a Western-dominated peace. As the sanctioning over Russia became a political imperative, Europe abandoned its long-standing economic interdependence with Russia—a relationship far closer than that between the US and Russia. A striking example was Germany’s cancellation of the Nord Stream 2 natural gas pipeline, a €10 billion project with an annual capacity of 55 billion cubic meters. Instead, many European countries turned to higher-cost, shipborne liquefied natural gas from the US—despite its longer transportation time and logistical challenges.

Most EU member states lack a medium- to long-term institutional framework for addressing European security in relation to Ukraine. Instead, their approach has largely been reactive, centered on providing “firm political, financial, economic, humanitarian, military, and diplomatic support to Ukraine and its people for as long as necessary.”<sup>①</sup> With Donald Trump’s return to the White House, Europe now faces an existential dilemma: if the US withdraws military and economic aid to Ukraine, can Europe sustain Kyiv’s war efforts and financial stability on its own?

## **II. China-Europe Relations: Challenges and Opportunities**

China and Europe are key global actors in politics, economy, and civilization. Amid unprecedented global changes, China and the

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<sup>①</sup> European Council, “European Council Conclusions on Ukraine, Enlargement and Reforms,” December 14, 2023, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2023/12/14/european-council-conclusions-on-ukraine-enlargement-and-reforms/>.



EU continue to maintain dialogue and cooperation, yet they also face significant challenges. At the same time, these changes present new opportunities for the future development of China-EU relations.

## **i. Challenges to China-EU Relations**

### **1. The Accelerated Shift in Europe's Perception of China**

As Europe undergoes intensifying political, economic, and diplomatic transformations, its policy towards China is evolving accordingly. European leaders believe that the EU is in an era of “profound change,” with increasing instability, a sense of loss, and insecurity within the Union.”<sup>①</sup> Amid the collision of diverse political ideologies in Europe, China has become a focal point of discourse among European elites and public. Increasingly, normal economic, trade, and diplomatic relations between China and Europe are being politicized and even securitized, driven by clashes of European political thoughts and narratives.

Europe's stance on China is influenced by both its internal and external dynamics. Internally, changes in the EU's political system and leadership have shaped its evolving approach. Externally, geopolitical pressures—particularly from the US—have played a significant role. The EU's perception of China is characterized by a coexistence of diverse viewpoints within European policymaking, a balance between policy unity, pragmatism, and values-based diplomacy, and the tension between an autonomous EU foreign policy and pressure from the US. As these dynamics continue to unfold, China-EU relations will remain subject to ongoing adjustments, challenges, and recalibrations.

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<sup>①</sup> Ursula von der Leyen, “Europe's Choice, Political Guidelines for the Next European Commission 2024-2029,” July 18, 2024, p. 3, [https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/e6cd4328-673c-4e7a-8683-f63ffb2cf648\\_en?filename=Political%20Guidelines%202024-2029\\_EN.pdf](https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/e6cd4328-673c-4e7a-8683-f63ffb2cf648_en?filename=Political%20Guidelines%202024-2029_EN.pdf).

### (1) The Growing Diversity in European Perceptions of China

In recent years, policy preferences and positions within EU institutions, among member states, and between the EU and European capitals have exhibited a complex mix of consensus and divergence, leading to an increasingly diversified European approach toward China.

First, the triple positioning of “rival, competitor, and partner”<sup>①</sup> remains the dominant framework through which the EU perceives China. European perspectives on China fluctuate between viewing it as a cooperation partner, a negotiating partner, an economic competitor, and a systemic rival. At the same time, domestic politics across Europe is becoming more radicalized, polarized, and fragmented, suppressing voices that advocate for rational and pragmatic cooperation with China. This has resulted in growing duality in the attitudes of certain European countries toward China. Additionally, some European think tanks have been actively amplifying narratives of China as a “security threat”, aiming to push China-EU relations toward greater confrontation.<sup>②</sup>

Second, the EU and its member states prioritize domestic and foreign policies differently. As trade, technology, and security challenges become increasingly interconnected, the division of labor between the EU and national governments is shifting. While the EU strives to create a unified single market and level playing field, its regulatory framework significantly limits the capacity of individual member states to independently implement industrial policies. Given the rising demand for public investment, demographic shifts, and economic uncertainty, debates over government spending priorities in Europe’s welfare states

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<sup>①</sup> European Commission, “EU-China – A Strategic Outlook,” March 12, 2019, <https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2019-03/communication-eu-china-a-strategic-outlook.pdf>.

<sup>②</sup> Gunnar Wiegand, Natalie Sabanadze and Abigaël Vasselier, “China-Russia Alignment: A Threat to Europe’s Security,” Chatham House, German Marshall Fund and MERICS, June 26, 2024, [https://www.gmfus.org/sites/default/files/2024-06/Chatham%20House%20GMF%20MERICS%20Report%20China-Russia%20alignment\\_06-2024.pdf](https://www.gmfus.org/sites/default/files/2024-06/Chatham%20House%20GMF%20MERICS%20Report%20China-Russia%20alignment_06-2024.pdf).

are intensifying. On the question of whether the EU should align more closely with the US on its China policy, opinions within Europe remain divided.<sup>①</sup> Some member states continue to advocate for engagement and improving relations with China, while others adopt a more confrontational stance, aligning with the US in confronting China.

Third, the policy gap between the EU institutions and its member states regarding China is widening. On the one hand, the EC has taken an increasingly assertive stance on China, aiming to maintain a tough approach as a means of consolidating its authority over EU policymaking. Additionally, the Commission is likely to strengthen its coordination with the EP to align their positions on China. On the other hand, the European Council's approach to China may become more polarized due to diverging priorities among EU member states. Domestic political and economic pressures could push the Council to adjust or even unify its stance on China in response to shifting domestic demands within member states. Overall, the EU's China policy is likely to be shaped by a complex interplay of negotiations and compromises between the EC, the EP, and member states, reflecting the institutional power struggles and diverse national interests within the EU.

## (2) EU's Attempts to Unify its Policy towards China

A polarized and fragmented EU will be unable to take the initiative or exert influence in shaping the evolving global order. It is evident that the EU seeks to strengthen its internal political integration and develop effective solutions to address emerging challenges. In times of

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<sup>①</sup> Philippe Etienne, "The European Union Between the United States and China: Should We Choose Between Equidistance and Following," Foundation Robert Schuman, 8 October 2024, <https://server.www.robert-schuman.eu/storage/en/doc/questions-d-europe/qe-763-en.pdf>; Margot Schüller, "Disengagement from China: United States and European Union Policies Compared," German Institute for Global and Area Studies, No. 1, 2023, <https://www.giga-hamburg.de/en/publications/giga-focus/disengagement-from-china-united-states-european-union-policies-compared>.

geopolitical turmoil, European leaders increasingly recognize that unity is more critical than ever. Consequently, enhancing unity has become a key objective in the EU's China policy,<sup>①</sup> ensuring a unified stance and coordinated action.

European perceptions and policies toward China are shaped by the endogenous dynamics of China-Europe relations. As China's global influence grows and Europe faces relative economic decline, European attitudes toward China have been increasingly marked by "economic competitiveness anxiety".

Concerns over the trade deficit with China have fueled dissatisfaction, with Europe attributing the imbalance to unequal market access, alleged distortions caused by China's subsidies, and perceived interference in the EU's market. In response, the EU has actively pursued countervailing subsidy investigations, particularly targeting Chinese goods such as electric vehicles. Amid this landscape, the EU's policy towards China has become more inward-looking and conservative, adopting protectionist measures under the guise of defense. The EU institutions are not only reinforcing the European single market and prioritizing their own strategic interests but are also striving to redefine the EU's role in the global economy. Their approach emphasizes environmental and labor standards while promoting a fair, sustainable, and prosperous global economic order.

Europe's perception of China is also shaped by the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian conflict and the strategic competition between China and the US. In response, the EU has sought to adopt a unified stance and "Europeanize" its policy towards China. Since February 2022, the Russian-Ukrainian conflict has negatively impacted China-EU relations.

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<sup>①</sup> European Commission, "Speech by President von der Leyen on EU-China Relations to the Mercator Institute for China Studies and the European Policy Centre," March 30, 2023, [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/speech\\_23\\_2063](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/speech_23_2063).

As the conflict persists, EU institutions and some member states have increasingly framed Europe's relationship with China through the lens of the so-called "China-Russia axis".<sup>①</sup> They have linked China-Europe relations with the conflict and intensified their rejection of China.

At the same time, China-Europe relations have been significantly influenced by US. Since the Biden administration took office in 2021, the US and Europe have strengthened coordination on their China policies, leading to greater strategic convergence. The outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict has further strengthened transatlantic ties, particularly on geopolitical and security issues, making European countries more aligned with US strategic priorities. Moreover, European policy towards China remains shaped by the US-led international order, with Europe's growing assertiveness towards China reflecting both direct US influence and its role in shaping US-China strategic competition. While the return of Donald Trump introduces uncertainty into global affairs, particularly regarding transatlantic relations, one certainty remains: the US will continue to be a key factor shaping Europe's perceptions and policies toward China.

## 2. Europe's Conservative Economic Policy Toward China

On June 20, 2023, the EC and the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy jointly released the *European Economic Security Strategy*—the EU's first comprehensive economic security strategy since the inception of European integration.<sup>②</sup> In response to the economic risks facing the EU, the strategy establishes a policy framework aimed at safeguarding economic security and outlines a concrete action

<sup>①</sup> Michał Bogusz, Jakub Jakóbowski and Witold Rodkiewicz, "The Beijing-Moscow Axis: The Foundations of an Asymmetric Alliance," OSW, November 15, 2021, <https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/osw-report/2021-11-15/beijing-moscow-axis>.

<sup>②</sup> European Union, "European Economic Security Strategy," JOIN (2023) 20 final, Brussels, June 20, 2023.

plan for the EU and its member states to implement.

The introduction of the Strategy marks a significant shift in EU policymaking, as economic security is now positioned as a strategic priority. The underlying logic of the EU's internal and external economic policies is evolving from a traditional "efficiency-first" approach to a framework that balances "efficiency and security"—and in some cases, prioritizes security. This shift underscores the EU's deepening concerns over risks and competitiveness. Four key factors have driven the EU to adopt this strategy: (a) the Covid-19 pandemic exposed vulnerabilities in the EU's supply chains under extreme conditions, highlighting the need for greater resilience; (b) the Russian-Ukrainian conflict further heightened anxieties over external dependencies, particularly in critical sectors such as energy and raw materials; (c) Europe's lagging position in the new wave of technological and industrial advancements has subjected the EU to intense global competitive pressures; (d) persistent tensions between the US and China have reinforced the EU's risk-averse stance, leading to a more cautious and conservative approach to economic and trade relations with China.

As part of its economic security strategy, the EU has developed a comprehensive framework consisting of three key pillars: promoting, protecting, and partnering. "Enhancement" focuses on improving the EU's competitiveness, fostering economic growth, strengthening economic resilience, and consolidating the EU's technological and industrial base. "Protection" entails safeguarding economic security through various policy instruments, including the adoption of new, targeted measures when necessary. "Cooperation" emphasizes building global partnerships to support economic stability and diversification. In essence, the EU seeks to implement a comprehensive "de-risking" strategy by proactively strengthening its economic foundations to mitigate risks, enhancing defensive mechanisms to prevent vulnerabilities, and

expanding economic and trade ties to diversify dependencies.<sup>①</sup>

Notably, China is not explicitly mentioned in the *European Economic Security Strategy*. However, the Strategy is largely aligned with the “de-risking” approach outlined by President Ursula von der Leyen in her March 2023 speech on EU-China relations. Many of the policy instruments introduced under this strategy relate to China, leaving little doubt that the EU aims to reduce its dependence on China while intensifying economic competition with China. Given that the EU has long been China’s primary source of technology and one of China’s most significant trading partners, its tightening of foreign cooperation in high-tech sectors will inevitably produce negative implications for China-Europe scientific, technological, and economic relations.

In fact, some of the actions taken by the EU and its member states within the framework of the *European Economic Security Strategy* have triggered a significant impact on China. On June 30, 2023, the Dutch government introduced new export control regulations on advanced semiconductor equipment, which took effect on September 1, 2023. According to these regulations, semiconductor equipment manufacturers in the Netherlands must obtain export licenses for certain advanced semiconductor manufacturing technologies, including EUV pellicles, production equipment, and EUV lithography machines. As ASML, a Dutch company, holds a near-monopoly on the global market for EUV lithography machines, these restrictions pose a major challenge for China, a key importer of such technology. The limitations on access to cutting-edge semiconductor equipment will make it increasingly difficult for China’s chip industry to acquire the latest manufacturing process technology and equipment.

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<sup>①</sup> Sun Yanhong, “Analysis of the EU’s Economic Security Strategy and Its Impact on China: From ‘Open Strategic Autonomy’ to Comprehensive ‘De-risking’,” *Russian, East European & Central Asian Studies*, Issue 2, 2024, p.29.



Importantly, the Netherlands' decision to implement these export controls was, to a significant extent, influenced by US pressure.<sup>①</sup> This underscores the broader geopolitical context in which the EU's economic security strategy is embedded. Whether through active alignment with the US or through more passive adjustments under US influence, the EU's approach to economic security remains intertwined with Washington's broader strategy to curb China's technological and industrial advancements. In addition, on October 4, 2023, the EC launched an investigation into imports of Chinese electric vehicles, citing concerns over unfair subsidies. Following the investigation, the EU announced that it would impose final countervailing duties on these imports for five years, being effective on October 31, 2024.

## **ii. Opportunities for China-EU relations**

### **1. Mutual needs of China and the EU are greater than mutual exclusion**

Since the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and the EU in 1975, the EU's strategy toward China has been primarily based on “engagement and cooperation”. As both China and the EU navigate shifts in the global order and economic system, they face shared challenges and uncertainties at both regional and international levels. While competition between China and Europe has intensified—particularly in areas such as rule-making, digital and technological development, and normative frameworks—cooperation remains a crucial element of their relationship. Despite growing tensions, the mutual benefits of China-EU relations continue to outweigh the disruptions caused by geopolitical and economic shifts.

From both a historical and forward-looking perspective, China and Europe remain more interdependent than they are adversarial.

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<sup>①</sup> Michael Race, “Dutch to Restrict Chip Equipment Exports amid US Pressure,” BBC News, June 30, 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-66063594#>.

China's importance in the EU's external strategy has steadily increased, just as Europe's role in China's foreign policy has expanded. The EU acknowledges that the Indo-Pacific region has become a decisive region for the future of the world,<sup>①</sup> underscoring China's strategic significance. While China and Europe do not have direct geopolitical or military-security conflicts, geopolitical competition has grown in recent years. The EU, along with major European countries such as the United Kingdom, France, and Germany, has adopted a more competitive stance towards China. However, this competition remains primarily economic, normative, and regulatory, rather than an all-encompassing geostrategic rivalry. Europe's policy toward China is shaped by both economic interests and normative considerations. However, the fragmentation and incoherence of the EU's internal policymaking further complicate efforts to develop a unified and consistent approach towards China, posing challenges to the long-term stability and effectiveness of their bilateral relationship.

China has long been committed to fostering a new type of international relations centered on win-win cooperation.<sup>②</sup> As the world's largest developing country and largest developed bloc, China-EU strategic cooperation plays a pivotal role in shaping the global landscape, as well as in fostering world peace, stability, and prosperity. The 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China report highlighted that "the world has once again reached a crossroads in history, and its future course will be decided by all the world's peoples".<sup>③</sup>

<sup>①</sup> European Commission, "The EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific," JOIN (2021) 24 final, Brussels, September 16, 2021, [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/jointcommunication\\_2021\\_24\\_1\\_en.pdf](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/jointcommunication_2021_24_1_en.pdf).

<sup>②</sup> Wang Yi, "Toward a New Type of International Relations of Win-Win Cooperation," March 23, 2015, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjb/wjbz/jh/202405/t20240527\\_11312110.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjb/wjbz/jh/202405/t20240527_11312110.html).

<sup>③</sup> Xi Jinping, "Hold High the Great Banner of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics and Strive in Unity to Build a Modern Socialist Country in All Respects - Report to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China," October 16, 2022, <https://www.idcpc.org.cn/english2023/tjzl/cpcjj/20thPartyCongrssReport/>.

Amid intensifying great-power competition and lingering tensions reminiscent of a new Cold War, China-EU strategic cooperation and the evolving international order are mutually reinforcing. On the one hand, closer China-EU collaboration can advance global multipolarity and economic globalization; on the other, a stable and inclusive international environment will create greater opportunities for deepening China-EU strategic ties. President Xi Jinping has underscored that under the increasingly turbulent international situation “the China-EU relationship has strategic significance and implications for global peace, stability and prosperity”.<sup>①</sup> As two major forces advancing multipolarity, two major markets in support of globalization, and two major civilizations championing diversity, China and the EU can contribute to the emergence of a multipolar world based on equality and a globalization process that is more universally inclusive.

Chinese modernization has entered a critical initial phase, while European integration is also at a pivotal stage of development. This presents a historic opportunity for China-Europe cooperation. Strengthening the China-EU strategic partnership serves the fundamental interests of both sides. For many European countries, the aspiration to become an independent pole in a multipolar world represents a core element of the “European dream.” President Ursula von der Leyen has acknowledged that “the next five years will define Europe’s place in the world for the next five decades.”<sup>②</sup> Moreover, Europe and the US hold divergent visions for the future of the international order. While the US

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<sup>①</sup> “President Xi Jinping Meets European Council President Charles Michel and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen,” December 7, 2023, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/xw/zyxw/202405/t20240530\\_11332569.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/xw/zyxw/202405/t20240530_11332569.html).

<sup>②</sup> Ursula von der Leyen, “Europe’s Choices: Political Guidelines for the Next European Commission 2024-2029,” July 18, 2024, p.5, [https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/e6cd4328-673c-4e7a-8683-f63ffb2cf648\\_en?filename=Political%20Guidelines%202024-2029\\_EN.pdf](https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/e6cd4328-673c-4e7a-8683-f63ffb2cf648_en?filename=Political%20Guidelines%202024-2029_EN.pdf).

remains committed to preserving its global hegemony and a unipolar world, Europe—unburdened by the need to safeguard hegemonic dominance—accepts multipolarity and values multilateralism.

## 2. China-Europe Cooperation Outweighs Competition

China and the EU maintain highly complementary economies with deeply intertwined interests, particularly in areas such as climate change mitigation, biodiversity protection, and the promotion of effective multilateralism. European leaders recognize these shared priorities, and have openly opposed the notion of “decoupling” from China, while President Ursula von der Leyen has similarly acknowledged that such a move is neither feasible nor aligned with Europe’s interests.

At the EU Summer Summit in June 2023, economic and security strategies—particularly the approach to “de-risking” relations with China—were central topics of discussion. The summit’s conclusions reaffirmed that China remains a key economic and trade partner for the EU. While European leaders have expressed an interest in gradually reducing reliance on China in certain strategic sectors, they have made it clear that full economic decoupling is not the objective.<sup>①</sup> Moreover, findings from the EC’s strategic dependence reports (2021, 2022) challenge the perception of excessive reliance on China. According to these reports, commodities with high dependence on China account for less than 1% of the EU’s total imports from China,<sup>②</sup> indicating that concerns over “Chinese dependence” may be overstated.

Since late 2022, China and the EU have significantly increased

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<sup>①</sup> European Council, “European Council Meeting (29 and 30 June 2023) – Conclusions,” Brussels, 30 June 2023.

<sup>②</sup> European Commission, “Strategic Dependencies and Capacities,” Commission Staff Working Document, SWD (2021) 352 final, Brussels, 5 May 2021; European Commission, “EU Strategic Dependencies and Capacities: Second Stage of In-depth Reviews, SWD (2022) 41, Brussels, February 22, 2022.

high-level engagements, with leaders from both sides frequently exchanging visits and interactions. These efforts have been aimed at repairing communication gaps and rebuilding trust, which were strained during the Covid-19 pandemic and further challenged by the geopolitical repercussions of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. From September 2023 onward, China and the EU have resumed in-person exchanges across key sectors, including economy, trade, digital, and environment. A major milestone in this process was the 10th China-EU High-Level Economic and Trade Dialogue, held on September 25, 2023, where both sides reached a series of agreements and consensus on issues such as macroeconomic policy coordination, industrial and supply chain cooperation, business environment improvements, World Trade Organization reform, financial sector liberalization, and regulatory cooperation.<sup>①</sup> Notably, discussions led to the proposal of an early warning mechanism for the supply chain of raw materials and the establishment of a dialogue mechanism in export control. Additionally, both parties engaged in frank and in-depth exchanges regarding the EU's international procurement tools and its recent policies on foreign government subsidies, which have direct or indirect implications for economic security and risk mitigation strategies within the EU.

These developments underscore that, despite differences in perspectives on bilateral relations and some global issues, both China and the EU share a strong commitment to dialogue and cooperation. The ongoing establishment and refinement of dialogue and consultation mechanisms will play a crucial role in effectively managing disagreements, fostering mutual understanding, and maximizing opportunities for pragmatic collaboration.

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<sup>①</sup> “Commerce Ministry: China, EU Economic and Trade Dialogue Productive,” September 26, 2023, [http://english.scio.gov.cn/pressroom/2023-09/26/content\\_116710884.htm](http://english.scio.gov.cn/pressroom/2023-09/26/content_116710884.htm).

### 3. China-Europe Consensus Outweighs Differences

In its 2022 *National Security Strategy*, the Biden administration declared that “the post-Cold War era is definitively over” and emphasized the need for the US to strategically “out-compete” its geopolitical rivals.<sup>①</sup> The US-China competition has expanded beyond economic and technological spheres to encompass military security, ideological influence, and value-based norms.

Unlike the US, the EU and its member states have shown little inclination to engage in a “new Cold War”. This stance was reaffirmed on April 7, 2023, during President Emmanuel Macron’s visit to China, when China and France issued a joint statement emphasizing their commitment to strengthening the international multilateral system under the auspices of the United Nations.<sup>②</sup> Despite the influence of the “de-risking” narrative promoted by the EC and some European governments, many European businesses continue to see China as an essential economic partner. The comparative advantages of China’s large market, well-developed industrial and supply chains, and commitment to high-level economic openness have encouraged European firms to expand investment and trade ties with China. A 2024 report by the Peterson Institute for International Economics highlights this trend, noting that from 2018 to 2023, economic interdependence between the EU and China has increased rather than declined. China has significantly expanded its imports of European-produced goods, including travel items, handbags, footwear, and apparel, while Europe’s imports from China—particularly in sectors such as batteries and electric vehicle components—have grown

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<sup>①</sup> The White House, “National Security Strategy,” October 2022, <https://bidenwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/8-November-Combined-PDF-for-Upload.pdf>.

<sup>②</sup> “Joint statement by the People’s Republic of China and the French Republic,” Xinhuanet, April 7, 2023, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/world/2023-04/07/c\\_1129503357.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/world/2023-04/07/c_1129503357.htm)

substantially.<sup>①</sup>

Geographically, China and Europe are positioned at the eastern and western ends of the Eurasian continent and do not share any direct borders. Furthermore, with the return of Macao to China in 1999, all territorial disputes stemming from the colonial era were resolved. As a result, there are no geography-related geopolitical conflicts between the two sides.

This geographical separation allows China and Europe to approach global conflicts with a degree of strategic detachment, as seen in their responses to the Israeli-Hamas conflict in the Middle East. Both China and the EU, guided by the principle of a shared human destiny, have emphasized the need to safeguard peace, minimize humanitarian suffering, and prioritize political solutions over military action. While differences exist—particularly regarding whether to designate Hamas as a terrorist organization—the positions of China, Spain, and many other European countries on the Israeli-Palestinian issue align closely. The EU, European governments, and China are all significant contributors of humanitarian and development aid to Palestinian institutions. After China and many developing countries recognized the State of Palestine, more and more European countries began to consider breaking away from the US stance, believing that they should unilaterally recognize the State of Palestine. This shift became particularly evident on May 22, 2024, when Norway, Ireland, and Spain officially recognized the State of Palestine. As a result, the number of EU member states recognizing Palestinian statehood has now reached 12—nearly half of the EU’s 27 members.

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<sup>①</sup> Mary E. Lovely and Jing Yan, “While the US and China Decouple, the EU and China Deepen Trade Dependencies,” Peterson Institute for International Economics, August 27, 2024, <https://www.piie.com/blogs/realtime-economics/2024/while-us-and-china-decouple-eu-and-china-deepen-trade-dependencies>.



### **III. Exploring New Developments in China-EU Relations**

President Xi Jinping has consistently emphasized “China always views its relations with the EU from a strategic and long-term perspective. It regards Europe as an important dimension in its major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics and an important partner on its path toward Chinese modernization.”<sup>①</sup> To achieve a high-level comprehensive strategic partnership, China and the EU must strengthen political mutual trust, enhance pragmatic cooperation, and maintain multi-level dialogues. These elements serve as the fundamental pillars for deepening bilateral relations and identifying new areas of cooperation.

#### **i. Establishing a Right Perception and Consolidating Political Mutual Trust**

##### **1. Strengthening High-level Diplomacy to Guide China-EU Relations**

Since the end of 2022, China and the EU have engaged in frequent high-level diplomatic exchanges, yielding significant outcomes in fostering consensus and advancing cooperation. In April 2023, President Emmanuel Macron and President Ursula von der Leyen visited China jointly; In December 2023, the 24th China-EU Summit was successfully held in Beijing. In April 2024, Chancellor Olaf Scholz visited China, leading to the conclusion of several key agreements on bilateral cooperation. In May 2024, President Xi Jinping undertook a state visit to France, Serbia, and Hungary, injecting renewed momentum into the stabilization and development of China-Europe relations. Additionally, leaders from Spain, Italy, Poland, and other European countries have also

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<sup>①</sup> “President Xi Jinping Holds China-France-EU Trilateral Leaders’ Meeting with French President Emmanuel Macron and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen,” May 6, 2024, [https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/zy/jj/xjpdfsxjxgsfw/202405/t20240506\\_11293488.html](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/zy/jj/xjpdfsxjxgsfw/202405/t20240506_11293488.html).

visited China, demonstrating a strong willingness to enhance bilateral cooperation. The high frequency of diplomatic engagements between heads of state has played a crucial role in clarifying misunderstandings, aligning positions, deepening mutual consensus, and ensuring coordinated action amid an increasingly complex international landscape. These efforts have helped set a clear direction for the sustained and stable development of China-Europe relations.

## 2. Strengthening the China-Europe Partnership to Contribute to Global Peace and Prosperity

China should maintain a comprehensive strategic approach in its engagement with the EU, ensuring that China-Europe relations remain a pillar of global peace and shared development. To solidify the foundation of this partnership, three key areas require enhancement.

(a) Advancing common interests: China should leverage economic ties with Europe by strengthening mutual benefits, using the high-quality development of the Belt and Road Initiative as a platform. This includes deepening market reforms and expanding economic openness to create more opportunities for cooperation.

(b) Enhancing mutual understanding: China and the Europe should seek common ground while respecting differences. It is essential to emphasize that democracy, human rights, and the rule of law are universal values shared by all of humanity. Furthermore, multilateralism, multipolarity, and other shared principles between China and Europe should be underscored.

(c) Strengthening strategic consensus: Within the framework of China's three major global initiatives, China and Europe should work together to address regional and global challenges, reinforcing their shared commitment to multipolarity and economic globalization.

### 3. Upholding Cooperation with Europe and Strengthening the Bilateral Foundations of China-Europe Relations

Following the 2024 US presidential election and the EP election, the political landscape in both the US and Europe will undergo significant changes and restructuring. It is crucial to look beyond the short-term electoral cycles and consider the medium-term institutional shifts as well as the long-term evolution of political thought.

Our fundamental assessment of China-Europe relations is as follows: politically and militarily, China and Europe do not have geopolitical contradictions or fundamental strategic conflicts. Economically and in trade, the two sides are both competitive and complementary, with no fundamental divergence of interests. Diplomatically, China and Europe share a broad consensus on advancing multilateralism and multipolarity, with numerous common interests. This threefold assessment continues to serve as the strongest foundation and driving force for the development of China-Europe relations. However, China's engagement with Europe should place greater emphasis on strengthening bilateral relations with individual European countries, thereby reinforcing the cornerstone of China-Europe relations.

#### **ii. Advancing Pragmatic Cooperation and Strengthening China-Europe Economic and Trade Relations**

Economic and trade cooperation has long been a key pillar and driving force of China-Europe relations. However, in recent years, as China has strengthened its economic and technological capabilities while Europe declined relatively, China's competitiveness in emerging fields such as new energy and digital technologies has risen significantly. At the same time, the EU has introduced "de-risking" measures toward China, leading to a new phase of heightened economic and trade frictions.

With Ursula von der Leyen's re-election as EC President, it is

anticipated that she will continue advancing her economic security strategy and the “de-risking” approach toward China in her second term. However, from a broader perspective, China and the EU remain deeply interconnected economically, with extensive and intertwined interests. The EU neither has the intent nor the capacity to fully “decouple” from China. Furthermore, as Donald Trump secures a second term as US president, shifts in US-EU economic relations may prompt the EU to adopt a more proactive stance toward economic and trade cooperation with China. Looking ahead, despite an increasingly complex and competitive environment, there remains significant potential for China-EU economic and trade cooperation. Navigating this evolving landscape and identifying opportunities within intensifying competition will become the new normal in China-EU economic and trade relations.

#### 1. Leveraging China-EU Electric Vehicle Trade Dispute Negotiations to Establish a New Model of Economic and Trade Cooperation

The series of unilateral economic and trade measures taken by the EU against China largely stem from concerns over declining competitiveness, prompting defensive economic policies. In this context, it is imperative for China and the EU to develop a new model of economic and trade cooperation that accommodates the interests of both parties.

Negotiations between China and the EU over the trade dispute concerning electric vehicles present a strategic opportunity to establish more flexible and effective emergency consultation mechanisms. Such mechanisms would help ensure the overall stability of China-EU economic and trade relations. Since the initiation of the EU’s countervailing investigation into imports of Chinese-made electric vehicles in 2023, European officials have repeatedly reinforced the narrative that China’s industrial policies—particularly subsidies—have led to overcapacities. Given the current paralysis of the World Trade

Organization's dispute settlement mechanism and the increasing use of industrial subsidies by Western countries, including the US and EU member states, the issue of state support for industries has become a focal point of contention. As EU nations expand their own subsidy programs, negotiations over the electric vehicles dispute provide an opportunity for China and the EU to reach a fundamental consensus on the regulation and management of industrial subsidies. Such an agreement could serve to mitigate future economic and trade frictions, fostering a more stable and cooperative bilateral relationship.

## 2. Creating New Opportunities for China-EU Economic and Trade Cooperation by Promoting China's High-level Opening-up

China is actively implementing a range of measures to further advance high-level opening-up, creating new opportunities for economic and trade cooperation with the EU. These measures include expanding the catalog of industries that encourage foreign investment, accelerating the removal of restrictions on foreign access to the manufacturing sector, and promoting the orderly opening-up of key sectors such as telecommunications, the Internet, education, culture, and healthcare.

As the only country encompassing all industrial categories in the “UN International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities”, China possesses comprehensive advantages in industrial support, infrastructure, human resources, market size, and economic growth potential. Notably, despite increasing geopolitical tensions in recent years, German direct investment in China has continued to rise, suggesting that German enterprises still recognize China's strategic advantages as a global manufacturing and investment hub, and that China's ongoing efforts to deepen its openness are expected to create new avenues for pragmatic China-EU cooperation. For instance, in September 2024, China's Ministry of Commerce, the National Health

Commission, and other relevant authorities jointly issued a notice allowing the establishment of wholly foreign-owned hospitals in Beijing, Tianjin, and Shanghai.<sup>①</sup> This policy shift undoubtedly presents fresh opportunities for China-EU collaboration in the healthcare sector, demonstrating China's commitment to fostering a more open and inclusive economic environment.

### 3. Strengthening Cooperation in Green Transformation

Although China and the EU compete in the field of green transformation, they maintain strong complementarities in key areas such as raw materials, technology, markets, capital, and talent. As a result, there remains significant potential for future collaboration. To foster healthy competition and mutual development in the new energy sector, China can encourage its leading enterprises—including those in new energy vehicles and battery production—to invest in Europe.

For wholly foreign-owned greenfield investments, it is essential to conduct thorough research on the potential implications of the EU's *Foreign Subsidies Regulation* and to ensure compliance from the outset to mitigate investment risks. If wholly-owned greenfield investment proves challenging, alternative strategies, such as joint ventures with European automotive companies, should be considered. By leveraging complementary technical expertise and market insights, these partnerships could facilitate the production of co-branded China-EU electric vehicles, further advancing cooperation in green industries.

## iii. Strengthening Dialogue and Communication: Advancing Common Interests between China and Europe

### 1. Playing a Constructive Role in the Ukraine Issue

In response to the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, China has actively

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<sup>①</sup> “China to Allow Wholly Foreign-owned Hospitals in Certain Areas,” September 8, 2024, [https://english.www.gov.cn/news/202409/08/content\\_WS66dd8885c6d0868f4e8eabae.html](https://english.www.gov.cn/news/202409/08/content_WS66dd8885c6d0868f4e8eabae.html).

advocated for a peaceful resolution based on international law and multilateral cooperation. The Chinese government introduced “The Global Security Initiative Concept Paper” in 2023, which calls on “major countries to lead by example in honoring equality, good faith, cooperation and the rule of law, and in complying with the UN Charter and international law.”<sup>①</sup> Furthermore, China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs released “China’s Position on the Political Settlement of the Ukraine Crisis”, outlining a 12-point proposal, the first of which calls for respecting the sovereignty of all countries. It states that “universally recognized international law, including the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, must be strictly observed. The sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of all countries must be effectively upheld.”<sup>②</sup>

On November 4, 2022, during a meeting with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, President Xi Jinping urged the international community to “oppose to the threat or use of nuclear weapons, advocate that nuclear weapons cannot be used and that nuclear wars must not be fought, and prevent a nuclear crisis in Eurasia.”<sup>③</sup> In subsequent discussions with European leaders, China has consistently supported Europe’s role in facilitating dialogue, advocating for a balanced, effective, and sustainable security framework for the region.

In addition to its diplomatic efforts, China has provided humanitarian aid to Ukraine and Moldova and pledged to continue offering assistance in line with its capabilities and Ukraine’s needs. These actions reflect

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<sup>①</sup> “The Global Security Initiative Concept Paper,” February 21, 2023, p.5, [http://en.chinadiplomacy.org.cn/pdf/The\\_Global\\_Security\\_Initiative\\_Concept\\_Paper.pdf](http://en.chinadiplomacy.org.cn/pdf/The_Global_Security_Initiative_Concept_Paper.pdf).

<sup>②</sup> “China’s Position on the Political Settlement of the Ukraine Crisis,” February 24, 2023, [https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/zy/gb/202405/t20240531\\_11367485.html](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/zy/gb/202405/t20240531_11367485.html).

<sup>③</sup> “President Xi Jinping Meets with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz,” November 4, 2022, [https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/wjb/zzjg\\_663340/xos\\_664404/xwlb\\_664406/202211/t20221104\\_10800546.html](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/wjb/zzjg_663340/xos_664404/xwlb_664406/202211/t20221104_10800546.html).



China's commitment as a responsible global power and align with the long-term interests of European nations. Both China and the EU share the common goal of seeking a peaceful resolution to the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. Given this shared interest, the EU should recognize China's constructive role in peacebuilding and work collaboratively towards a political settlement of the crisis.

## 2. Bridging Geopolitical Differences to Enhance Consensus through Cooperation

China and the EU hold differing positions on key geopolitical conflicts, including the Russian-Ukrainian conflict and crises in the Middle East. These differences can be summarized in three main points.

First, China adheres to a policy of non-alignment and independent decision-making in its diplomacy, emphasizing respect for national sovereignty. In contrast, the EU and major European countries have closely coordinated their positions with the US on the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, engaging deeply in regional disputes and pursuing their strategic interests through alliances to ensure their own security.

Second, China upholds the principle of indivisible security, arguing that one country's security should not come at the expense of another's and that regional stability cannot be achieved by strengthening or expanding military blocs. China underlines that the legitimate and reasonable security concerns of all countries should be taken seriously and addressed properly. China believes that the Russian-Ukrainian conflict stems from long-standing structural contradictions that require a historical and dynamic perspective to understand. In contrast, the EU's approach tends to overlook these deeper geopolitical complexities.

Third, China advocates for peaceful dispute resolution and has actively contributed to efforts for an early ceasefire in both the Russian-Ukrainian conflict and the Israeli-Palestinian crisis. However, the EU

has taken a more interventionist approach in Ukraine, providing high-precision heavy weaponry, intelligence, and logistical support, as well as imposing economic sanctions on Russia. These actions have, in China's view, prolonged the conflict and exacerbated humanitarian suffering.

Despite these differences, China and the EU share common ground in their commitment to preserving the existing international order, with the United Nations at its core, and upholding the authority of international law. On conflicts involving Israel, Hamas, Lebanon, and Iran, China has worked alongside Spain and other European countries to defend relevant UN Security Council resolutions. They have jointly condemned attacks on civilians, violations of international humanitarian law, and the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, including strikes on UN peacekeeping forces. Given these overlapping geopolitical perspectives, China and Europe have a strong foundation for rational dialogue. Through constructive engagement, they can work to resolve misunderstandings and foster greater consensus on global security issues.

### 3. Strengthening People-to-People Exchanges to Deepen the Foundation of China-Europe Friendship

President Xi Jinping has emphasized that “friendship, which derives from close contact between the people, holds the key to sound state-to-state relations.”<sup>①</sup> People-to-people exchanges serve as a “ballast stone” in China-EU relations and are a fundamental driver of their long-term development. However, the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russian-Ukrainian conflict have significantly disrupted China-Europe cultural and social exchanges, leading to a widening gap in mutual understanding and trust between their populations.

Recognizing the urgency of restoring and strengthening people-to-

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<sup>①</sup> Xi Jinping, “Work Together to Build the Silk Road Economic Belt and The 21st Century Maritime Silk Road,” May 14, 2017, <http://2017.beltandroadforum.org/english/n100/2018/0306/c25-1038.html>.

people ties, China has taken proactive steps to accelerate the resumption of exchanges. In December 2023, China unilaterally introduced a 15-day visa-free entry policy for citizens of five EU member states, including France and Germany. Since then, China has expanded its visa-free policy to cover a growing number of European countries. By the end of 2024, China had extended visa-free access to nearly all EU member states, as well as Switzerland, Norway, Montenegro, etc., further increasing the visa-free stay period to 30 days. In May 2024, during his visit to France, President Xi Jinping proposed a major initiative to boost educational and youth exchanges. China aims to accommodate more than 10,000 French students to study in China over the next three years and double the number of European youths coming to China on exchange trips. This initiative reflects China's sincere commitment to fostering deeper people-to-people ties with Europe, particularly among younger generations.<sup>①</sup> To further consolidate the people-to-people foundation of bilateral relations, the EU should reciprocate by implementing substantive measures to facilitate travel for Chinese citizens to Europe.

## IV. Conclusion

In January 2024, during a meeting with Belgian Prime Minister Alexander De Croo, President Xi Jinping underscored the need to build more “bridges” between China and Europe in response to the increasingly complex global challenges. Prime Minister De Croo recalled President Xi's speech in Bruges in 2014, where he used the metaphor of bridges to comprehensively outline China's policy toward Europe. In that speech, President Xi envisioned the construction of four key bridges: a bridge of peace and stability, a bridge of growth and prosperity, a bridge of reform

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<sup>①</sup> Li Shengming, “The ‘Mutual Pursuit’ of China-France Educational Exchanges,” *GuangMing Daily*, June 20, 2024, p.14.

and progress, and a bridge of common cultural prosperity.

Over the past decade, China has maintained a consistent Europe policy,<sup>①</sup> firmly supporting European integration. Likewise, Europe should respect the development path chosen by the Chinese people and refrain from imposing its values and governance models on others. The deepening and expansion of China-EU cooperation can only be achieved through mutual respect, strengthened political trust, and recognition of each other's core interests.

Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2012, under the guidance of “Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy”, China and Europe have enhanced civilizational exchanges, upheld diversity, and adhered to the principles of friendship, mutual trust, and cooperation, fostering a strategically stable bilateral relationship.<sup>②</sup> The China-Serbia community of shared future and the upgraded China-Hungary all-weather comprehensive strategic partnership exemplify mutual support on sovereignty, security, and development, setting a precedent for China's broader relations with European nations. As President Xi has emphasized, mutual independence and respect form the cornerstone of a healthy China-EU relationship—one that “does not target any third party, nor should it be dependent on or dictated by any third party.”<sup>③</sup> China continues to support European integration and strategic autonomy, envisioning Europe as a key pole in a multipolar world.

Looking ahead, China remains committed to an independent and autonomous EU that plays a stabilizing role in global governance

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<sup>①</sup> Guo Jiping, “Under the Shining Banner of Building a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind,” *People's Daily*, March 23, 2024, p.7.

<sup>②</sup> “Xi Meets Spanish PM,” April 1, 2023, [http://english.scio.gov.cn/m/topnews/2023-04/01/content\\_85206119.htm](http://english.scio.gov.cn/m/topnews/2023-04/01/content_85206119.htm).

<sup>③</sup> “President Xi Jinping Holds China-France-EU Trilateral Leaders' Meeting with French President Emmanuel Macron and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen,” May 6, 2024, [https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/zy/jj/xjpdfsxjxgsfw/202405/t20240506\\_11293488.html](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/zy/jj/xjpdfsxjxgsfw/202405/t20240506_11293488.html).

and the multilateral order while upholding the principles of economic globalization. However, in an evolving global landscape, China and the EU must explore new areas of partnership, and establish mechanisms for deeper collaboration through sustained dialogue and compromise. Triangular cooperation could further nurture common interests, fostering greater mutual trust and understanding. Upholding free trade and the authority of international law has been the common principles and pursuits for both China and the EU. Given the US' withdrawal from multilateral institutions and renewed trade conflicts, China and the EU should embrace the era of multipolarity, uphold the principles of mutual respect and equality, and pursue win-win cooperation to jointly safeguard economic globalization and the United Nations-centered international order.