

U.S.-CHINA ENGAGEMENT ERA HAS COME TO AN END: TOP U.S. OFFICIAL

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Kurt Campbell

The more than three-decade long era of engagement between the United States and China that saw the world's two largest economies develop closely interdependent relations "has come to an end", a top official of the Biden administration has said.

"The period that was broadly described as engagement has come to an end," Kurt Campbell, who is the Coordinator for Indo-Pacific Affairs and the top U.S. official for Asia, said at a Stanford University event. He said "competition" would henceforth be "the dominant paradigm" and U.S. policy would work under "a new set of strategic parameters", Bloomberg News quoted him as saying.

Policy shift

Mr. Campbell's comments underline the shift in U.S. views on China from the time of the Obama administration as well as the broadly bipartisan consensus on the current direction of relations, following four turbulent years for the relationship under the previous Trump administration.

Mr. Campbell said "Chinese policies under [President] Xi are in large part responsible for the shift in U.S. policy," Bloomberg News reported, adding that he cited "clashes on China's border with India, an economic campaign against Australia and the rise of China's 'wolf warrior' diplomacy" as examples that suggested "China is determined to play a more assertive role." He described the Chinese President as "deeply ideological but also quite unsentimental" and said the two top Chinese diplomats who had held talks with top Biden administration officials in Alaska in March - Politburo member Yang Jiechi and Foreign Minister Wang Yi - were "nowhere near, within a hundred miles" of Mr. Xi's inner circle. He said the U.S. believed "the best way to engage a more assertive China is to work with allies, partners and friends."

Reacting to his comments, China's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said on Thursday that "using 'competition' [to] define or dominate China-U.S. ties is a total mistake that will only lead to confrontation and conflict." "Even if there is competition, it should be sound competition that helps to reinforce each other and pursue common progress, rather than a vicious competition to beat each other. China firmly rejects U.S. moves to exclude and contain China in the name of competition," he added.

Also on Thursday, People's Liberation Army Senior Colonel and China's Defence Ministry spokesperson, Tan Kefei, asked about the U.S. Indo-Pacific military strategy, hit out at countries looking "to establish selective and exclusive military alliances, to gang up or to create the 'New Cold War' featuring bloc confrontation," coming amid increasing Chinese criticism of the India-Australia-Japan-U.S. Quad grouping.

"The strategy of intensifying military presence and highlighting military competition will only aggravate regional tensions and endanger world peace and stability," he said, adding that "the U.S. side should not, on the one hand, claim to put up new defence hotlines [with China] while on the other hand keep ramping up military deployments in the Asian Pacific region, frequently

conduct close-in reconnaissance on China, and even deliberately initiate dangerous circumstances where aircraft and vessels nearly collide.”

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