

TURNING TIDES? – THE FUTURE OF CHINA-EU RELATIONS

PROGRAM

October 27–28, 2025 – Bologna

Jointly organized by the University of Bologna and Johns Hopkins University SAIS Europe

MONDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2025

@University of Bologna | Aula del VIII Centenario, Via Zamboni 33

14:30 – 15:00 | Welcome Coffee

15:00 – 15:30 | Welcome Remarks

Giovanni Molari, Rector, University of Bologna

James B. Steinberg, Dean, Johns Hopkins University SAIS

Renaud Dehousse, Rector, Johns Hopkins SAIS Europe

Chair: **Francesco Moro**, Professor of Political Science & Head of Department, Political and Social Sciences, University of Bologna; Adjunct Professor, Johns Hopkins SAIS Europe

15:30 -17:00 | European leaders outlook on EU-PRC relations

Paolo Gentiloni, Former European Commissioner for Economic and Financial Affairs; Former Italian Prime Minister

Silvie Matelly, Director, Institute Jacques Delors

Romano Prodi, Former President of the EC; Former Prime Minister of Italy

Chair: **Nathalie Tocci**, Director of the Istituto Affari Internazionali; James Anderson Professor of the Practice, Johns Hopkins University SAIS Europe

17:00 – 17:15 | Coffee Break

17:15 -19:15 | Roundtable: Practicing EU-China Relations: Views From Within

Thomas Bagger, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to the Italian Republic and the Republic of San Marino

Joanna Dopierala-Konkołowicz Director for Asia Pacific, French Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs

Benoît Guidée, Director for Asia Pacific, French Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs

Stefano Sannino, Director-General, Dept. MENA and the Gulf, European Union

Armando Varricchio, Senior Fellow on Transatlantic Relations, John Cabot University

Caroline Wilson, Ambassador, UK Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office

Chair: **Enrico Fardella**, Associate Professor, Department of Social and Human Sciences, University of Naples 'L'Orientale'; Adjunct Professor, Johns Hopkins SAIS Europe, **Noah Barkin**, Visiting Senior, Indo-Pacific Program GMF; Senior Advisor, Rhodium Group's China practice

19:15 – 19:45 | Aperitivo

20:30 | Dinner for speakers only

@Circolo della Caccia | via Castiglione, 25, tel. +39 051 236421

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2025

@Johns Hopkins SAIS Europe | Auditorium, Via B. Andreatta 3

8:30 – 9:00 | Welcome Coffee

09:00 -10:15 | It is the Economy, Stupid”: EU-China Economic Relations at a Crossroad

Noah Barkin, Visiting Senior, Indo-Pacific Program GMF; Senior Advisor, Rhodium Group's China practice

Elvire Fabry, Senior Researcher in Geopolitics of Trade, Jacques Delors Institute

Michael Pettis, Professor of Finance at Guanghua School of Management, Peking University, and Senior Fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Michael Plummer, Eni Professor of International Economics, Johns Hopkins SAIS Europe

Chair: **Tommaso Sonno**, Associate Professor of Economics, University of Bologna; Adjunct Professor, Johns Hopkins University SAIS Europe

10:15 -11:30 | Parallel Divergences? Transatlantic Relations and China

Stéphanie Balme, Professor and Director, Center For International Studies (CERI), SciencePo

Jessica Chen Weiss, David M. Lampton Professor of China Studies, Johns Hopkins SAIS

Julien Gewirtz, Senior Research Scholar, Columbia University

Frank Gavin, Giovanni Agnelli Distinguished Professor and the inaugural director of the Henry A. Kissinger Center for Global Affairs at Johns Hopkins SAIS.

Chair: **Paolo Wulzer**, Director of the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences; Professor of History of International Politics, University of Naples ‘l’Orientale’

11:30 – 11:45 | Coffee Break

11:45 – 13:00 | Strategic Dialogue: limited but strategic alignment: Sino-Russian relations. Implications for the EU

Oriana Skylar Mastro, Center Fellow and Director of the Indo-Pacific Policy Lab, Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies, Stanford University

Sergey Radchenko, Wilson E. Schmidt Distinguished Professor, Johns Hopkins SAIS Europe

Joseph Torigian, Associate Professor, School of International Service, American University

Feng Yujun, Full Professor of History of Sino-Russian Relations, Peking University

Chair: **Antonio Fiori**, Associate Professor, Department of Political and Social Sciences, University of Bologna

13:00 – 14:15 | Lunch

@SAIS Europe Penthouse – 4th Floor

14.15 -15:30 | From Fire to Embers? The Future of EU-China Relations

Rosemary Foot, Professor (Emeritus), Department of Politics and International Relations, University of Oxford's

Zhu Feng, Dean of School of International Studies, Nanjing University

Matteo Dian, Associate Professor, Department of Political and Social Sciences, University of Bologna

Michael Leigh, Director of the Master of Arts in European Public Policy, Senior Adjunct Professor, Johns Hopkins SAIS Europe

Chair: **David Arase**, Resident Professor of International Politics, Johns Hopkins SAIS Nanjing

15:45 – 17:00 | Europe-China Digital Partnership Cooperation: New Legal Frontiers

Elaine Fahey, Professor of Law, Jean Monnet Chair in Law & Transatlantic Relations, City St George's, University of London

Federico Casolari, Full Professor & Head of Department of Legal Studies, University of Bologna

Marina Timoteo, Full Professor of Comparative Private Law, University of Bologna

Chair: **Giuseppe Martinico**, Full Professor of Comparative Public Law, Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies

17:00 – 17:30 | Final Remarks

Enrico Fardella, Associate Professor, Department of Social and Human Sciences, University of Naples 'L'Orientale'; Adjunct Professor, Johns Hopkins University SAIS Europe

Francesco Moro, Professor of Political Science & Head of Department, Political and Social Sciences, University of Bologna; Adjunct Professor, Johns Hopkins University SAIS Europe

Sergey Radchenko, Wilson E. Schmidt Distinguished Professor, Johns Hopkins University SAIS Europe

19:30 | Farewell Dinner

@TBD

Turning Tides? - The Future of CHINA-EU Relations

May 6, 2025, marks the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the European Union. This significant milestone occurs amidst an increasingly intense competition between the United States and the PRC—often described, by observers in both the West and China, as a “new Cold War.”

When the PRC and the European Economic Community formalized their diplomatic ties in 1975, China held a markedly different position within the Cold War framework. Emerging painfully from the Cultural Revolution, Beijing sought a strategic alignment with the West, aiming to jointly counterbalance the Soviet Union while pursuing economic modernization in concert with the US-led international order. From the 1970s onwards, Sino-Western cooperation became a key transformative factor, accelerating the end of the “old” Cold War and paving the way for the PRC's rise as a central player in the global manufacturing network. Within this context, Sino-European relations played an essential role in China's “socialization” with the West.

In the post-Cold War era, engaging with the PRC became a priority for Western political and security interests. However, the strengthening of Chinese nationalism and its assertive offshoots have redefined China's global ambitions, positioning it in a decisively revisionist stance towards the liberal order, to which the EU is fundamentally aligned. As a result, the growing interdependence that once carried the expectation of China's progressive liberal transformation has instead produced an entirely opposite outcome—one where China's economic rise and uncertain intentions challenge the governance and norms of the liberal international order itself.

As Sino-US relations continue to deteriorate, the EU faces important choices in its own relationship with China. How far, and how fast, should it go in seeking “derisking” from Beijing, and what could such “derisking” entail for Europe, and for the future of trans-Atlantic relations? To what extent can the EU carve out its own path in relations with China at a time when economic choices are increasingly inseparable from security imperatives? This conference aims to reflect on the historical “baggage” of the Sino-European relationship, how it has, and continues to fit, within the broader EU foreign policy vision, and how it will likely play out in the months and years ahead.

This conference offers a unique opportunity to engage a wide array of audiences, including students, scholars, diplomats, corporate representatives, and journalists. For SAIS and UNIBO students, the event provides an unparalleled chance to gain insights directly from policymakers, economists, and international relations experts who have shaped Sino-European dynamics over decades. The interactive nature of the discussions, combined with the presence of globally renowned figures, makes it an invaluable platform for students aspiring to careers in international affairs, public policy, or global business. It also bridges theoretical learning with practical, real-world applications, fostering a deeper understanding of one of the most critical geopolitical relationships of the 21st century.

For scholars, the conference promises to be a milestone gathering, bringing together leading experts to share groundbreaking research and historical perspectives on Sino-European relations, fostering

academic collaboration across disciplines. Diplomats will find the discussions particularly relevant as they address current challenges such as economic “derisking” and strategic autonomy within the EU, offering actionable insights for shaping policy. Corporate representatives, on the other hand, will benefit from an in-depth analysis of the evolving trade and investment dynamics between Europe and China, critical for navigating today’s complex geopolitical landscape. Finally, for journalists, the event provides a front-row seat to exclusive conversations with key policymakers and thought leaders, offering rich material for reporting on one of the most consequential global issues of our time. In sum, this conference is not only a celebration of 50 years of EU-PRC relations but also a forward-looking platform for fostering dialogue and understanding among diverse stakeholders.