

“The China-Factor: Sino-British Relations and the Conundrum of Economic and Security Interests”

Wednesday, 23 June 2021 16:00 (1h 30m)

Over the past few years, the consequences of China’s four-decade economic rise have finally spilled over into the international arena. This development has led to shifts that extend across geopolitics, security, diplomacy, and the political economy, opening new horizons while challenging long-standing dogmas.

Like many countries from the United States to Europe and South-East Asia, the United Kingdom is struggling to create a coherent ‘China strategy’ that overcomes the problematic interlocking between economic and security interests. Indeed, London has to balance a crucial trade interaction with Beijing, the Anglo-American special relationship, ongoing developments in the South China Sea, and a unique historical bond to Hong Kong.

Papers in this panel seek to unpack this conundrum from the viewpoint of two corresponding perspectives. On the one hand, one paper considers the shifting landscape through the lens of US-China geopolitical competition. Conversely, two papers investigate Sino-British relations by looking at UK’s securitisation of Chinese Foreign Direct Investments (FDIs) and by exploring the concealed networks behind the significant events of the Sino-British relationship in recent years. Finally, one paper looks at UK-China relations historically. This way, the panel provides a comprehensive picture that accounts for both geopolitical and policy dimensions of Britain’s China dilemma. Considered together, the papers reveal a complex and multifaceted account where engagement with China may become one of Downing Street’s most sophisticated dilemmas.

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