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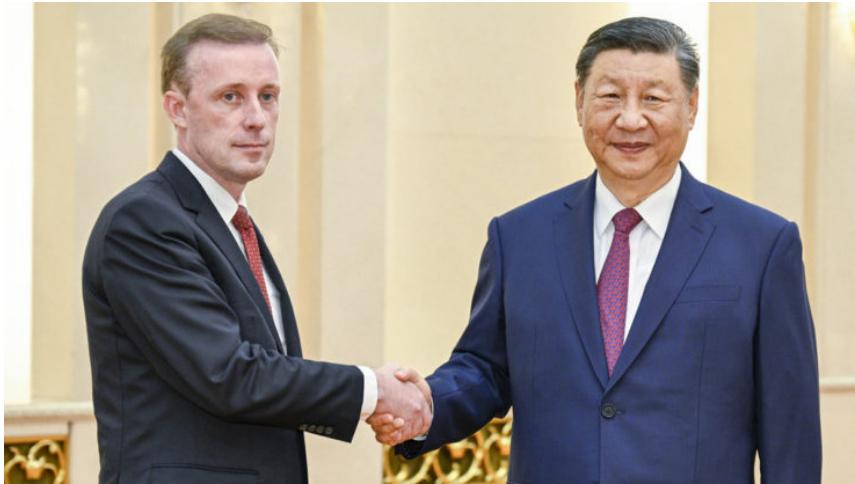
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What is the outcome of US National Security Advisor Jacob Sullivan's visit to the People's Republic of China?



An important event has taken place in US-China relations. From 27 to 29 August this year, Jacob Sullivan, the U.S. National Security Advisor, paid a visit to China. This political figure is the second most responsible person in this sphere of state activity. Therefore, it is not surprising that this event has also become significant for the current stage of development of the “Great World Game”.

Introductory remarks

This is the first visit by an American politician in the last eight years and it took place at the invitation of Wang Yi, member of the Politburo of the Chinese Communist Party and Chinese Foreign Minister. It should be noted that this is the fourth meeting between these statesmen in the period from May 2023 to the present day. Such meetings demonstrate the interest of the two leaders in keeping the lines of bilateral communication open.

Shortly before the talks began, [the Chinese newspaper Global Times](#) reported that there are more than 20 different “dialogue mechanisms” through which the parties can discuss almost the entire range of emerging issues. On the scale of importance of recent events, we can safely place the “mechanism” of contacts between J. Sullivan and Wang Yi in the immediate aftermath of the meeting between the two leaders.

In September 2023, talks between Jacob Sullivan and Wang Yi took place in Malta. The purpose of the talks was to discuss the state of preparations for the meeting between Joe Biden and Xi Jinping. The leaders’ meeting took place two months later in San Francisco. In January 2024, another meeting between J. Sullivan and Wang Yi took place [in Bangkok](#). This time they discussed the complex situation in the Southeast Asian sub-region, which, together with Taiwan, is becoming the most “heated” zone in the entire system of bilateral relations.

Analysing all that is going on, it can be said that on the American side, the US Secretary of the Treasury, Janet Yellen, is in charge of exchanging signals with the main geopolitical opponent at the “working” level. However, the time has come for these officials to conduct an “interim audit” of the state of the entire system of bilateral relations. Especially since there is little evidence of the positive performance of the “20 mechanisms”. The most notable of these have already been discussed in our magazine in connection with the regular meeting of the bilateral Financial Working Group (FWG) held in Shanghai in mid-August.

To all of the above we can add [the statement made a week later by the head of the US Federal Reserve, Jerome Powell](#), about the forthcoming reduction in the federal funds rate. To date, the purpose of this decision is officially conditioned by trends within the US economy itself. It is worth noting that it [has already been positively received in China](#).

Unfortunately, [there is a lot of negativity in all areas of relations](#) between the two leading world powers. First of all, we should pay attention to the sphere that is relatively new in bilateral relations, but potentially the most dangerous. Although no traces of its discussion could be found during the past negotiations, the reason for this is quite clear.

Nuclear arms race is becoming a reality

The roots of the current exacerbation of the problem referred to in this subtitle go back to the second half of the 1990s, when the issue of India’s accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons became particularly acute during the negotiations on its extension. India made its accession conditional on the presentation by the five “official” nuclear powers of a binding phased plan for nuclear disarmament. In the absence of a

positive response, India de facto joined the club of nuclear powers, soon followed by Pakistan. All in all, the question of a new round in the nuclear arms race became a question of time, i.e. of changing political circumstances.

Twenty years later, the process of serious deterioration of the situation on a global scale began. One of the members of the above-mentioned “five”, China, began to ask why the current world leader and our main geopolitical opponent had thousands of nuclear warheads, while we had only a few hundred.

So far, Beijing has officially maintained a doctrine of “minimum deterrence”, ruling out the use of nuclear weapons in military operations. However, the [Pentagon](#) believes that if the People’s Liberation Army of China (PLA) has about 500 nuclear warheads in May 2023, the number could double by 2030. One of the responses to this prospect was a document on the modernisation of the US nuclear arsenal.

However, one of the most unpleasant consequences of the next nuclear games we are discussing is that India is certain to rejoin the race. It already has all the necessary technologies in the field of both delivery vehicles and the most advanced nuclear warheads. It will be followed by Pakistan and so on.

As for the periodic signals sent to China about joining some kind of negotiation process on nuclear disarmament, Beijing considers it impossible for China to participate in such a process, given the huge disparity with the United States in the size of its nuclear arsenals. There is a certain logic to this position. If one can speak of logic at all on this issue, which seems to be reserved for “discussions” in a madhouse.

But this problem was not raised at all in the past US-China talks. Even though the people who headed the two delegations were the most qualified to do so.

Discussions on Taiwan and the situation in the South China Sea have been at the centre of the past talks

It is well known that at such meetings each side always tries to focus the discussion on the issues that concern it most at the moment. The People’s Republic of China, on the other hand, is irritated by the sharp increase in Washington’s activity in Taiwan, which is taking advantage of the fact that the Democratic Progressive Party is holding on to the Taiwanese presidency. This was one of the [main results](#) of the parliamentary elections held in January this year.

Although William Lai won less than 40 per cent of the vote, this does not prevent him from positioning himself as the “chief defender of democracy” on the island. The latter is said to be threatened by a parliament now controlled by the opposition, which is trying to

change current legislation in order to gain some influence over the political course of the president and the government he forms.

At the moment, Taiwan's president and government are not functioning normally. The US is taking advantage of this situation, with [the Taipei Times reporting](#) that the heads of Taiwan's Foreign Ministry and National Security Council were "officially received and held closed-door talks" in Washington on 22 August. There was an immediate and predictably [harsh reaction from the Chinese Foreign Ministry](#).

For Washington, the source of major problems is the growing outcry from a key ally in the Southeast Asian sub-region, the Philippines. At the same time, such hysteria provides the US with an opportunity to make its presence felt. But it is also fraught with the danger of taking the whole complex of relations with the main geopolitical adversary beyond the bounds of "controlled competition". This is precisely what may result from the willingness [expressed](#) by the head of the US Pacific Command, Admiral Samuel Paparo, to "escort Philippine vessels" in the South China Sea.

It was delivered before J. Sullivan arrived in China. During his talks with Wang Yi, the politician [paid particular attention to the situation in the South China Sea](#). At the same time, he did not avoid issues related to Taiwan and problems in bilateral trade.

All in all, the significance of the meeting between the leaders of the two leading world powers discussed here is due to the very fact that it took place. This is roughly the conclusion reached by [the leading media](#) in both the United States and [the People's Republic of China](#), quoting both participants in the event.

But such a conclusion carries its own weight in these crazy times.

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