

US 'reflection' on China ties is superficial

By Wang Peng

In recent months, subtle changes have taken place in China-US relations. Although the context is intricate, there are small signs to follow. By linking several overt or covert trends with key details, it may be possible to find out the new connotation of the China-US competition in the next stage.

First, in the field of security, while the US continues to press hard and tighten the net in the Indo-Pacific, it seems to frequently extend an "olive branch" to conduct high-level dialogue with China to prevent bilateral relations from getting out of control. This contradiction is intriguing and needs to be carefully judged.

From the perspective of foreign policy and security-military deployment, it is really hard to see that the US has a true intention to ease China relations. At the political and diplomatic levels, the US has completely disregarded international law, conventions, and the basic etiquette of interaction between major powers, and refused to lift illegal sanctions against China's defense minister. On the eve of the Shangri-La Dialogue, the US sought to arrange a meeting between the defense chiefs of the two countries. Such an insincere "meeting" is of course unacceptable to China.

While the two militaries exchanged a

war of words at the Shangri-La Dialogue, the Taiwan Straits were not peaceful. On Saturday, a US destroyer and a Canadian frigate made a transit through the Taiwan Straits.

The Biden administration has repeatedly emphasized "setting guardrails that enable responsible management of competition between China and the US" and ensuring "that competition should not tip over into conflict or confrontation." Despite that, all the signs have shown that this is just a strategy of rhetoric to restrain China's countermeasures.

Second, in the fields of economics and global trade policy, the US seems to have "reflected" on itself, but, in reality, it has continued to go further down the wrong path. At the end of April, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan made a speech, entitled "Renewing American Economic Leadership," at the Brookings Institution. He argued that the US should reach a "new Washington consensus" that integrates its domestic economic policy with global security agenda.

Many international analysts believe that this speech has important historical significance because it not only deeply reflects on and even denies free-market economic policies but also introduces some previously "politically incorrect" concepts. What was once considered "politically incorrect" is now being pack-

aged as a new idea by the Biden administration to endorse its policies, which is truly lamentable.

However, Washington's rethinking of the US' economic model is superficial. They completely ignore that the real cause of the gradual decline of the US from its "heyday" was not, or at least not exclusively, "neoliberalism," but rather a social decline, governance failures, and international abuse of hegemony and overreach with US characteristics.

In the economic field, another noteworthy statement is that the US openly declares that it is no longer seeking "decoupling" from China but rather "de-risking." How should we understand this statement? Simply put, some Americans used to view China as a "parasite." They believed that they had "rebuilt China" and that China had "ungratefully" sucked, exploited, and plagiarized from the US, causing Americans to lose their jobs. Therefore, the US wanted to "decouple" from China.

Now, the US has seen China's strength and the deep intertwining of the economies, industrial chains, and supply chains of the two sides, it realizes that hasty decoupling will do more harm than good. But the US will not reflect on itself. Instead, it regards China as a "puffer fish," whose meat is delicious and edible, yet there are poisonous glands in its body, so must be cut

open and the poisonous parts must be removed by an experienced chef with a knife. This is called "de-risking."

Nevertheless, no matter how many calculations the US has made, it has failed to reflect on itself. Its cognitive premise is wrong from very beginning – China is neither a "parasite" nor a "puffer fish," but a waking sleeping lion, or a soaring dragon. Therefore, the so-called de-risking by the US toward China has already failed morally. It is a typical behavior of someone being sick but forcing others to take pills.

Be it at the strategic-security level or at the technical-economic level, the US "reflection" on China and China-US relations is superficial and fragmented. It can even be said that it ignores objective facts and is against the international community, which opposes camp confrontation and calls for unity and cooperation. That being said, the future of China-US relations is not optimistic. Chinese who love peace and concentrate on development need to plan ahead, have the necessary bottom line awareness to prepare for the worst-case scenario, for the possible arrival of storms in ties.

The author is a distinguished research fellow at the School of Management at Huazhong University of Science and Technology. opinion@globaltimes.com.cn

Blinken's Saudi visit won't stop US' declining influence in Middle East

By Ding Long

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken kicked off his visit to Saudi Arabia on Tuesday. During his visit, Blinken is expected to discuss bilateral and multilateral issues with the Saudi side, including cooperation to mediate the conflict in Sudan and promoting ties between Saudi Arabia and Israel. He will also hold a ministerial meeting with the foreign ministers of the GCC countries.

Blinken's visit demonstrates the US is attaching greater importance to its relations with Saudi Arabia, which is becoming increasingly detached from the US orbit impacted by the tide of reconciliation in the Middle East. The US is eager to stabilize its relationship with Saudi Arabia and save its precarious Middle East alliance system. However, there are contradictions in US' Middle East policy, and it has been out of touch with the new geopolitical reality in the region. Therefore, it is unlikely that Blinken's visit will yield any significant results.

Besides the agendas discussed at the table, Blinken aims to achieve the following three goals. Firstly, the US hopes to strengthen coor-



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dination with Saudi Arabia on energy policy. Since the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the US has used both soft and hard tactics against Saudi Arabia, hoping that the latter would join the US camp to fill the supply gap caused by the Russian oil embargo through increased oil production, stabilize oil prices, and ease domestic inflationary pressures. However, Saudi Arabia did not succumb to US pressure and instead strengthened cooperation with Russia under the "OPEC+" framework and restricted production many times, which humiliated the US.

Secondly, in terms of geopolitics, the US is eager to curb the further spreading of the effects of the Middle East reconciliation tide. After China successfully facilitated

the reconciliation and resumption of diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran in March this year, a wave of "reconciliation" with strong potential and climax has been set off in the Middle East. The rapid geopolitical changes go against the wishes of the US and accelerate the decline of US power in the Middle East.

Thirdly, in terms of great power competition, the US is attempting to exclude China and Russia in the Middle East where international competitive factors such as resources, markets, technology, and military converge. On one hand, the US is implementing a strategic contraction from the Middle East, while on the other hand, it is vigorously guarding against countries like China, Russia, and Iran filling the "vacuum" left by its departure.

The US is making every effort to obstruct strategic cooperation between Middle Eastern countries on the one side, and China and Russia on the other, and is launching new cooperation plans to counter the two countries' influence.

However, numerous contradictions have led the US' Middle East policy into a quagmire. Even frequent visits by high-ranking officials like Blinken cannot change the declining influence of the US in the Middle East.

Firstly, the US cannot realize a "withdrawing while fighting" approach in the Middle East. After the US reduces its military presence, it's inevitable its Middle Eastern allies will seek strategic autonomy and ease the strategic tension with regional adversaries. The overall relative decline of US strength and the reduction of its input in the Middle East will inevitably lead to the decline of its Middle Eastern alliance system.

Secondly, the US' Middle East policy is far behind the changes in the region. The geopolitical changes in the Middle East reflect the historical trend, in which regional countries seek unity, development, and strategic autonomy. However, the US still attempts to gain

arbitration power over Middle Eastern affairs by stirring up regional conflicts and camp confrontation, hoping to benefit from the chaos. The wave of reconciliation sweeping across the Middle East indicates that the US is lagging behind the changes of the era, and its Middle East policy that goes against the tide will inevitably suffer defeat.

Thirdly, the Cold War mentality should not define the relationship between the Middle East and major powers. The US views the Middle East as a new battleground for strategic competition with China and Russia. However, the interests of Middle Eastern countries have become highly diversified, and they are no longer willing to blindly follow the US and serve as pawns in its global strategy. The scenario of rallying allies to resist China and Russia, a Cold War tactic of the US, is no longer possible in the Middle East.

The author is a professor with the Middle East Studies Institute of Shanghai International Studies University. opinion@globaltimes.com.cn