

The U.S.-China Cold War and its global repercussions

On May 10-11, 2023, The U.S. National Security Advisor Jack Sullivan met in Vienna with the Director of the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee Foreign Affairs Commission Office Wang Yi. The two sides exchanged views on bilateral relations, the

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Russian-Ukrainian war and the Taiwan issue, but the main goal of the meeting appears to be the restoration of disrupted (among other things, by the downing of a Chinese spy balloon over the US territory) lines of communication. The importance of keeping the lines of communication open to avoid dangerous misunderstandings was also stressed in talks with the Chinese side by the U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who visited China on June 18-19, 2023. Blinken also declared intensive efforts to prevent US-China rivalry from turning into a conflict.ⁱ

Despite attempts to improve U.S.-China relations, they appear to be becoming increasingly confrontational, with President Joe Biden's administration – apart from only a partial change in rhetorical dimensions – largely continuing the hard line adopted by Donald Trump towards China. The U.S.-China rivalry is also entering ever new areas, which will also have implications for other countries.

The evolution of US-China relations

US-China relations have undergone a significant transformation over the past three decades. As recently as the end of the Cold War, the informal U.S.-China alliance aimed at the USSR was one of the main pillars of U.S. policy in Asia. The collapse of the Eastern Bloc and the brutal suppression of popular protests in the Tiananmen Square forced a revision of US policy toward the People's Republic of China. This process was accelerated by the rapid growth of China's economic and military power (in the face of Russia's weakness and Japan's economic downturn, China could

become the only prospective challenge to American dominance), whose policy was also becoming increasingly assertive and, in the face of weaker neighbours, even aggressive. What's more, with the growing economic importance of Asia, US trade and economic activity was moving there, so a disturbance of stability in the region due to Chinese actions could significantly affect the economy and prosperity of the United States. Hence, Washington, as early as the 1990s, began to pursue a policy of "engagement and containment" toward China, on the one hand including China in international cooperation, and on the other maintaining a strong political and military presence in the region (including by supporting the independent status of Taiwan – recognised by the PRC as its province – and maintaining allied relations with Japan and South Korea, among others, supported by a military presence). Gradually, China was becoming a top foreign and security policy priority for the US (George W. Bush described China as a "strategic competitor" even during the election campaign), only temporarily pushed back by US involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq. Symbolic of this process was the "pivot" toward Asia during the Democratic administration of Barack Obama. It included e.g. the transfer of most of the US navy's capabilities to the Pacific, the deployment of US forces in Australia and the start of work – ultimately unsuccessful – on the creation of a new free trade area with US participation that excludes China, called the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP).

Towards a cold war - the policies of the Trump administration

U.S.-China relations have become even more strained during Donald Trump's presidency, as reflected in U.S. strategic documents. As indicated by the unveiled in December 2017 National Security Strategy of the United States of America, "China and Russia challenge American power, influence, and interests, attempting to erode American security and prosperity."ⁱⁱ The document was also critical of the previous administration's policies directed at making China a "responsible stakeholder." The January 2018 National Defense Strategy, meanwhile, proclaimed the return of great-power competition, calling China a "revisionist power" and a "strategic competitor."

U.S. assessments of PRC policy expressed in the strategies quickly translated into real action. The Trump administration, in addition to continuing its support for Taiwan, began to make stronger

demands on China to reduce its roughly \$350 billion trade deficit and to better protect intellectual property (forced technology transfers and intellectual property theft were expected to cost US companies \$300 billion a year),ⁱⁱⁱ leading to a trade war. In April 2018 the US announced a list of 1,333 high-tech products worth \$46 billion to be subjected to 25 percent tariffs, which – as the list expanded – were introduced in successive tranches worth \$34 billion, \$16 billion and finally in July 2018 as much as \$200 billion, which was met with analogous actions from the Chinese side against the US. After months of mutual imposition of tariffs on subsequent products and difficult talks, in mid-January 2020 the two sides concluded a so-called "first phase" trade agreement, meeting some of the US demands (China pledged, among other things, to purchase an additional \$200 billion worth of goods and services over two years).

After a temporary "ceasefire" on trade issues, however, tensions in U.S.-China relations escalated against the backdrop of China's responsibility for the outbreak of the global COVID-19 pandemic, as in the spring of 2020 the Donald Trump administration accused China of causing the pandemic by acting too slowly and failing to disclose information about the detection of the virus in the city of Wuhan beforehand. Trump himself has started calling COVID "China's virus",^{iv} which, of course, was met with strong reactions from the Chinese side, and U.S.-China relations remained strained until the end of the Republican administration.

Biden towards China - change or continuation?

The nature of U.S.-China relations has not been significantly altered by the victory of the Democratic Joe Biden's administration, although it has made some attempts to open up to Beijing. Indeed, as early as March 2021, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken met with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi in Anchorage, Alaska. However, the climate of the meeting turned out to be bad, and the sides began the meeting with a mutual exchange of accusations (the US side expressed "deep concern" over Chinese actions in Xinjiang, against Hong Kong, Taiwan, cyberattacks on the US and economic intimidation of Washington's allies, while the Chinese representative criticised the state of American democracy and the US foreign and economic policy). Nor has the war in Ukraine caused by Russia's unprovoked aggression against the country

contributed to improvement of relations. For China, for which Russia remains a strategic partner ("comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for the new era"), unlike most countries in the world, has not condemned Russian aggression. What's more, Beijing replaces the word "war" with the euphemism "crisis" in its official communications, indicating that its causes are complex and include, among other things, the issue of NATO enlargement and the West's broader policy toward Russia. Washington is also concerned that China could more directly support Moscow in the war, such as through arms supplies, warning that this would be met with "serious consequences" from the US.^v More serious tensions also arose against the backdrop of the House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan in August 2022, which the authorities in Beijing interpreted as a violation of the "one China" principle and the unofficial nature of US-Taiwan relations (the US government, under the agreement with the PRC since 1979, has been recognising the government in Beijing as the only legitimate Chinese government, maintaining only unofficial relations with Taiwan), responding with a series of threats and military manoeuvres, which Washington considered as an "overreaction." Nor was there a breakthrough in mutual relations when Joe Biden and Xi Jinping met at the G20 summit in Bali, although the two leaders had the opportunity to talk in person about bilateral relations for the first time since the US election.

The continuity in U.S. policy toward China, however, can be seen most clearly in U.S. policy documents. Released in October 2022, the new National Security Strategy and National Defense Strategy identify China as a major challenge to US national security. China, in the strategy's assessment, is the only rival possessing both the will to change the rules-based international order and the appropriate capabilities to achieve this goal.^{vi}

Cold war enters new fronts

Regardless of momentary fluctuations in relations, there is no doubt that the U.S.-China rivalry is structural and, like the U.S.-Soviet rivalry in the 20th century, although it does not take the form of a military confrontation it is spilling over into new areas both geographically and thematically. In

the latter dimension, it manifests itself in areas such as technology, diplomacy or infrastructure, among others.

Technologies

The U.S.-China rivalry can now be seen to its fullest extent in the technological dimension. It intensified significantly during Donald Trump's presidency, when the United States began to look more closely at the Chinese company Huawei and Chinese 5G technologies. In December 2018, Meng Wanzhou, Huawei's executive vice president and chief financial officer, was detained in Canada at the request of the U.S. government, accused by Washington of circumventing US sanctions on Iran. At the same time, the U.S. had sought to discourage allies from using solutions provided by the Chinese giant as potentially threatening to ICT security, due to the company's close ties to the PRC government and the associated intelligence threat. Washington thus, threatened allies wishing to continue 5G technology cooperation with Huawei in this context with the possibility of limiting intelligence and military cooperation with the U.S. The U.S. administration also accused the company of embezzlement, money laundering or intellectual property theft. Although China argued that the charges were politically motivated and intended to eliminate Chinese companies from the lucrative 5G market in mid-May 2019, the U.S. decided to put Huawei and its affiliated companies on a "blacklist" of entities that must seek special approval from the U.S. government to acquire U.S. components and technologies (this represented an impediment to the company being denied access to components and software updates provided by U.S. companies). In May 2020 the Department of Commerce imposed further restrictions on Huawei, which required, among other things, manufacturers of semiconductors (which are used, for example, in the production of smartphones) – including foreign ones – to obtain special licenses to sell them to Huawei if they were created using U.S. technology (this mainly affected Taiwan's TSMC, which supplies 90 percent of semiconductors to Huawei). The restrictions were further strengthened in August 2020, also expanding the catalogue of Huawei subsidiaries in other countries that are also subject to restrictions (to 152).

Not only did the Biden administration not back down from Trump's restrictions on the Chinese tech giants, it actually expanded them in March 2021. In November of the same year, President Biden signed a bill prohibiting the U.S. administration from granting new licenses to trade with companies that pose a threat to U.S. national security – such as Huawei and ZTE. At the same time, Washington pressured allies, mainly the Netherlands and Japan, to prohibit their companies from selling technology (deep ultraviolet lithography, DUV) to manufacture chips. Finally, in January 2023, the Biden administration was to stop issuing licenses to sell components to Huawei altogether.^{vii} The U.S. administration, however, is not only trying to deny Chinese companies access to semiconductors but has also made efforts to strengthen its own industry in this dimension. In June 2021, President Biden signed into law the CHIPS Act (Creating Helpful Incentives to Produce Semiconductors Act), passed by Congress, which provides government investment in scientific research, as well as grants and financial incentives for companies seeking to increase semiconductor production on US soil.

International organisations

The U.S.-China rivalry is also entering the realm of global diplomacy. China, with the growth of its own power, is becoming increasingly active on the international stage and is undertaking new diplomatic activities. This is especially true of the United Nations and its agencies particularly in areas where China's policies are most heavily criticised.

The activity of the government of Communist China since it replaced the government of the Republic of China on Taiwan in 1971 as the representative of "all China" in the UN Security Council has been relatively limited (China, for example, has abstained from voting on controversial issues that do not directly concern it – most recently, for example, on draft resolutions condemning Russia for its aggression against Ukraine). This was due to its focus on its own problems and internal development, and its traditionally stated policy of not interfering in the internal affairs of other countries. Recently, however, there has been a marked change in China's approach to engaging in international problems. Among other things, China is increasingly participating in United Nations peacekeeping missions (China now contributes the most to United Nations

peacekeeping operations among the permanent members of the UNSC – as of May 2022, some 2,000 Chinese soldiers and police officers had participated in 9 UN missions) and vying for influence within the Organisation itself.

An important arena of U.S.-Chinese rivalry has recently been the World Health Organisation (WHO), which became particularly evident against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic. Indeed, at the end of May 2020, the Trump administration announced the exit of the U.S. from the WHO, accusing the organisation of "mismanagement of the pandemic" and pro-Chinese orientation in assessing the PRC's actions at the beginning of the pandemic and the source of the virus. According to the arguments provided by the administration, the WHO was to, among other things repeat after the Chinese government that the virus did not transmit from person to person, contrary to Taiwan's information, and also failed to recommend travel restrictions to China despite the fact that travel restrictions had already been implemented in China itself. At the same time, the U.S. urged the Organisation to introduce reforms for, inter alia, transparency, holding member countries accountable for non-compliance with international health regulations, and countering China's undue influence on the Organisation,^{viii} and the very process of the US exit from WHO was halted only by the US elections. It seems that the US accusations are not completely unfounded because China has indeed strongly increased its activity and presence in the WHO. This may be due to several reasons, such as demographic issues, the demand for Taiwan's inclusion in the organisation's work and the issue of responsibility for the COVID pandemic outbreak.

Demographic issues have traditionally been one of the main areas of concern for the communist PRC leadership. Earlier fears of overpopulation and resulting development problems (the risk of which was supposed to be mitigated by the one-child policy introduced in 1979), have been replaced in recent years by problems of excessive population aging and fertility. According to official Chinese government data, in 2020 the number of people over 60 years of age was 264 million, equivalent to 18.7 percent of the country's total population, an increase of 5.5 percent from 2010.^{ix} Moreover, the PRC government's estimates indicate that China's population of people over 60 will grow to 487 million by 2050,^x which will account for 35 percent of China's total

population. This will be a major challenge for Chinese authorities, who will have to provide medical and social care for the growing elderly population. A more serious demographic problem for China, however, will be a parallel population shrinkage. According to official data from National Bureau of Statistics of China, the PRC's population shrank in 2022 for the first time since the early 1960s, when the country was suffering the consequences of its "Great Leap Forward" policy, including famine. China could lose its position as the world's most populous country to India later this year, and the disparity between the two countries will widen over time.^{xi} According to long-term estimates by the United Nations at current trends, China's population will shrink by about 400 million over a 50-year horizon and by about 700 million by the end of this century (to 767 million from today's more than 1.4 billion)^{xii}. This, combined with an aging population, will represent a huge loss of working-age population, with even hard-to-quantify consequences for the Chinese economy. It seems that this may pose the most serious challenge to China's strategic goals for the Communist Party of China's centennial in 2049, expressed in slogans about "a flourishing socialist superpower" and "the great renaissance of the Chinese nation," which the U.S. administration believes will effectively mean Chinese domination of the international system. All the more so since, according to the same UN estimates, the US population will not shrink, but will actually grow by nearly 60 million (to about 400 million). As Michael E. O'Hanlon of the Brookings Institution points out, "it is far from obvious that, hegemonically speaking, time is on China's side."^{xiii} Thus, from the Chinese perspective, it is of considerable importance to increase influence over the organisation that coordinates policies at the global level that directly affect demographics in other countries of the world including the West (this would enable a change in the Organisation's priorities – for example, less emphasis on the issue of combating diseases of civilisation or addiction in developed countries).

The second factor prompting China to become more involved in the UN and its agendas is the issue of Taiwan. The Republic of China in Taiwan, which is recognised by only 13 countries in the

world¹, has long expressed interest in greater participation in the work of some international organisations, especially the WHO (which has the support of the US and the EU, among others). For Taiwan, this has as much a symbolic dimension (breaking the country's isolation) as a practical one (its 23 million population and the world's 20th-largest economy are effectively excluded from international cooperation, which was to hinder, among other things, the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic). However, the PRC government in Beijing has consistently sought to isolate the island, depriving it of allies and excluding from multilateral cooperation, which is expected to prompt the government in Taiwan to initiate "reunification" talks with the PRC.

Another factor motivating China to be more outwardly active is the lessons from the COVID pandemic. China takes great care in shaping the narrative relating to it on the international stage, portraying itself as a responsible power and an advocate for the interests of the developing countries of the global south. Hence, from the beginning, the PRC has shrugged off any responsibility for the spread of the COVID pandemic from China abroad and even created its image as a global leader in combating the pandemic, distributing tests, masks and its own vaccines among supportive countries. "Chinese aid," however, was largely commercial in nature, and where it was in the form of non-refundable aid, it was directed at achieving political and propaganda goals. China, after the U.S. froze its contributions to the WHO, pledged an additional \$50 million to the organisation in March and April 2020, while praising the Organisation for its objectivity and impartiality of assessment, in apparent contradiction to the position of the U.S. and some allies. Japanese Deputy Prime Minister Taro Aso suggested e.g. the WHO change its name to "China Health Organization". However, the additional measures were not just a goodwill gesture. As experts quoted by Business Insider pointed out, China used the issue of Washington's dues freeze to increase its influence over the Organisation, and its leadership "was captured by [countries like] China".^{xiv} This judgment may be justified insofar as, even before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the position of Director General of the Organisation from 2006 to 2017 was held by Hong Kong-born and strongly promoted by the PRC Chinese woman Margaret Chan, whose

¹ According to established practice, countries recognise as legitimate Chinese authorities either the government in Beijing or in Taipei, which does not prevent Taiwan from maintaining rich unofficial relations with the US, among others.

tenure was not without controversy (e.g., against the backdrop of the management of the H1N1 influenza pandemic in 2009 and the response to the Ebola outbreak in West Africa from 2014 to 2016).^{xv} Although she denied that there was pressure on her from the PRC in 2016, she decided not to invite Taiwan to the World Health Assembly, even though the island's representatives had previously been invited as observers, pointing to the "One China" policy.^{xvi} What's more, in the Organisation's internal documents she was said to have demanded that the Republic of China be referred to as "Taiwan – a province of China". Also, the current authorities of the Organisation, which, according to press reports, would be elected thanks to strong support and lobbying from China, are controversial in the opinion of critics. Indeed, the new Director General, Ethiopian Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, does not have a medical degree, as first in the Organisation's history, his management of Ethiopia's Ministry of Health was said to be questionable (including strong corruption within the organisation), and as Foreign Minister he was said to in turn favour strengthening the Chinese presence in the country. Also, his leftist views (politically he hails from the Marxist Tigrayan People's Liberation Front) may translate into the WHO's overall policies. Indeed, in recent years there has been a tightening of the Organisation's stance on worldview and moral issues, which, regardless of individual views, may be considered beyond its basic tasks under the WHO Constitution. These include access to abortion and contraception and support for the LGBT community (e.g., in March 2022 WHO published new guidelines on abortion, calling for, among other things, the complete removal of restrictions on access to abortion).

WHO authorities, it has been pointed out, are also accused of being pro-Chinese in the work of the organisation itself and of relying too much on information from the PRC government at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, Taiwan has consistently, since 2016, no longer been invited as an observer to the World Health Assembly, which is obviously the result of Chinese pressure on the organisation and WHO member states.

It is worth adding that China, building its influence in international organisations, seems to cooperate in this respect with Russia, which is also strengthening its position in the UN system. One of the first decisions of WHO Director General Ghebreyesus was the appointment of Russian

women Tereza Kasaeva as the Director of the WHO Global Tuberculosis Programme (at that time Russia had the worst tuberculosis record in the world). Kasaeva was selected under a fast-track procedure, a month after Ghebreyesus met with Russian President Vladimir Putin at the World Health Assembly in Moscow. Despite the war in Ukraine and Western sanctions against Russia, Kasaeva still holds a senior position at the WHO European Office for the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases which is still located in Moscow, whose global director for years was a Russian, Svetlana Akselrod, who also served as WHO Deputy Director-General. Only on May 15, 2023, more than a year after the Russian aggression against Ukraine, WHO decided to move the office from Moscow to Copenhagen, which is to take place by January 1, 2024, at the latest.

Another apparent "battle" in the U.S.-China rivalry within the UN has taken place within the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), which is responsible for the area of communications and information technology. The Organisation, for example, sets international standards for communications from mobile telephony to communications satellites, including standards for 5G and 6G networks. Two approaches to the future of the Internet are currently colliding in the Organisation: the Western one – based on the paradigm of freedom – and the "sovereignty" one – promoted by China and Russia, among others, assuming a high degree of state control over the Internet content and users. The promotion of the "sovereignty" vision in the ITU was supported by the fact that for 8 years Chinese Houlin Zhao served as Secretary General of the Organisation. During this period the Chinese leadership of the organisation pushed for, among other things, the extension of the ITU's mandate to the Internet-related standards, increased the employment of the Chinese in the Organisation or introduced initiatives to transform Chinese standards into universal ones. After the end of Houlin Zhao's term, the Chinese backed the Russian candidate Rashid Ismailov, whose election would have meant a continuation of the previous efforts.^{xvii} In the end, however, the U.S. managed to push through the candidacy of its candidate Doreen Bogdan-Martin, representing to some extent a symbolic reclaiming of the Organisation by the West.

However, the greater support for its own candidates, along with the decision to stay in the WHO, shows a certain shift in policy toward international organisations by the Biden administration,

which rather than withdrawing from particular organisations due to China's growing influence in them, among other things, points to the need for greater US activity. China's greater influence in the organisations of the UN system can be so much more problematic for the US and the broader West that China's agenda often stands in obvious contradiction to the purposes for which these bodies were established. For example, the "Chinese vision of human rights" promoted by China in the Human Rights Council – and especially many of the practical measures implemented by the Chinese government – does not correspond to that expressed in even the most basic United Nations conventions. In the area of health, on the other hand, China's priority – due to demographic trends – is not at all necessarily the good health and longevity in the West, which may reflect, for example, on the WHO's agenda (e.g., according to public health experts, the World Health Organization's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control in its current form has not significantly contributed to reducing the number of smokers, and in recent years, under pressure from the WHO, there has been an increase in pressure to combat products alternative to cigarettes, which indirectly protects the strong tobacco industry in the PRC).^{xviii} The same may be true of high-tech organisations and agencies like the aforementioned ITU.

Infrastructure and connectivity

A major field of US-Chinese rivalry is also the area of infrastructure and major infrastructure projects. This is reflected in China's powerful economic initiatives, such as the idea of "One Belt One Road" (OBOR) which, was put forward by Xi Jinping in the fall of 2013. It consists of a land part (the Silk Road Economic Belt – a total of more than a dozen corridors from China to the EU, which involves the expansion or construction of new roads, rail routes, including high-speed rail, and transmission – oil and gas pipelines) and a maritime part (the 21st-century Maritime Silk Road), and is to consist of the development of an infrastructure network linking China, through Central Asian and Middle Eastern countries, to Europe.

In addition to the best-known OBOR projects, such as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and the expansion of the Chinese-bought port of Piraeus, Greece, China is also investing in infrastructure in Africa, South America and Central Europe. In Africa, China is now the largest

investor in infrastructure projects (Chinese investment is seven times that of the next investor) and Chinese companies have completed, among others, the \$1.2 billion Tanzania Gas Field Development Project in 2015; the \$3.4 billion 750-kilometer Ethiopia-Djibouti railroad in 2016; and the \$3.8 billion 750-kilometer railroad in Kenya in 2017.^{xix} South America is a relatively new area of Chinese activity, but already in 2014 the cumulative value of Chinese direct investment exceeded \$100 billion, and China's EXIM Bank and China Development Bank are also lending for infrastructure investments made under the OBOR banner.^{xx} In the central part of the Old Continent, China is implementing the Budapest-Belgrade rail link project, a \$1.3 billion highway from the port of Bar in Montenegro to Belgrade – for which a loan was provided to the government in Montenegro – and a Chinese company has won and executed a tender to build a bridge to the Pelješac peninsula in Croatia.

From a U.S. perspective, the Belt and Road initiative goes beyond infrastructure. On the one hand, it serves to extend Chinese economic and political influence over the countries through which the new transportation corridors, along with related investments, will run. On the other hand – as one might assume – OBOR is intended to serve the purpose of securing supply lines and transport routes from Europe and the Middle East to China (until now, Chinese trade has been based on maritime transport, and could therefore be easily interrupted in the event of a possible conflict or crisis with the United States by the US Navy). For these reasons, the United States, on the one hand, actively discourages other countries from cooperating with China in the area of infrastructure, pointing out, for example, the risk of the so-called "debt trap," and, on the other hand, proposing its own alternative initiatives. An example of this is the BUILD Act (Better Utilization of Investments Leading to Development Act), signed by the US President in October 2018, which brought a number of changes to the dimension of US development assistance. Under it, a new agency, the United States International Development Finance Corporation (USIDFC) was established to promote private capital investment in developing countries to stimulate economic development, create jobs and reduce poverty. The USIDFC is to provide financing and insurance for investment projects, including for critical infrastructure, that will contribute to sustainable

development and economic growth in these countries. The initiative is intended to create a private capital alternative to politically motivated PRC infrastructure investments. The US has also made efforts internationally to create an alternative to OBOR. Indeed, in 2022, the G7 countries established the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII), an outgrowth of the B3W (Build Back Better World) initiative announced a year earlier. According to the project, G7 countries, with the support of private capital, are expected to mobilise a total of about \$600 billion in infrastructure investments in the areas of energy, transport, digital communications, health and the environment over the next five years. These investments are to be based on high standards in the areas of transparency, anti-corruption procedures, respect for the environment or labour rights - areas where most criticism is levelled against Chinese investments. One of the first significant projects under the initiative is the Lobito corridor connecting the Democratic Republic of Congo and Zambia via Angola to the Atlantic and, in the future, the Indian Ocean. Also on the list of initiatives to be supported are renewable energy and nuclear power projects (small modular reactors) in Angola, Indonesia, Romania or Brazil, among others.^{xxi} On the other hand, in 2019, the US, together with Japan and Australia (subsequently joined by the UK and Spain), established the Blue Dot Network (BDN) initiative to certify the quality and soundness of infrastructure projects thus, encouraging investors. In Central Europe, the U.S. has taken a keen interest in the Trilateral Initiative as a potential alternative to cooperation between countries in the region and China in the area of infrastructure.

Conclusions

1. The US-China relationship appears to be becoming increasingly confrontational, with the Biden administration largely continuing the line adopted by Donald Trump.
2. Regardless of temporary fluctuations in Washington-Beijing relations, there is no doubt that the U.S.-China rivalry is structural, and while it is not taking the form of military confrontation it is spilling over into ever new areas both geographically and thematically. In the latter dimension, it manifests itself in such areas as technology, diplomacy and infrastructure, among others.

3. In the area of technology, the United States, in addition to strengthening its own capabilities (e.g., through the CHIPS Act), is increasingly requiring allies to limit their cooperation with China (currently, in addition to issues of 5G technology development, this mainly concerns countries with developed semiconductor production capabilities – Taiwan, the Netherlands and Japan).
4. U.S.-China rivalry is also intensifying in the forums of international organisations, as was recently seen against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic at the WHO or the election of a new ICT leadership. China is trying to increase its influence in individual organisations like the WHO – e.g. by filling leadership positions with its candidates and "buying votes" of developing countries - because of its own vested interests (blocking Taiwan, demographic and worldview issues, promoting its vision of human rights), which may influence its agenda.
5. The Polish government should increase its vigilance on documents, regulations or standards coming out of international organisations heavily influenced by China and Russia, such as the World Health Organisation, or Information and Communication Technologies. New regulatory proposals coming out of such organisations should be analysed holistically and interdepartmentally (current forms of interdepartmental consultations are often fictitious), and take into account not only the opinions of the relevant ministry, but also the perspective of ministries responsible for foreign affairs, defence and internal affairs or think tanks. It is also worth examining in this regard the existing norms and agreements from international organisations that are particularly vulnerable to authoritarian states.
6. The intensifying U.S.-Chinese rivalry for the Central European region, in addition to the threat (further prioritisation of the Chinese threat at the expense of the Russian threat to NATO's eastern flank), may also bring certain opportunities, especially in the area of infrastructure (including further U.S. support for the Three Seas Initiative) or modern technologies (moving production chains to allied countries). Poland and other countries should monitor such initiatives as the PGII, looking for additional financing opportunities for infrastructure projects, especially those implemented in cooperation with other CEE countries, or supporting the acquisition of

investments by countries that are particularly important from the perspective of Polish interests (e.g. Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia).

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Founded in 2005, the **Casimir Pulaski Foundation** is an independent, non-for-profit, non-partisan Polish-think tank conducting research on different aspects of European and Transatlantic security, with a special focus on Central and Eastern Europe.

The Foundation brings together dozens of international experts in various fields (foreign policy, defence, energy, democratic resilience) and publishes analysis describing and explaining international events, identifying trends in the European and Transatlantic security environment and recommending solutions for government decision-makers and the private sector.

The Casimir Pulaski Foundation is also the initiator and main organizer of the **Warsaw Security Forum** conference, which since 2014 annually gathers over 2000 stakeholders from more than 60 countries in order to elaborate shared responses to common transatlantic security challenges.

Each year the Foundation presents the **“Knight of Freedom”** award to outstanding figures who contribute to the promotion of the values of General Casimir Pulaski, such as freedom, justice and democracy. It is also the home to the Polish branch of the **Women in International Security network**.

The Casimir Pulaski Foundation has been ranked as the **first among Polish Think Tanks** dealing with defence and national security according to the 'Global Go To Think Tank Index' report in 2018, 2019 and 2020 respectively. The Foundation also has a status of a partner organization of the Council of Europe.

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ⁱ Secretary Blinken's Visit to the People's Republic of China (PRC), Department of State, Secretary Blinken's Visit to the People's Republic of China (PRC), <https://www.state.gov/secretary-blinkens-visit-to-the-peoples-republic-of-china-prc/> (access July 16, 2023).

ⁱⁱ *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, 2017,

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ Remarks by President Trump at Business Event with President Xi of China | Beijing, China, *White House*, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-business-event-president-xi-china-beijing-china/> (access June 12, 2023).

^{iv} “Trump blames China for coronavirus pandemic: ‘The world is paying a very big price for what they did’,” *CNBC*, March 19, 2020, <https://www.cnn.com/2020/03/19/coronavirus-outbreak-trump-blames-china-for-virus-again.html> (access May 13, 2023).

^v “Ukraine war: Blinken says China might give weapons to Russia,” *BBC*, February 20, 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-64695042> (access May 13, 2023).

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