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The U.S. Raised Tariffs on China. Now It Wants Europe's Support.

Washington is trying to wrangle its European allies into a united front against a surge in Chinese exports

By [Andrew Duehren](#) [Follow](#) and [Kim Mackrael](#) [Follow](#)

May 21, 2024 3:33 pm ET



Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said she wasn't necessarily calling for the U.S. and Europe to adopt identical policies. PHOTO: ALEX KRAUS/BLOOMBERG NEWS

STRESA, Italy—The U.S. is leaning on Europe to help defend against a surge of Chinese exports on global markets, trying to achieve unity among allies that hold distinct views of how to respond to Beijing's economic might.

The U.S. last week raised tariffs on roughly \$18 billion of Chinese goods to protect American industries from inexpensive Chinese competition. In a speech in Frankfurt on Tuesday, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen suggested that Europe should complement the American tariffs.

“China’s industrial policy may seem remote as we sit here in this room, but if we do not respond strategically and in a united way, the viability of businesses in both our countries and around the world could be at risk,” Yellen said. In Italy, she will attend meetings of finance ministers of the Group of Seven advanced democracies this week, when U.S. officials are expected to push for a shared vision for trade with China.

While the European Union has toughened its stance on Beijing, many European officials remain skeptical of Washington’s approach to China. They question whether higher tariffs flout global trade rules and are seeking to preserve good relations with Beijing, a close trading partner.



European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said the EU has ‘a different approach’ than the U.S. PHOTO: VIRGINIA MAYO/ASSOCIATED PRESS

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said in a political debate Tuesday that the EU shares some U.S. concerns about China, including on overcapacity. However, rather than imposing broad tariffs, “we have a different approach, a much more tailored approach,” von der Leyen said.

At stake in the trans-Atlantic tensions is China’s standing in the global economy. Chinese officials have sought to sway European leaders toward a more accommodating stance on trade, with Chinese President Xi Jinping visiting three European countries this month to emphasize close economic ties. Washington, meanwhile, sees European support as a critical way to isolate Beijing on the global stage and lend credence to American complaints about Chinese commercial practices.

Before the U.S. raised tariffs last week, top Biden administration officials spent months raising complaints about Chinese overproduction in key industries. Both the U.S. and EU have committed to reducing their dependence on Chinese companies.

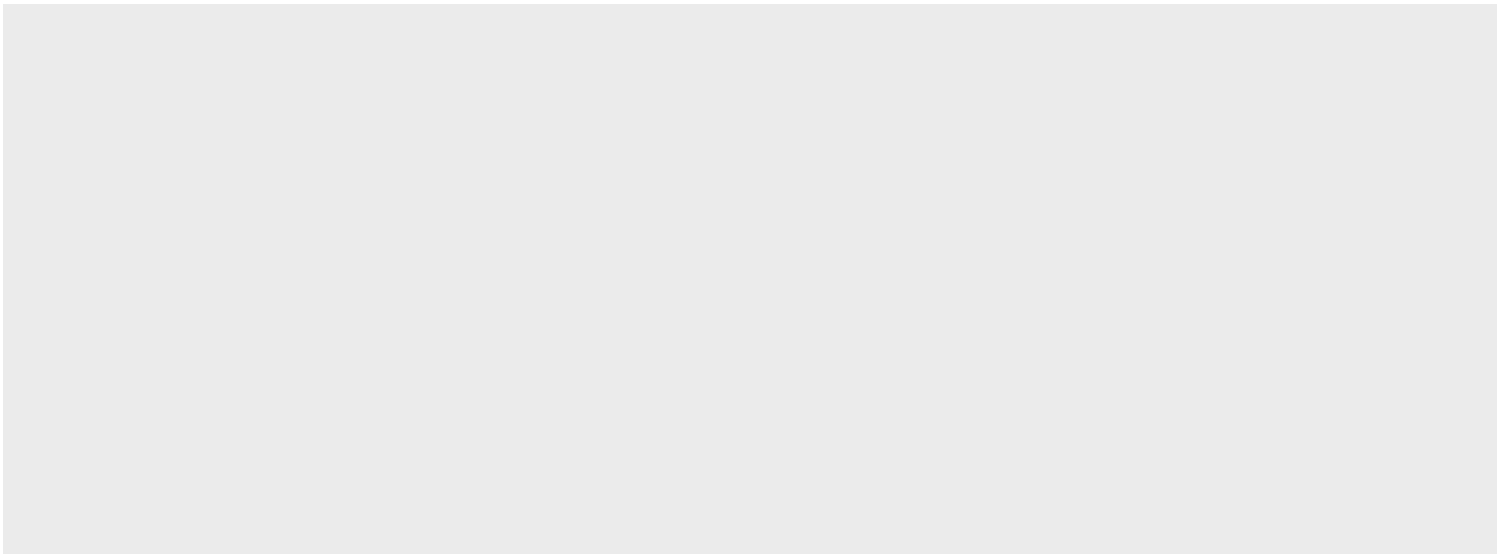
But European officials worry that tariff increases like those the U.S. has imposed would violate global rules set by the World Trade Organization.

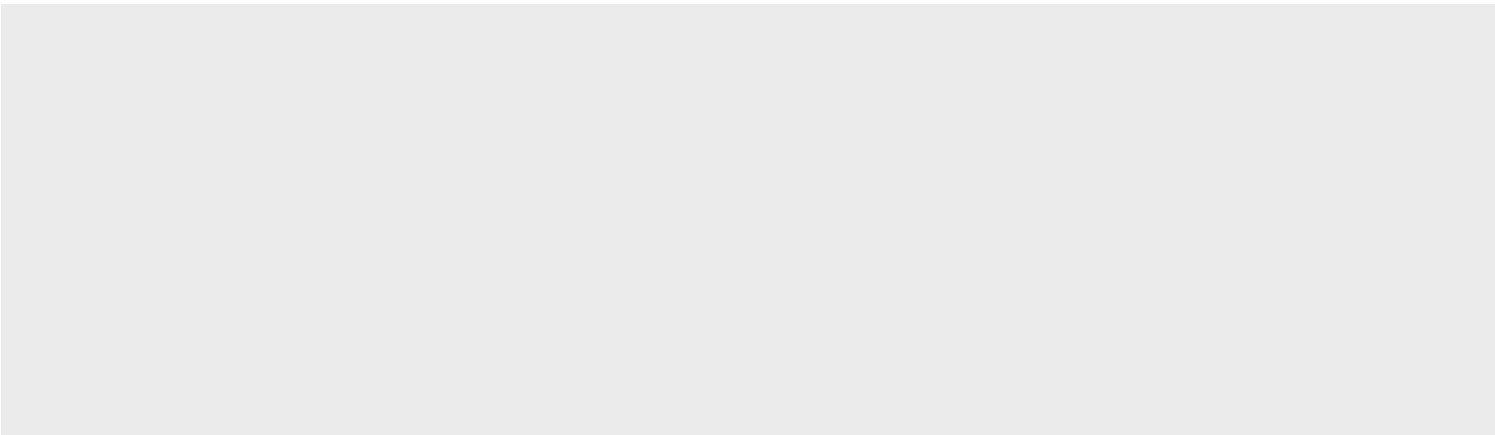
The EU launched an antisubsidy investigation into electric vehicles from China last year. The value of Chinese EV imports to the bloc reached \$11.5 billion in 2023, accounting for 37% of all EV imports, according to research firm Rhodium Group.

EU officials have until early next month to inform affected companies about any plans for imposing temporary tariffs on Chinese EVs and face a November deadline to impose longer-lasting measures. Speaking on Tuesday, von der Leyen signaled that any eventual tariffs imposed by the EU would be narrower than the 100% duty the U.S. slapped on Chinese electric vehicles last week.

The bloc's EV investigation is part of a strategy to use its legal tools to push back against China's economic policies. The EU in recent months launched a string of other probes into whether Chinese subsidies are giving companies an unfair advantage in EU public procurement markets, and officials are looking at whether China's domestic procurement practices unfairly favor Chinese medical-devices companies.

"The EU will continue to pursue a combination of actions to address unfair trading practices," a spokesman for the European Commission said.





Chinese President Xi Jinping with Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic during Xi's visit to Europe this month. PHOTO: DARKO VOJINOVIC/ASSOCIATED PRESS

EU member states remain divided over how to respond to China's economic policies, however, with export heavyweight Germany expressing skepticism about the possibility of raising tariffs for Chinese EVs. China is an important market for German manufacturers, while Western brands, including Tesla and BMW, produce EVs in China and export them to Europe.

Yellen said she wasn't necessarily calling for the U.S. and Europe to adopt the exact same set of policies. "I think each country has different tools and concerns and will use them as appropriate," Yellen told reporters.

On other measures aimed at challenging China's economic power, the U.S. has tried—and so far failed—to craft a shared approach with Europe. For example, the two powers have sought to reach a trade deal on minerals used to power clean-energy technology, which is a sector largely dominated by Chinese companies. But those talks have stalled for months.

The U.S. has also ramped up its attempts to curb Chinese access to advanced technology and investment, efforts that Europe has largely so far not matched. Yellen, in an interview, said the U.S. could continue to increase measures against China if necessary.

The escalating measures raise the risk for both the U.S. and EU that China will retaliate with measures of its own.

The China Chamber of Commerce to the EU warned on Tuesday that Beijing could seek to increase tariffs on certain car imports, citing Chinese press reports and information it said it had received from insiders.

China launched an antidumping investigation on Sunday into polyoxymethylene copolymer, a plastic used in auto parts and electronics. The probe affects imports from the U.S., the EU, Japan and Taiwan.

The European Commission said it would study the contents of the Chinese investigation before deciding on any next steps.

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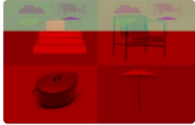
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