

European Dispatch: Wavering commitment to the United States.

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Emmanuel Macron and Ursula von der Leyen meeting with Xi Jinping in April 2023

Jacob Sagers – Recent polling released from the EU shows a stark gap emerging between European and American opinions towards Russia and China. Majorities in eleven European states are unwilling to support the US in a military conflict with China and prefer to stay neutral. Meanwhile, increased pressure from the far right and far left in the US have called for nonintervention in the Russia-Ukraine conflict, perceiving Russia to only be a European issue. China’s growing power is leading to a reevaluation of American and European relations.

Geopolitical codes are the way a country positions themselves within the global community. This includes identifying allies, enemies, and justifying past and present actions to their public. NATO’s establishment after World War Two, and prominence through the Cold war and to today, has maintained close American-European relations in most foreign affairs. However, not all European states and leaders reaffirm the status quo. For example, recent remarks from French President Emmanuel Macron’s visit to Beijing in April, including: “...it would be “a trap for Europe” to get caught up in crises “that are not ours” while referencing Taiwan signal a drastic shift in French geopolitical codes. France is not alone, with German chancellor Olaf Scholz stating China is, “a strategic and global partner.” The two largest EU countries hold immense influence throughout Europe and signal a major change in geopolitical codes if the US and China continue to position themselves for conflict.

These sentiments do not necessarily translate into positive views, however. Only 31% and 33% of French and German businessmen view China favorably, while over 41% and 50% view them as a rival. **National identity**, or the way people see themselves as a member of a nation, can help us understand these similar opinions. Growing regional identity since the formation of the European Union (the Euro, etc.) has developed a more profound sense of what it means to be European. Increasingly similar views among EU member states may allow an easier transition to different European and US geopolitical codes and an apathetic economic partnership with China. The question then becomes, if European states stayed neutral in an American clash with China, how would the American public respond, and would the United States leave Europe to its own fate?

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