

# Sitting on the Fence: Europe's Position in Great-Power Politics



**U**nder the Trump administration, tensions between the United States and China have increased, leading to a trade war with both countries imposing protectionist duties on each other's goods. So are we in the middle of a new Cold War? While some experts use this analogy, Kori Schake and Yao Yunzhu lay out why they do not consider it suitable.

Irrespective of what we call the current developments, the question remains how the European Union and its member states should position themselves in this great-power competition. When asked, 56 percent of Germans say that close relations with the United States are more important than with China. However, 82 percent of respondents in Germany and 68 percent of respondents in the United Kingdom would prefer to remain neutral in a US-China conflict. Pauline Neville-Jones explains how Europe can avoid being caught in the middle.

During the course of 2020, many European governments decided to restrict market access for Huawei or even banned the Chinese company as a supplier of 5G infrastructure. The contribution by Paolo Gentiloni demonstrates that the European Union recognizes the necessity to move towards enhanced European sovereignty and to reduce economic as well as technological dependencies. By contrast, the German public is still torn: 51 percent of respondents say Germany should ban the provision of critical infrastructure by non-democratic states, whereas 42 percent say it should not.

While the survey results do not give a clear answer to the question of whether COVID-19 has strengthened (49 percent) or weakened (41 percent) European solidarity, the ongoing pandemic has certainly had one effect. It has accelerated the debate about a reshaping of the world economy and has turbocharged some countries' desire to roll back their global trade and investment ties. Yet, as Ng Eng Hen points out, increased European economic independence should not lead to isolation but to more cooperation with like-minded partners in the Indo-Pacific. According to Vijay Gokhale, India and the EU should partner to strengthen multilateralism and to counterbalance 'China's unipolar dream'. Europe has to walk the line between political cooperation and economic independence – without losing its balance.



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