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The EU and China: Redressing: An Unbalanced Relationship

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Henry Kissinger famously once asked: “What number should I dial when I want to talk to Europe?” Beijing has found the answer. It begins +4930, the code for Berlin. Last autumn, President Xi Jinping added two more numbers to his address book: those of Britain’s Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer, who accorded him a rapturous – some unkindly souls said sycophantic - welcome to London and declared Britain to be China’s “best partner in the west”.

When Mr Xi or his colleagues call Berlin or London, they can expect an enthusiastic response – especially if there is Chinese money in it. Beijing, however, guarantees European leaders no such reciprocity, especially if they dare step out of line by, for example, meeting the Dalai Lama. Then, they can expect a frosty reception, or none at all.

As that suggests, the relationship between China and Europe is unbalanced, with the scales weighted mostly, though not entirely, in China’s favour. The author argues that that imbalance owes less to Chinese strength, which is often over-rated abroad, than to European weaknesses – mostly self-inflicted.

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