

Joe Biden's Administration on China's containment policy

Abstract. The article is devoted to a content analysis of various Sino-American sources to determine the future relationship between the People's Republic of China and the United States of America during the presidency of the 46th US President Joe Biden and his team. The purpose of the article is to review the new representatives of the American government, to establish their positions in the China containment policy, as well as to study the views of the Chinese community about the Biden's team for the subsequent forecast of the future actions of the new US administration regarding China. As result, the article provides some forecasts for the upcoming changes in the US strategy towards China. During the analysis, the authors concluded that the Biden administration will be distinguished by a higher degree of coordination between government agencies. The United States will continue its policy of containing China but will also choose to cooperate with China on selected issues of common interest. A partial restoration of military relations between them is possible, and the risks of sudden armed conflicts will decrease. Thus, it is expected that US policy during the presidency of Joe Biden will have a more "cautious" direction.

Key words: China, Joe Biden, Kurt Campbell, Katherine Tai, Antony Blinken, Jake Sullivan, "cautious containment".

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Introduction

Relations between the People's Republic of China and the United States of America are passing through a trade and technological war, sanctions policy, and the problem of intellectual property. China has become the main strategic rival for the USA. The Donald Trump administration's tough actions had a huge effect on the China-USA relationship. It seemed to be on the path of cooperation during the Barack Obama era. However, new US President Joe Biden has a very different attitude towards China. What are the chances for Biden and his administration to overcome the crisis and find a solution now? What changes are expected during the Joe Biden administration?

The Chinese authorities did not view the 2020 US presidential election as an event that could have a significant impact on the state of relations between China and the United States. Regardless of the outcome of the elections, the USA was expected to continue its China containment policy. However, Chinese experts expressed the opinion that Joe Biden's position on China would be softer.

The article presents the main results of the analysis of Chinese and American sources to identify the Biden and his team's position on policy regarding to China. The purpose is to review the main representatives of the new US administration, their positions on China, as well as the opinions of Chinese experts about the members of Joe Biden's team to predict the future US policy towards China. This article is one of the first efforts in Kazakhstan to analyze the Chinese-American relations during the presidency of Joe Biden, which determines the novelty of the study.

Methods

Theoretical methods as comparative, content analysis and inductive-deductive analysis are used in the implementation of the research. Content analysis of China's expert opinions, recent political developments in the USA, and new appointments in the American government have contributed to the review of bilateral relations, as well as an attempt to predict future events.

Discussion

The results of Donald Trump's presidency have left an indefinite impression both in American society and among foreign states, including China. Just as Trump allowed himself to openly criticize allies, impose sanctions against countries, and declare a trade war between China the USA, so experts and foreign officials in their statements about the personal qualities of the former US president called him narcissistic, scandalous, etc. It is an unprecedented case.

Before the announcement of the election results, most Chinese experts considered hardly Trump's victory. Besides, repeating of 2016 election was expected with a loss in the number of votes, but superiority in the number of electors. Chinese experts noticed the failure of the fight against the COVID-19 outbreak and the crisis that captured the United States among the reasons for Trump's defeat.

Professor Zhou Xiaoming, a former Chinese trade negotiator and former deputy representative in Geneva, said that Donald Trump's victory possibility is decreasing in the background of his rating due to the mistimed and effectless fight against the COVID-19 outbreak. Joe Biden's victory should have been contributed by a mail-order vote and a lot of support for the Democratic Party in the faltering states. Chinese experts did not see the elections as an event that could have a significant impact on Chinese American relations. Regardless of the election results, experts expected the United States to continue its China containment policy [1].

In the case of his victory, it was supposed that Donald Trump would continue the previous policy without significant changes. If Trump is re-elected, it is doubtful that trade negotiations between China and the United States will restart next year. The US will continue to contain China, and the opportunities for trade negotiations between China and the US will dwindle. On the occasion of Donald Trump's re-election, the policy towards China will not change, while the situation on the South China Sea and Taiwan issues may deteriorate, as well as increase ideological confrontation [2].

If Joe Biden is elected, there will be no major improvement in US-China relations, but the rivalry can be mitigated by the return of cooperation in a few areas as fighting the COVID-19 epidemic. Besides, Joe Biden will focus on rebuilding relations with allies to strengthen US global influence.

American experts see Joe Biden as a nominal return to traditional US foreign policy and global leadership [3]. From the first day in the White House, he systematically reverses all of Trump's decisions. He signed orders to return to the Paris Climate Agreement, to resume negotiations with Iran on a nuclear deal, and to establish international cooperation to struggle with the COVID-19 pandemic.

The 2020 US presidential election did not solve the problem of rivalry between China and the United States. The new administration of the 46th US President continued to maintain an unfriendly policy towards China and increased pressure on China's security. On election day, November 3, the United States and India held Malabar military exercises in the Indian Ocean, in a sensitive area for Chinese security. Donald Trump's Indo-Pacific strategy promotes a change in the power balance. Besides, the US sanctions policy has also continued to expand. On November 9, the United States inflicted an entry ban and froze American bank accounts of four officials from the Central People's Government and the government of Hong Kong [4]. China responded as usual

with criticism of the US action [5].

According to the United States, China is systematically expanding its global presence, imposing its political model, and directing investments in those areas that make it a competitor for global

leadership and allow it to control key technologies. This led to a China containment policy. By the beginning of the third decade of the 21st century, the United States and China are still equal rivals in cumulative power. The ability of the United States to influence world politics and the economy is systematically decreasing, while the balance of power continues to shift from West to East, primarily to China.

Mr. Biden's first decisions affirmed the US continuation of China's containment policy. He immediately noted that the disputed Senkaku Islands fall under the jurisdiction of the Japan-US security pact [6]. Chinese American relations keep conflict in the trade war too. Joe Biden does not plan to rescind tariffs on Chinese goods. He stated only the necessity to investigate trade agreements and consult with allies to form an effective strategy [7].

Joe Biden announced key appointments to his administration on November 24, 2020. The main share was made by representatives of the Barack Obama administration (Table 1).

Table 1. Biden's team representatives and their positions

Representative of Biden's team	Position
Katherine Tai	The US Trade Representative
Antony Blinken	The US Secretary of State
Jake Sullivan	The US National Security Advisor
Linda Thomas-Greenfield	The US Ambassador to the United Nations
John Kerry	The US Special Presidential Envoy for Climate
Janet Yellen	The US Secretary of the Treasury
Kurt Campbell	National Security Council Coordinator for the Indo-Pacific

Katherine Tai has been appointed to the US Trade Representative post since March 18, 2021. She is known for harsh statements against China [8]. Kurt M. Campbell, an adviser to Biden's campaign headquarters, said that the USA needs to work with allies and deny China access to artificial intelligence, robotics, and 5G [9]. He upholds tougher policy on Chinese companies through financial aid to American companies. Such opinions and positions of Mr. Biden's representatives do not provide an opportunity to predict a weakening of the policy against China.

Chinese experts are consentient in this opinion. They wrote that Biden certainly shares Donald Trump's views on the necessity of the China containment but prefers to use a different strategy. Biden pays attention to American allies to maintain the US leading role in the development of high technologies [10].

The positions of Biden's team members regarding China differ in their degree of rigidity, but they are unanimous in the general line on the necessity to limit Chinese initiatives and to endeavour for world domination. Chinese experts do some assessments about the new US administration. Hua Changchun, a China economist of Nomura International (Hong Kong) Limited, believes that the currently appointed US Secretary of State Antony Blinken will support a strategy to re-establish ties with allies and ensure US technological dominance, not through protectionist measures, but through setting higher global standards. He is expected to pay more attention to human rights issues in dialogue with China [11].

Recently he emphasized the destructiveness of the US-China delimitation and the obligatoriness for cooperation, primarily in areas as arms control and climate change, and simultaneously criticized the Trump administration for “strategic deficits” and inability to confront the China Communist Party in cases of human rights violations, which should be considered during the Joe Biden presidency [12].

Jake Sullivan, the National Security Advisor to U.S. President, takes a hard line with China.

In his opinion, the time of preference for cooperation over rivalry has gone with Barack Obama, but now the United States must build up its national power and line up interaction with China from a strong position. Nevertheless, Jake Sullivan is not a supporter of containment in the Cold War logic. Instead, he relies on solving internal problems and strengthening allies that will help enhance the position of the United States in interaction with China [13].

Biden's team will generally focus on rebuilding alliances and restoring the US dominance on the world stage. This will make it possible to compete more effectively with China, instead of placing China at the top of the foreign policy agenda. Both Antony Blinken and Jake Sullivan share liberal internationalist views, adhere to a similar style of work. These facts will ensure a high level of team coherence.

The choice of the direction to enhance allied relations for solving foreign policy problems is also confirmed by the appointments of Linda Thomas-Greenfield to the post of Ambassador to the UN and John Kerry to the position of the US Special Presidential Envoy for Climate. Especially, the appointment of Linda Thomas-Greenfield is a clear signal of the US returns to active interaction with international institutions. They can be used to put pressure on China in international disputes, primarily over the South China Sea [14].

John Kerry follows views like Antony Blinken's “competition with the possibility of cooperation in certain areas”. He notices with regret that US policy towards China has “based on emotion, not facts”. It could hinder cooperation on such an important issue like climate change. The appointment of John Kerry probably indicates an intention to reinstate the US position in the international climate negotiations and to re-join the Paris Agreement [15].

The appointment of Katherine Tai to the post of US Trade Representative caused a particular reaction of Chinese observers. She is the daughter of Taiwanese immigrants, was involved in the US lawsuit against China in a rare-earths case in 2012 and supported a pro-Uyghur bill in the House of Representatives in 2019 [16]. She believes that Donald Trump's protectionist measures were defensive, and calls to focus on the offensive component, as well as to support American manufacturers to reduce imports from China. Her appointment confirms that there will be no major policy revision towards China, despite the possibility of cooperation on some issues.

Also, it is worth to note that Joe Biden invited Kurt Campbell to the position of coordinator for Indo-Pacific affairs at the National Security Council. The Chinese media considered Kurt Campbell's rich experience on Asian issues, extensive contacts in the region, and good relations with Biden's foreign policy team – with Antony Blinken and Jake Sullivan [17].

Janet Yellen's appointment as the US Treasury Secretary will make competition with China more orderly. Chaotic restrictive measures against Chinese companies for their alleged ties with the military and support of China's foreign policy will be replaced by well-considered measures to solve problems of state subsidies and intellectual property theft. Janet Yellen emphasized the destructive impact of the trade war between China and the USA on technological progress. She questioned the trade deficit as a measure of its fairness and opposed the fragmentation of the international market amid the trade war [18]. Former White House trade negotiator Clete Willems said she is more moderate on China than members of the Trump team, and her appointment may signal a desire to ease tensions [19].

Results

The US strategy towards China will undergo some changes during the Joe Biden presidency. Mr. Biden's policy towards China could be based on the following principles:

1. The necessity to adhere to the principles of liberal internationalism. The US's competitive advantage against China is the ability to create multilateral institutions and influence global rules.
2. Return to the policy of involving China is impossible. It is necessary to develop a third way of competition and coexistence based on the values promoted by the United States.
3. Counteraction with Chinese growing power needs solving the US internal problems. Economic and technological competition with China should not spill over into a new Cold War.
4. China is not an "adversary" whose internal political system needs to be undermined. Despite the competition, to prevent military conflicts, it is necessary to maintain a healthy dialogue.
5. The question of China is not a priority of US foreign policy. It will focus on "eliminating chaos" by restoring relations with allies, returning to the role of a responsible power (including on the issue of climate change), revising the approach to the Middle East.

In the political and military spheres, Biden's team is expected to maintain the Trump administration's course of containing China and supporting American military superiority in the Asia-Pacific region. The future course of the Biden administration towards China in the military sphere can be defined as "cautious containment". The United States will pursue an active military policy and deploy armed forces in the region to prevent unwanted changes in the military balance. At the same time, more attention will be paid to interaction with regional allies and partners. The Americans may take a more constructive position in maintaining ties between the Chinese and American military [20].

Conclusion

Chinese experts do not expect the Biden administration to abandon its China containment policy in politics, economics, and technology. Besides, it is supposed that the American foreign policy strategy will undergo significant changes. At the heart of US policy will be the rebuilding of the alliance system and the role of the United States as a country in creating international norms, institutions, and standards. The USA is likely to continue to pursue a policy of isolating China in the field of high technologies, to pay particular attention to limiting the Chinese potential in the field of artificial intelligence, 5G, and other promising technologies. Sanctions instruments and discriminatory customs tariffs will continue to be applied to put economic pressure on China. Nevertheless, the actions of Biden's team will be more thoughtful and well planned. Chinese experts emphasize that it is a team of like-minded people with significant experience in working together. They are expected to be highly coordinated in their actions.

As a result, the US measures of economic pressure on China will be more targeted, thoughtful, and carefully planned. Withal, Chinese experts draw attention to the fact that, at least at the beginning of Biden's presidency, the solution to the numerous internal problems of the United States will be in the foreground for his administration. Thus, China may not be the main problem for Biden's team during this time. A partial resumption of dialogue is possible in defence and security. In general, the US is expected to act more cautiously.

US policy of pressure on high-tech sectors of the Chinese economy is anticipated to remain unchanged. There is no reason to look for a radical turn in the American sanctions policy. At the same time, it is impossible to exclude the revision of certain introduced measures, including some increased tariffs in case they harm American business and consumers.

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Джо Байденнің әкімшілігінің Қытайды шектеу саясаты

Аңдатпа. Мақала 46-шы АҚШ президенті Джо Байден мен оның саяси тобының билігі кезінде ҚХР мен АҚШ-тың болашақтағы қарым-қатынасын анықтау үшін түрлі қытай-американдық дереккөздердің контент-талдауға арналған. Мақаланың мақсаты - американдық үкіметтің жаңа өкілдеріне шолу жасау, олардың Қытайды шектеу саясатындағы ұстанымдарын, сонымен қатар Қытай қоғамдастығының Байден тобына жаңа көзқарастарын анықтау. Мақаланың нәтижесі ретінде АҚШ-тың Қытай стратегиясында болатын өзгерістер туралы болжамдар жасалады. Талдау барысында авторлар Байден әкімшілігі мемлекеттік органдар арасындағы үйлесімдіктің жоғары деңгейімен ерекшеленеді деген қорытындыға келді. АҚШ Қытайды шектеу саясатын жалғастырады, сонымен бірге Қытаймен ортақ мүдделер бойынша таңдалған мәселелердің негізінде ынтымақтасуды мақсат етеді. Олардың арасындағы әскери қатынастардың ішінара қалпына келуі ықтимал, ал кенеттен қарулы қақтығыстардың пайда болу қаупі азаяды. Осылайша, Джо Байденнің президенттігі кезеңінде АҚШ-тың саясатында «сақтық» бағыты басым болатыны күтілуде.

Түйін сөздер: Қытай, Джо Байден, Курт Кэмпбелл, Кэтрин Тай, Энтони Блинкен, Джейк Салливан, «сақ шектеу».

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Политика администрации Джо Байдена по сдерживанию Китая

Аннотация. Статья посвящена контент-анализу различных китайско-американских источников для определения будущих отношений между КНР и США в период президентства 46-го президента США Джо Байдена и его команды. Целью статьи является обзор новых представителей американского правительства, определение их позиций в политике сдерживания Китая, а также взглядов китайского сообщества на команду Байдена для последующего прогноза будущих действий новой администрации США в отношении Китая. В результате в статье даются прогнозы предстоящих изменений в китайской стратегии

США. В ходе анализа авторы пришли к выводу, что администрация Байдена отличится более высокой степенью координации между государственными учреждениями. Соединенные Штаты продолжают политику сдерживания Китая, но также предпочтут сотрудничество с Китаем по избранным вопросам, представляющим общий интерес. Возможно частичное восстановление военных отношений между ними, а риски внезапных вооруженных конфликтов снизятся. Таким образом, ожидается, что политика США в период президентства Джо Байдена будет иметь более «осторожную» направленность.

Ключевые слова: Китай, Джо Байден, Курт Кэмпбелл, Кэтрин Тай, Энтони Блинкен, Джейк Салливан, «осторожное сдерживание».

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