

UDC 338.2

DOI: 10.46493/2663-2675.32(6).2022.23-30

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Confrontation with Beijing as One of the Priorities of US Foreign Policy

Abstract. The United States and China are by far the most powerful countries on the planet by many indicators, and both of these countries can influence the course of many processes around the world. In particular, the United States has a substantial influence on the world stage, so it is necessary to investigate the significance of the confrontation with Beijing in the context of their foreign policy, and what are the prospects for its continuation. Thus, the relevance of the subject is determined by the fact that the results of this confrontation have an impact on the policy of all countries in the future. The main purpose of the study is to determine the level of priority of the confrontation with China for the United States, by analysing the foundations of the geopolitical theory of the United States and considering the history of this conflict. When writing the study, the following methods were used: analysis, synthesis, comparison, specification and generalisation of information. As a result of the study, the following conclusions can be drawn: the confrontation between the United States and Beijing takes place in three main areas of activity: trade, economic, and ideological; it was determined that the United States is the most influential country in the world and is trying to maintain this influence; it was identified that the key aspect of the US foreign policy influence is trade, which is one of the main reasons for the confrontation with China; the impact of this conflict on the whole world was established; certain problems of US internal policy and possible prospects for the development of this conflict were considered. The originality of the study is that it considers the conflict between the United States and China as broadly as possible, considering various fields of activity. The results of this study will be useful for economists who study the economic problems of the whole world, and Ukraine in particular, including researchers in the United States, to draw attention to the problems and threats of their own country

Keywords: ideology, economy, technology, geopolitics, trade war

Introduction

The investigation of the current confrontation between the two most powerful countries in various aspects – the United States and China is very important and relevant for researchers in many countries, because, due to the analysis of the priorities of the foreign policy of the United States and their implementation, in reality, it is possible to determine the further development of the conflict and its impact on other countries of the world.

The United States is a powerful country that has shaped its foreign policy influence over a long time. Therewith, the United States has shown itself as a country that does not always pursue a tough policy but mainly tries to engage in dialogue with other countries for further co-operation. With this in mind, today the US government is

trying to maintain and strengthen its position in its foreign policy. However, the growing global influence of modern China undermines the position of the United States, so the latter must fight to maintain its influence.

Notably, the relations between these countries have not always been hostile. For a long time, the United States was in friendly relations with China, but after the great economic crisis of 2008, Beijing began to pursue its economic policy, due to which it was able to substantially strengthen its position and attract the attention of researchers. Thus, it is important to investigate the foreign policy activities of the presidential administration of B. Obama with China. The presidency of his successor D. Trump was marked by a tough economic policy against

Received: 25.08.2022, Revised: 07.11.2022, Accepted: 02.12.2022

Suggested Citation:

Orobets, I., Sydorenko, O., Xun, A., & Pasek, I. (2022). Confrontation with Beijing as one of the priorities of US foreign policy. *Foreign Affairs*, 32(6), 23-30.

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China, which was called the trade war. This subject was popular in society, as this event escalated the confrontation between these superpowers and had a substantial impact on the whole world. After the end of the presidency of D. Trump, the tension over this confrontation has subsided. However, the struggle between the two countries remains, so investigating its further development is important to predict the results of this conflict.

Important for the study is the paper of F. Ehsan, in which the author directly examines the history of relations with the United States and the development of China [1]. The researcher who was one of the first to investigate this subject is R. Sutter, who investigated the relations of these countries during the reign of B. Obama [2]. In the context of such a subject, the findings of U.N. Harari are important, considering the problems and challenges of the modern world in their book, and justified the importance of ideologies in the politics of many countries [3]. Another researcher who has made a substantial contribution to the examination of this confrontation is S. Goulard, who defined the role of European countries in the economic confrontation between the United States and China [4]. Ukrainian researchers have also made a substantial contribution to the investigation of these problems, in particular, the study of T. Grachevska and O. Vasylytsa [5; 6]. In these papers, the authors consider the possibility of escalating the confrontation between China and the United States and its impact on the whole world. The warnings that were stated by the famous historian N. Ferguson [7] are notable. An important thesis of this author is that given the internal political troubles, the United States may lose in the confrontation with China.

The purpose of the study is to determine the level of priority of the confrontation with China for US foreign policy. This will be achieved by considering the theory of foreign policy activities of the United States and reviewing the history and current state of the conflict with Beijing. The originality of the study is precisely the analysis of this issue.

Materials and Methods

In the first stage of the study, the process of selecting information and analysing it was conducted. The confrontation between the United States and China on the global stage involves a large number of aspects and takes place in various fields of activity. Accordingly, it was necessary to select literature that would describe as fully as possible the results of the struggle in the economic, technological, and ideological fields. In addition, the study focuses on the investigation of the mentioned confrontation in the context of the foreign policy activities of the United States, so it was necessary to conduct a thorough analysis of the principles of conducting US foreign policy since this can determine the role of this confrontation in the context of the activities of the United States. In addition, the study reviewed the literature that makes predictions development of the confrontation, the use of which is important for further modelling of the conflict and the foreign policy situation in the world.

The second stage of the study is characterised by the use of the method of information synthesis. In the

first stage, a substantial amount of information, which differs in its essence and content, was selected. Thus, in the second stage of the study, a method was used, the use of which allows combining information of different content. In particular, after defining the basics and principles of foreign policy activities and considering what risks and in what areas the confrontation with China is taking place, due to the combination of this information, it is possible to determine the significance of the struggle in the US foreign policy. The comparison method was used during this stage of the study. For example, when considering the history of relations between these countries, a comparison was made of the nature of relations between these countries now and in different historical periods. Due to the use of this method, it was possible to cover the essence of US-Chinese relations more widely and identify key events that determined the development and aggravation of the confrontation between these countries.

In the third stage of writing the study, the concretisation method was applied. In particular, this method was used when considering the theory of US foreign policy, since the country's activities on the world stage are very broad, so it was necessary to focus on the details that are important for the study. In addition, the trade war between the United States and China includes a large number of events, so key facts were selected, due to the consideration which it is possible to understand the essence and significance of this confrontation.

The fourth stage of the study is the final one and is characterised by the use of the generalisation method. Due to the use of this method, a brief description of the results was made and they were summed up. Thus, it was determined what is the nature of the current confrontation between the United States and China, and in what areas of activity this conflict takes place. In addition, the significance of this conflict for the whole world and its place in the foreign policy of the US was outlined.

Results

For a substantial period of its existence, the United States has played a substantial role in foreign policy around the world. This country became especially strong at the end of the 20th century, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, which was the main and largest rival of the United States. As a result, after the collapse of its rival, the United States was able to claim world domination. It is important to note that the collapse of the USSR meant the victory of the United States on an ideological level. Thus, the United States has become the only powerful superpower in the world that extends its influence to other countries. In particular, Z. Brzezinski, in the book, *The Grand Chessboard*, proves that the United States should remain the last and main hegemon, which will allow establishing of order and peace around the world. Thus, since then, US foreign policy has been aimed at strengthening its influence in the world and defending liberal values. Separately should be considered the terminology that Z. Brzezinski introduces, in particular, these are definitions such as geostrategic player, which denotes a country that influences the course of implementing its foreign policy on the internal policy

of other countries; and the term geostrategic stronghold, which is used to denote a country that is influenced by a geostrategic player [8].

Another important aspect to pay attention to is the methods that the United States uses in its foreign policy. Given the historical circumstances, namely that the United States was founded by England, which at that time was a powerful maritime power, the United States adopted the experience of navigation from its metropolis. On the other hand, the geographical aspect is important, the essence of which is that the United States is located on a continent that is far from Europe, and as a result of this, navigation was actively developed to cooperate with developed countries. Based on this, the geostrategic concept of the United States was formed, which was described and systematised by the famous American figure A. Mahan. The author voiced the idea in the following postulate: "Whoever rules the waves rules the world." The main means of implementing this type of policy is the development of naval forces, in particular, in the form of establishing military bases on the territory of other countries, which ensures military control. In addition, an important aspect is the development of maritime trade, which allows establishing of ties with different countries and the developing of the economy. Thus, according to this concept, the influence of the United States and the strengthening of the hegemony of this country appear due to the strengthening of the military and merchant fleets [9].

It is also necessary to pay attention to the fact that the confrontation between geostrategic players often lies not only in the plane of confrontation of the actual pragmatic interests of a particular country but at the highest ideological level. The modern world is guided by liberal-democratic ideas that have been formed over a substantial period of history. In this case, the United States acts as a guarantor of the dominance of the democratic system in the world, educational ideas that set freedom and human life as their main goal. Today, most countries of the world are guided by these ideas. However, now, for the first time since the end of the Cold War, there is an increase in the influence of autocratic regimes based on the principles and attitudes of socialist ideas. The most influential country in this sense is China, which is actively developing and extending its influence to other countries. Thus, it is possible to notice the reasons for the confrontation between the United States and China at the ideological level, which is expressed in their confrontation [10].

China is also a geostrategic player and has its methods of political influence. This influence is mainly conducted in the economic and technological fields.

Before considering the confrontation between the US and China, it is worth taking a look at some of the historical circumstances of the latter country. In the late 18th and 19th centuries, China emerged from centuries of isolation and came under the strong influence of Western countries. At that time, European empires did not pursue a specific humanitarian mission, but their interests in China were purely economic, and for the sake of their implementation, these countries used various methods. Thus, the population of this country was oppressed for a substantial

time. As a result, in the first half of the 20th century, Chinese society was divided into two camps: traditionalist and socialist. The struggle between these groups ended in 1949 with the victory of the communists and their coming to power. The leader Mao Zedong was a staunch socialist and used totalitarian methods in the form of usurping power and creating a cult of his personality to achieve his goals. However, he still failed to achieve the ideological goals set, the purpose of which was to establish a communist system in China and subsequently the global communist revolution. In the 1970s, Chinese President Deng Xiaoping analysed the mistakes of his predecessor and began to implement a course to strengthen Beijing's cooperation with Western countries. During this period, along with socialist ideas, the so-called pragmatic socialism was formed, the essence of which was that the best thing for the Chinese people is what gives them economic benefits. However, although the Chinese increased cooperation with Western countries, they did not adopt democratic ideals, so the ideas of socialism and autocracy were firmly established in the minds of the people [1].

An important event that affected US-China relations was the great economic crisis of 2008. The administration of the then president of the United States B. Obama has focused on strengthening cooperation with the major economies of China and Japan. In particular, during this period, the influence of the United States substantially increased in the East Asian Region [2].

By strengthening cooperation with China, American politicians have made a serious mistake. The United States hoped that globalisation, the internet, and free trade would allow China to integrate into today's globalised liberal world. However, the Chinese managed to create their economic system and exercise control over the internet, so that this country was able to use such tools for its purposes. Thus, there are contradictions between Beijing and Washington, because their economic interests differ from each other. Because of this, there are many conflicts on this basis, in particular, China, as part of the implementation of the "One Belt, One Road" project, plans to create some institutions around the world and reorganise the ancient trading system of the so-called Great Silk Road into its own, but the United States is trying to prevent this, as it may weaken its trade positions. In addition, it was profitable for entrepreneurs from the United States to conduct their activities in China, due to the use of cheap means of production, but for China itself, this is very unprofitable, since another state uses its resources. Considering the confrontation between these countries, the United States is leading in the military aspect, but the peculiarity of modern struggle is that it is conducted not in the military plane, but in the economic and political [5].

The modern confrontation between the United States and China is called a trade war. The term refers to a situation where countries restrict each other's trade by setting quotas or high tariffs on imported goods. As already mentioned, maritime trade is an important element of United States foreign policy, so the struggle in this area involves not only the struggle for economic interests but is an important element of national doctrine.

The United States and China are the countries with the most powerful economic systems in the world, with influence in many regions. Therefore, their struggle in this area poses a threat to many countries on the planet. Notably, the course of the economic war largely depends on the political leadership of these countries, in particular, soft politics in the East Asian region during the reign of B. Obama, due to which it was possible to prevent the escalation of the struggle. However, during the time of the next US President – D. Trump – there have been changes in foreign policy. This figure was able to gain power, in particular, through populist calls “Make America Great Again”, which primarily involve economic activities. During the implementation of this policy, a system of protectionism was introduced for American companies located abroad. As a result, this policy led to higher tariffs from the United States, to which China responded by raising export tariffs with the United States [6].

In 2017, the World Trade Organisation defined China’s economy as a market economy, but the United States refused

to recognise this, which increased the tension in the confrontation between these countries. The confrontation between the United States and China is also reflected in the 2017 US National Security Strategy [11]. This document provided for the introduction of restrictions on Chinese investment in American technologies strengthened export controls and expanded the list of goods that are prohibited from being sold to China. Thus, the United States imposed a 25% duty on exports of Chinese goods, as a result of which China responded by imposing a 50% duty on American goods. The official date of the beginning of the trade war between the United States and China is March 23, 2018, because it is on this day that D. Trump issued a “Presidential Memorandum Targeting China’s Economic Aggression” [12], which provided for the introduction of duties on steel and aluminium [13].

This policy can be understood because, looking at the chart below, it can be concluded that China owns a large part of US securities, so it could exercise influence on this country.

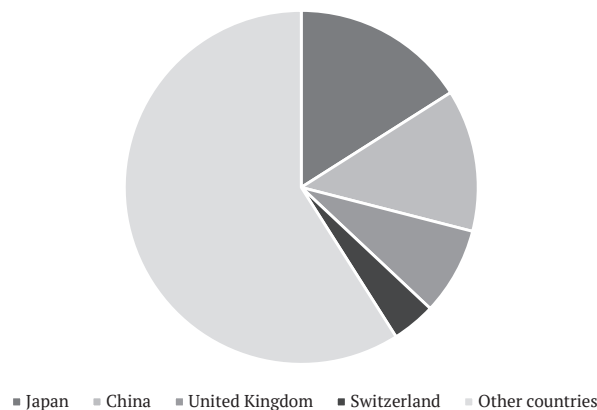


Figure 1. US securities holders (investors)

Source: E. Duffin. Major foreign holders of U.S. treasury securities [14]

In the summer of 2018, the economic conflict escalated, during which the United States imposed new duties on more than 800 types of goods in the industrial and transport sectors. These actions were taken to reduce the share of Chinese exports to the United States, by increasing US budget revenues and tax duties. In addition, this was done to encourage American companies to look for new markets and sources of purchasing goods for the industrial sector outside of China. In response, China imposed duties on about 500 types of American goods.

In the spring of 2019, the United States decided to increase the amount of trade duties from 10% to 25%. D. Trump hoped that in this way it would be possible to force China to sign an economic agreement that would be beneficial for the United States, but China refused to do so. As a result, American companies were banned from using Chinese digital equipment.

After almost two years of the “active phase” of the trade war, the countries signed a trade agreement in early 2020. This agreement provided for easing US tariffs on

Chinese imports, and on the other hand, obliged China to purchase certain American-made products [13].

It is important to note that European countries are ideological twins of the United States, but their approach to solving the problem in the East Asian region is somewhat different from that of the United States. Most European countries pursue a pragmatic foreign policy that involves strengthening economic relations with China. Some countries, such as the United Kingdom and France, adhere to the idea of free trade in this region, but still do not support the methods used by the United States. Thus, it can be seen that in this confrontation, the United States was left without the support of an important ally [4].

In addition to the economic confrontation between the United States and China, there is a confrontation between these countries in the field of technology. In the past decade, China has achieved rapid development of modern technologies. In particular, this was achieved due to cooperation with other countries, during which China established the extraction of a large number of rare earth

metals and materials that are necessary for the development of modern technologies. Although in 2021 the United States allocated a much larger amount of funds for the development of research in the field of artificial intelligence, however, most papers on this subject belong to Chinese researchers [14].

As for technology, it is also important to add that China is rapidly developing in the field of creating unmanned aerial vehicles for various purposes. In particular, speaking about commercial drones, China occupies a strong position in this regard, which is reflected in the chart.

Percentage of drone manufacturing countries in the US market

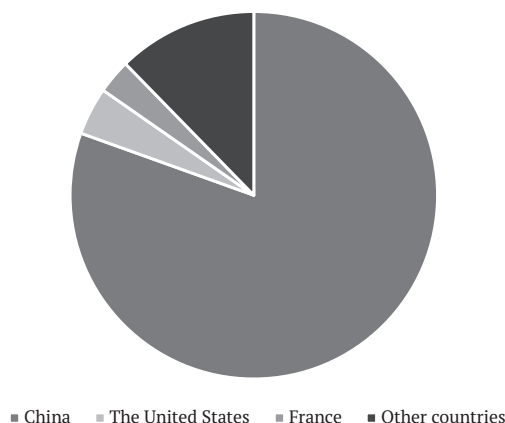


Figure 2. Percentage of drone manufacturing countries in the US market

Source: S. Korrek, 2021. The US-China Technology Race: Economic, Political and Normative Dimensions [15]

After coming to power in the United States of J. Biden, researchers drew attention to the fact that there is a softening of relations with China. However, it should be understood that establishing such relations as were during the presidency of B. Obama will not work anymore. In addition, the researchers predicted that the United States should not rely on its economic allies in this confrontation. Therefore, it was predicted that the administration of J. Biden will not have a clear strategy for conducting policy in this region, but tough measures will be taken in case of emergencies [14].

It can be stated that these forecasts came true because, during the period of his tenure in power, J. Biden did not take consistently tough measures against China, as it was in the days of D. Trump. However, the response of the United States to the events between China and Taiwan that broke out in late July and early August 2022 was harsh and instantaneous [17].

An important aspect is that the United States is currently experiencing a period of decline in democratic institutions and the development of populism. Therefore, due to the weakening of positions in internal politics, the positions in foreign politics can be weakened [18].

In general, the fight against China is an important component of the foreign policy activities of the United States, to preserve its status as a geopolitical player.

Discussion

The subject of the modern confrontation between the United States and China is quite popular among researchers since the struggle between the two economic superpowers somehow attracts other countries that are dependent on them. It was noted above that such a confrontation is not just economic, but has an ideological basis.

Thus, in the context of ideology, the thoughts of the famous Western philosopher and social researcher F. Fukuyama are important. This researcher became widely known in the 90s of the last century after the publication of a book called "The End of History and the Last Man". The author adheres to the philosophical view of history expressed by G. Hegel, which describes the development of mankind as the development of social relations. Thus, the main idea of F. Fukuyama is that after the collapse of the USSR in 1991, the only ruling ideology in the world remained – liberalism. By the end of history, the author understands that ideological confrontations are in the past, and liberalism will finally remain the main ideological system on Earth [19]. However, as already described in the main part of the study, ideological confrontations have not ended, but on the contrary, have intensified and are actively developing in the modern world. In particular, the development of the confrontation between liberalism and socialism is evident. In a similar vein, criticism of the idea of F. Fukuyama was outlined by U.N. Harari [10], who, considering the challenges to society in the 21st century, expressed the thesis that "the end of history is cancelled." This thesis primarily involves criticism of the book of the mentioned researcher and is aimed at considering the technological confrontation between the United States and China.

The economic aspect of the confrontation of the United States with China is one of the most controversial issues among researchers in the world. First of all, many Western analysts are interested in the question of how a trade war can affect the whole world. In this context, it is possible to often find papers with rather negative content that defend the idea that such a confrontation can lead to strong economic problems among European countries. In particular, this idea is defended in the paper by

M. Fesenko. The author claims that the confrontation between the United States and China can lead to fatal consequences in the form of nuclear war, but this is an extremely fatalistic scenario that the author considers. Another scenario that is closer to modern reality is the decline of the European Union economy, due to the strengthening role of China. However, as already discussed in the study, most European countries are now pursuing a pragmatic policy aimed at strengthening economic cooperation with China, so not the fall of the European economy can be predicted, but its reorientation [20].

Another researcher who studies the trade confrontation between the United States and China is the Ukrainian author O. Vasylytsa. In the paper, based on statistical data, the researcher examines the economic situation in the world and certain countries in particular. Thus, this researcher, like the previous author, claims that most of the countries that now hold the leading positions in the economy are going to face a collapse. In addition, the researcher notes that this struggle may leave a negative impact on the Ukrainian economy. However, as already noted, the trade war does not lead to collapse, but to a change in the economic centre of the world [6].

An important study that describes the change in the economic centre is the book by G. Rachman called "Easternization". The term used in the title of the book is a neologism introduced by the researcher to refer to the process of transition of economic influence to the territory of Southeast Asia. This term echoes another important concept called Westernisation. Both of these definitions are based on English words, which are translated as East and West, respectively. Thus, the author describes the role of the rise in the position of the East in the world economy, but it is worth noting that in this context, G. Rachman speaks not only about China's economic recovery but also about other countries in the region that are allies of Western countries. It is important to note that in this paper, the researcher adheres to a similar opinion, which was expressed in the study, that during the presidency of B. Obama and D. Trump, the role of the US in the global economy has weakened, and draws attention to the growing confrontation between the United States and China. The author also notes that Easternisation is not only a strengthening of Asian countries in economic terms, but also political terms [21].

The role of the policies of various US presidents in escalating the conflict with China is quite a popular subject among researchers. In particular, one of the authors who investigated the issue is I. Warren. The researcher draws attention to the intensification of confrontation during the presidency of D. Trump, however, the thesis that this confrontation was fuelled by his predecessor B. Obama is interesting. However, this opinion is not entirely accurate, because, as described in the main part of the study, the administration of B. Obama pursued a rather soft foreign policy in the Southeast Asian region. In addition, during the reign of this president, no legislative acts were adopted that would stimulate the further development of the confrontation [22].

Consideration of the spread of the influence of China was outlined in the paper by A. Kolombo. The author

devoted the research to describing economic ties between China and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The study describes the consideration of relations between these countries in historical retrospect, due to which it is possible to understand exactly how relations between these countries were formed. The main part of the study describes the economic cooperation of these countries in modern times. The author examines the development of trade and relations in general, in particular, the construction of a dam in Congo under Chinese leadership. However, the main problem that the author draws attention to is the extraction of rare earth metals. As already mentioned in this study, rare earth metals are of great importance in the modern world, since their use is necessary for the development of modern technologies, both commercial and military. Thus, it is possible to notice not only the economic strengthening of China but also the strategic one [23].

Interesting is the opinion of researcher J. Vogelmann. In his book, the author considers relations between the United States and China not from the standpoint of confrontation, but on the contrary, from the standpoint of cooperation. The researcher's thoughts are based on the fact that in many aspects the Chinese and American economies depend on each other. In particular, an important aspect is the large amount of investment in these countries. However, as discussed in the study, during the "active phase" of the trade war, some legal acts were issued on both sides, which were aimed at reducing the amount of investment and limiting cooperation between companies in these countries. Thus, it can be stated that economic cooperation between the United States and China exists, but the heads of both states understand that their countries are dependent on each other, so they try to reduce the level of this interaction [24].

The famous modern historian N. Ferguson, in his latest book, argues that today the United States and China are on the verge of a new Cold War. In addition, the author says that the United States has every chance of losing in this confrontation. These opinions are based on the observations mentioned in the main part of the study about the decline of US democratic institutions and the development of populism [7].

Thus, it can be seen that the conflict between the United States and China is developing at a substantial pace in many industries. Therefore, this confrontation should be a priority area of US foreign policy, to preserve their global positions and defend the democratic system.

Conclusions

During the study of this subject, a large number of aspects of the US foreign policy confrontation with China were considered, as a result of which it was identified that this struggle is the most priority component of US foreign policy. It was noted that the conflict covers the following areas of activity:

- Ideology. This industry is the main one since any conflicts begin precisely with the level of awareness of the meaning of confrontation.
- Economy. China is rapidly developing in this area, so it has every chance to undermine the influence in the world by the US. Thus, in a certain period, there was an

acute confrontation between these countries in this area, which was aimed at weakening the positions of each other. Now the United States and Beijing are increasing their economic influence around the world.

– Technologies. This industry is very important in a conflict because technology determines what the future will be like, so dominance in this area is important in terms of confrontation between countries.

In addition, at the beginning of the study, it was considered in detail on what basis the principles of United States foreign policy were formed. Combined with the results of the study, it can be stated that the confrontation with Beijing is a priority area of foreign policy due to the following factors:

– The United States is a defender of democratic values

in the world, so the loss of this country can undermine the stability of all democratic countries.

– Maritime trade is an important element of United States foreign policy. Limiting this activity reduces US influence in the world.

Such trends in internal politics can weaken the state so that it would not be able to confront China.

Thus, the subject of economic development needs further research, since this subject is important for the whole world. The issue of technological progress is also important since this area of activity never stands still, so consideration of technology updates will be relevant at all times. In addition, American researchers should pay attention to their internal political problems to correct them.

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Конфронтація з Пекіном як один із пріоритетів зовнішньої політики США

Анотація. США та Китай на сьогодні є найпотужнішими країнами на планеті за багатьма показниками, та обидві ці країни можуть впливати на перебіг багатьох процесів у всьому світі. Зокрема Сполучені Штати мають значний вплив на світовій арені, тому необхідно досліджувати те, яке значення має протистояння з Пекіном у контексті їхньої зовнішньої політики, та те, які існують перспективи його продовження. Таким чином, актуальність теми визначається тим, що результати цього протистояння мають вплив на політику усіх країн у майбутньому. Основною метою статті є визначення того наскільки пріоритетним є протистояння з Китаєм для США, шляхом дослідження основ геополітичної теорії Сполучених Штатів та розгляду історії цього конфлікту. Під час написання статті було використано низку наступних методів: аналіз, синтез, порівняння, конкретизація та узагальнення інформації. У результаті дослідження можна зробити наступні висновки: протистояння між США та Пекіном проходить у трьох основних сферах діяльності: торгівельній, економічній й ідеологічній; було визначено, що Сполучені Штати є найвпливовішою країною у світі та намагаються зберегти цей вплив; з'ясовано, що ключовим аспектом зовнішньополітичного впливу США є торгівля, яка є однією з основних причин протистояння з Китаєм; визначено те, який вплив цей конфлікт здійснює на весь світ; розглянуто певні проблеми внутрішньої політики США та розглянуто можливі перспективи розвитку цього конфлікту. Новизною статті є те, що у ній конфлікт між США та Китаєм розглянуто максимально широко, з урахуванням різних сфер діяльності. Результати цього дослідження будуть корисними для економістів, які досліджують економічні проблеми усього світу, та України зокрема, а також для науковців США, з метою звернення уваги на проблеми та загрози власної країни

Ключові слова: ідеологія, економіка, технології, геополітика, торговельна війна