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**CONTAINMENT POLICY
IN THE CONTEXT OF U.S.-CHINA RIVALRY:
HISTORICAL PARALLELS IN THE TRANSFORMATION
OF THE SHADOW DIMENSIONS OF ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY**

Abstract. The aim of this article is to substantiate a conceptual framework for the contemporary politics of containment in the rivalry between the United States and the People's Republic of China, understood not as a trade policy but as a security policy realized by economic means. The hypothesis is that modern containment is implemented primarily through the governance of global production networks and global value chains rather than through classical tariff barriers, and that this transformation gives rise to the phenomenon of coercive coupling and decoupling, within which middle powers are compelled to balance between the security pressure of the hegemon and their own economic interests. To verify this, the research applies analytical, structural-functional, and comparative methods, supported by institutional and geoeconomic analysis, which allow the instruments of contemporary containment, regulatory supply-chain controls, export controls, the economics of sanctions, and industrial policy to be interpreted as elements of a single strategic architecture. The study demonstrates that the rhetorical shift from decoupling to de-risking reflects the objective impossibility of a complete rupture with China and the recognition of its costs, so that the present phase of containment is not a blockade but a selective restraint on critical technologies. Attention is devoted to the category of the economics of sanctions and to its place within the system of economic containment, since sanctions, export controls, and conditional access to technology and

capital constitute the coercive pole of a single continuum of economic statecraft. The article also shows that the geopolitical context legitimizes the return of the developmental state and of active industrial policy, so that the very liberal model of the United States is being transformed toward state interventionism. As a result, the study argues that deglobalization does not weaken but, on the contrary, strengthens the role of the state in the governance of production networks, forming a new, bloc-based architecture of the world economy, with direct implications for Ukraine.

Keywords: economic diplomacy; economic rivalry; economic sanctions; coercive decoupling; militarized interdependence; global production networks; global value chains; supply chain control; export control; industrial policy; semiconductors; critical technologies; technological sovereignty.

INTRODUCTION

The contemporary politics of containment in the rivalry between the United States and the People's Republic of China represents a qualitatively new phenomenon that cannot be reduced either to the classical Cold War containment or to ordinary trade protectionism. Its distinctive feature is that the restraint of a rival's power is achieved primarily through the governance of global production networks and value chains rather than through tariff barriers alone. Modern geopolitics fundamentally transforms the nature of governance in these networks, shifting them from a firm-centered logic of costs and capabilities to a state-centered logic of security, diplomacy, and risk. American policy toward China has ceased to be a trade policy; it has become a security policy pursued through economic means.

The central hypothesis of this study is that contemporary containment gives rise to the phenomenon of coercive coupling and decoupling, within which the states of the second order, the middle powers, are compelled to balance between the security pressure of the hegemon and their own economic interests, realizing variable combinations of re-shoring, friend-shoring and reoriented offshoring. In the example of the semiconductor industry, this logic manifests itself with particular clarity: regulatory supply-chain controls, acting through allies, affect not only the target country but also third states, thereby qualitatively distinguishing them from classical unilateral sanctions. The rhetorical shift of Washington from decoupling toward de-risking reflects the objective impossibility of a complete rupture with China and the recognition of its cost; the aim is now to restrain the technological development of the competitor and to reduce undue dependence rather than to disconnect entirely.

A paradoxical consequence of the containment of China is that the very liberal model of the United States is being transformed toward state interventionism. The geopolitical context legitimizes the return of state capitalism and active industrial policy in countries where they had earlier been dismantled under the pressure of liberal orthodoxy: what was deemed unfair competition in the 1980s is today being revived as strategic autonomy. Deglobalization, contrary to expectations, does not weaken but strengthens the role of the state in the governance of production networks, forming a new, bloc-based architecture of the world economy. This has direct significance for Ukraine, whose strategy of postwar reconstruction and integration into global value chains will unfold precisely within this bloc-based architecture.

Statement of the problem. Despite the abundance of studies of individual instruments of American policy toward China, tariffs, export controls, sanctions, and industrial subsidies, the systemic logic connecting them remains underconceptualized. These instruments are frequently analyzed in isolation, as separate technical measures, which obscures the fact that together they constitute a single architecture of economic containment. The core problem lies in the absence of an integrated framework that would interpret regulatory supply-chain controls, the economics of sanctions, and industrial policy not as isolated tools but as complementary elements of a strategy of restraining the growth of a rival's power. Equally underconceptualized is the position of the middle powers within this architecture: the bipolar model of the United

States versus China proves analytically insufficient, since the effectiveness of containment depends not on the will of Washington but on the readiness of allies to bear its costs, which in turn is the subject of constant diplomatic bargaining. Addressing this gap requires interpreting the politics of containment as a security policy realized by economic means, within which the economics of sanctions occupies the coercive pole of a single continuum of economic statecraft.

ANALYSIS OF THE LATEST RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS

The conceptual foundations of the analysis of economic containment have evolved through several theoretical trajectories. The historical framework was set by the foundational study of J. Gaddis on the strategies of containment in postwar American national-security policy [1], which revealed the deep continuity between the Cold War logic of restraint and the contemporary logic of technological containment. The transfer of this logic into the economic sphere was substantiated by the classical work of D. Baldwin on economic statecraft [2], which demonstrated that economic instruments constitute a full-fledged tool of foreign policy, and was further developed in the geoeconomic direction by R. Blackwill and J. Harris [3], who showed that in the modern world economic instruments, war by other means, increasingly displace military ones. A key contribution was made by H. Farrell and A. Newman [4], whose concept of weaponized interdependence explains precisely how the structure of global economic networks, and above all of production and financial networks, generates asymmetries convertible into instruments of coercion.

Within the domain of the economics of sanctions, the foundational study of G. Hufbauer, J. Schott, and K. Elliott [5] established the empirical criteria for the effectiveness of restrictive measures, while the recent work of O. Itskhoki and E. Ribakova [6] transferred their analysis onto a rigorously economic plane, formalizing the mechanisms of transmission through trade, financial, and currency channels. The specific case of technological containment in the semiconductor sector is analyzed by M. Soliman and V. Carchidi in their work on the re-balancing of the strategy of tech containment [7], while the broader strategic context is examined by O. Obasun in the analysis of strategic drift and economic coercion in a multipolar world [8] and by B. Murdaco in the study of the political economy of American containment in relation to China [9]. These studies confirm that the instruments of restraint are increasingly integrated into a unified strategic architecture in which the economics of sanctions occupies the coercive pole.

The quantitative dimension of decoupling and the formation of blocs has become the subject of a substantial body of recent empirical research. The study by B. Bonadio, Z. Huo, A. Levchenko and their co-authors on the quantification of decoupling and the play with blocs [10] and the analysis by G. Gopinath, P.-O. Gourinchas and their co-authors of changing global linkages and a possible new Cold War [11] demonstrate that the fragmentation of the world economy proceeds along the lines of geopolitical alignment, generating measurable costs and a redistribution of trade flows. This perspective is complemented by O. Plotnikov, whose works on the risk dimension of the fragmentation of the world economy [12] and on the non-economic factors of the international movement of capital [13] show that access to capital and technology is increasingly determined by geopolitical rather than by purely economic criteria. The institutional-regulatory instrument of containment is examined by I. Fergusson, P. Kerr and C. Casey in their study of the American export-control system and the Export Control Reform Act of 2018 [14], which reveals the legal architecture through which the United States projects control over global technological flows.

The transformation of the world economy toward a bloc-based architecture and multipolarity is analyzed by L. Kisterskyi in his work on the preconditions for the formation of a multipolar global economy [15], as well as in research on international strategies of economic

development [16] and in the broader study of the minefields of international economic policy [17], which situate the politics of containment within the wider context of the struggle of countries to preserve their capacity for development. The return of the developmental state and of active industrial policy, a paradoxical consequence of containment, is illuminated by Yu. Kindzerskyi in his research on inclusive industrialization [18] and on deindustrialization and its determinants [19], as well as by L. Kisterskyi, V. Marmazov and I. Piliiaiev in the study of the modernization experience of South Korea [20], while the response of China itself, its dual-circulation development model, is examined by S. A. Javed and co-authors [21]. Overall, the reviewed literature reveals a convergence between the geoeconomic, statecraft and industrial-policy paradigms, requiring the joint consideration of the coercive and the constructive instruments of economic containment.

The distinction between economic diplomacy and economic statecraft is conceptually important for the present analysis. While economic diplomacy primarily refers to the conduct of international economic relations through negotiation, representation, trade promotion, investment facilitation, and the conclusion of international economic agreements, economic statecraft encompasses the deliberate use of economic instruments as means of pursuing foreign-policy and security objectives. In this broader understanding, sanctions, export controls, investment restrictions, embargoes, technology controls, politically motivated tariffs, conditional development assistance, and the strategic use of financial infrastructure constitute instruments of economic statecraft rather than of economic diplomacy. Accordingly, the contemporary policy of containment should be interpreted not simply as a manifestation of economic diplomacy but as a comprehensive system of economic statecraft, within which diplomatic, regulatory, financial and technological instruments are integrated into a single architecture of strategic influence.

The purpose of this article is to substantiate a systemic interpretation of the contemporary politics of containment in the U.S.-China rivalry as a security policy realized by economic means, and to demonstrate that its principal instruments, regulatory supply-chain controls, coercive decoupling, the economics of sanctions and industrial policy, constitute a single architecture of economic containment. Within such a framework, the economics of sanctions is interpreted as the coercive pole of a continuum of economic statecraft, and the return of the developmental state as a systemic consequence of containment. The study aims to reveal the position of the middle powers within this architecture and the implications of the bloc-based transformation of the world economy for Ukraine.

RESEARCH RESULTS

The point of departure for the analysis of contemporary containment is the conceptual shift from a firm-centered toward a state-centered paradigm of the governance of global production networks and global value chains. The traditional logic, built around the cost-capability structure and the strategic coupling of firms with regional assets, becomes analytically insufficient when the geography of production is determined by the geopolitical decisions of states. This shift provides the theoretical grounding for why containment today is realized precisely through production networks rather than through trade barriers alone. National-security interests increasingly dictate economic policy, thereby transforming the very concept of the economy-security nexus: this is an inversion of the previous logic, in which security was treated as an external factor relative to economic rationality.

Regulatory supply-chain controls constitute the central instrument of this new architecture. They combine bilateral and multilateral alliances to promote trade while imposing simultaneous sanctions on economic competitors. This instrument differs qualitatively from classical tariff barriers and unilateral sanctions by its network nature: it operates through allies

and affects not only the target country but also third states. It is precisely this character that the contemporary policy of containing China in the semiconductor sector possesses, a policy realized through pressure upon Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and the Netherlands. The analytical category of coercive coupling and decoupling describes the imposition by states of geospatial strategies, re-shoring and friend-shoring, under the pressure of the security interests of the hegemon, thereby reconceptualizing the classical notion of strategic coupling: previously firm-regional, it has now become interstate and coercive.

Washington's rhetorical shift from decoupling to de-risking reflects both the objective impossibility of a complete rupture with China and the recognition of its costs. The new aim is to restrain the competitor's technological development and reduce undue dependence, rather than disconnect entirely. This is fundamental to understanding the current phase of containment: it is not a blockade but a selective restraint on critical technologies. At the same time, the bipolar model of the United States versus China proves analytically insufficient. The middle powers of East Asia possess their own economic-security calculations and pursue balancing and dual-footing strategies that are not reducible to subordination to either pole. The effectiveness of the containment of China, therefore, depends not on the will of Washington but on the readiness of the allies to bear its costs, a subject of constant diplomatic bargaining.

As an analytical field, the economics of sanctions examines how the intentional curtailment of cross-border economic ties, whether in the movement of goods, the flow of finance and currency, or access to technology and investment, is turned into a lever of political pressure, and it assesses what such curtailment costs, how far it achieves its declared ends, and how its burden is distributed between the initiating and the targeted economy. Rather than treating restriction as mere punishment, this literature reads it as a way of reshaping another state's decision calculus, positioned at the coercive end of the spectrum of economic statecraft. Seen through this lens, export controls, the denial of access to advanced technologies, and financial restrictions are not discrete measures but expressions of a single underlying operation: the deliberate turning of interdependence into leverage, whereby the architecture of global production and financial networks is itself made to serve as a means of pressure.

So understood, the economics of sanctions finds its place within the wider system of economic containment. By economic containment, we mean a deliberate effort to slow the accumulation of a rival's power by shaping the economic environment in which it operates, drawing on restrictive *levers (sanctions, export controls, curbs on access to technology and capital)* alongside enabling ones (*conditional assistance, investment, the rewarding of reforms in third states*). Here, the economics of sanctions supplies the coercive component, whereas regulatory supply-chain controls furnish its networked, alliance-based mode of delivery. What gives contemporary containment its distinctive logic is the joining of these two registers: restrictive measures press directly upon the rival, while conditional aid and investment draw uncommitted states toward the initiator, and together they contract the space within which the rival can operate.

For the analysis of the U.S.-China rivalry, this conclusion is of key importance. China's semiconductor containment combines both poles: negative instruments (*export controls on advanced chips and lithography equipment*) and positive ones (*industrial subsidies under the CHIPS Act and friend-shoring incentives for allies*). The economics of sanctions thus ceases to be an isolated punitive practice and becomes an organic element of a strategy of structural power, within which the restraint of the rival and the attraction of partners constitute two sides of a single architecture of containment. It is precisely this integration that explains why the middle powers find themselves in a position of coercive balancing: they are simultaneously the objects of positive incentives and the instruments of negative restraint directed against China.

The recognition that the effectiveness of containment depends not on the will of the hegemon but on the readiness of allies to bear its costs shifts the analytical focus from the bipolar axis of the United States and China toward the intermediate stratum of states that neither initiate the architecture of restraint nor constitute its principal target. These are the middle powers, states of the second order whose economic weight and technological position render them indispensable links in global value chains, yet insufficient to autonomously define the rules of the geoeconomic order. Their behavior cannot be deduced from the logic of the two poles, since they possess their own economy-security calculations, and it is precisely the configuration of these calculations that determines whether a given instrument of containment is realized or remains a declaration. An adequate analysis of contemporary containment, therefore, requires a typology of the strategies through which the middle powers position themselves within its architecture.

The first strategy may be designated as compliant alignment. Within it, a middle power accepts the hegemon's security logic and integrates its own supply-chain policy into the architecture of restraint, calculating that the costs of participation are outweighed by the benefits of remaining within the protected technological bloc and the security guarantees that accompany it. This strategy is characteristic of states whose dependence on the hegemon in the sphere of security exceeds their economic dependence on the target of containment, so that the loss of access to the rival's market is perceived as an acceptable price for preserving the alliance. Yet even compliant alignment is not unconditional: it is accompanied by a continuous bargaining overcompensation, in the form of industrial subsidies, guaranteed investment or privileged access to the technologies of the hegemon, so that the participation of the ally is purchased rather than commanded.

The second strategy is that of hedging, or dual-footing. Here, a middle power declines to make a definitive choice between the poles and instead seeks to preserve economic ties with the target of containment while formally adhering to the hegemon's restrictive regime. The instruments of this strategy include the selective implementation of export controls, the toleration of indirect trade channels, and the maintenance of rhetorical neutrality that permits the state to present itself to each pole as a reliable partner. Dual-footing is rational for states whose economic dependence upon the target is comparable to their security dependence upon the hegemon, so that a definitive alignment with either pole would entail unacceptable losses. This strategy, however, is inherently unstable, since the intensification of the rivalry progressively narrows the space of neutrality and compels the state either toward alignment or toward a more overt reorientation.

The third strategy may be termed extractive positioning. Within it, a middle power exploits its indispensability in critical value chains to extract concessions from both poles simultaneously, converting its structural position into a source of geoeconomic rent. A state that controls a key node of the semiconductor chain, whether in design, in fabrication, or in the production of the equipment and materials without which fabrication is impossible, is able to transform the very pressure of containment into leverage, demanding investment, technology transfer or security commitments as the price of its cooperation. Extractive positioning differs from hedging in that it is not a defensive preservation of neutrality but an active monetization of scarcity, available only to those middle powers that occupy a genuinely irreplaceable position within the architecture of production.

The fourth strategy is that of autonomous reorientation, whereby a middle power, judging the costs of participation in the architecture of containment to be excessive or its own long-term interests to be incompatible with the logic of the hegemon, undertakes a deliberate diversification of its economic ties in the direction of the alternative pole or of a third grouping.

This strategy is characteristic of states whose economic dependence on the target of containment substantially exceeds their security dependence on the hegemon, or that perceive an opportunity in the bloc-based architecture to elevate their own regional standing. Autonomous reorientation is the least common of the four strategies, since it presupposes both a high tolerance of risk and the availability of a credible alternative, yet its very possibility disciplines the hegemon, compelling it to moderate the costs it imposes upon its allies lest their reorientation accelerate the fragmentation it seeks to control. These four strategies do not constitute mutually exclusive categories but rather ideal types, between which real states oscillate depending upon the sector, the moment and the balance of their dependencies. A single middle power may pursue compliant alignment in the most sensitive segments of the semiconductor chain while hedging in adjacent sectors and adopting an extractive position with respect to a particular irreplaceable technology. It is precisely this internal heterogeneity in the strategies of the middle powers that renders the architecture of containment inherently negotiated rather than commanded, and explains why its realization is never automatic but always the outcome of continuous diplomatic bargaining over the distribution of its costs. The position of any given middle power within this typology is not fixed but is itself a variable, responsive to the intensity of the rivalry, to the credibility of the alternative pole, and to the compensations offered by the hegemon. For the theory of economic containment, this conclusion signifies that the analysis cannot rest at the level of the intentions of the initiating state but must descend to the level of the incentive structures of the intermediate stratum, upon whose responses the effectiveness of the entire architecture ultimately depends.

A paradoxical consequence of the containment of China has been the reincarnation of the developmental-state model and the return of active industrial policy in the countries of the liberal core. The geopolitical context legitimizes state capitalism and industrial policy in states where they had earlier been dismantled under the pressure of liberal orthodoxy. What, in the 1980s, was deemed unfair competition in relation to Japan is today being revived as a call for strategic autonomy. The very liberal model of the United States is being transformed toward state interventionism, a shift given legislative form in the U.S. Innovation and Competition Act, passed by the Senate in 2021, whose core provisions were subsequently enacted in the CHIPS and Science Act of 2022. Deglobalization, contrary to expectations, does not weaken but strengthens the role of the state in the governance of production networks.

The transition from global integration toward trade blocs redefines the architecture of the world economy. The empirical quantification of decoupling demonstrates that the fragmentation of trade flows proceeds along the lines of geopolitical alignment, generating measurable costs and a redistribution of value chains. The response of China, its dual-circulation development model, represents an attempt to reduce dependence on external markets and technologies while preserving external openness where it remains advantageous. As a result, a bloc-based architecture of the world economy is formed in which economic interaction is increasingly mediated by geopolitical belonging, and in which the capacity of a country for development depends on its position within the architecture of the global competition of the great powers. For Ukraine, this bloc-based architecture possesses direct practical significance. The strategy of postwar reconstruction and integration into global value chains will unfold precisely under conditions of economic containment and the fragmentation of the world economy. An understanding of the logic of coercive decoupling, of the economics of sanctions and of the return of industrial policy allows Ukraine to construct a differentiated strategy of integration into the Western technological bloc while preserving its capacity for development and avoiding the reproduction of a new form of technological dependence.

CONCLUSIONS AND PROSPECTS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The conducted analysis allows the contemporary politics of containment in the U.S.-China rivalry to be interpreted as a security policy realized by economic means, whose principal instruments, regulatory supply-chain controls, coercive decoupling, the economics of sanctions and industrial policy, constitute a single architecture of economic containment. The central conclusion consists in confirming the hypothesis that modern containment is realized primarily through the governance of global production networks rather than through trade barriers alone, and that the rhetorical shift from decoupling toward de-risking reflects the transition from the aim of a complete rupture to that of a selective restraint in critical technologies.

The introduction of the category of the economics of sanctions and the demonstration of its place within the system of economic containment reveal that sanctions, export controls and conditional access to technology and capital constitute the coercive pole of a single continuum of economic statecraft, at the opposite, constructive pole of which lie conditional aid, investment and industrial subsidies. The integration of these poles constitutes the deep logic of contemporary containment, within which the middle powers find themselves in a position of coercive balancing, being simultaneously the objects of positive incentives and the instruments of negative restraint. A paradoxical consequence of this architecture has been the return of the developmental state and the transformation of the United States' liberal model toward state interventionism.

The analysis of the intermediate stratum of the world economy permits a conclusion that qualifies the very notion of hegemonic control. The architecture of containment, however comprehensive its design, is realized only to the degree that the middle powers consent to bear its costs, and this consent is neither given once nor given freely: it is the shifting outcome of a continuous bargaining in which each state, according to the configuration of its security and economic dependencies, selects among the strategies of compliant alignment, hedging, extractive positioning and autonomous reorientation. The effectiveness of containment is therefore not a property of the hegemon's intentions but a function of the incentive structures of the intermediate stratum, and it is precisely the heterogeneity of these structures that renders the bloc-based architecture of the world economy internally unstable and perpetually renegotiated. For a middle power, and Ukraine will enter the postwar order precisely as one, this signifies that a position within the architecture of containment is not assigned but constructed, and that the preservation of the capacity for development depends upon the deliberate cultivation of one's own indispensability rather than upon passive alignment with the stronger pole. The analysis demonstrates that shadow economic diplomacy should not be treated as an alternative to economic statecraft but rather as one of its functional dimensions, complementing formal diplomatic, financial and regulatory instruments within a unified architecture of strategic economic influence. Further research should focus on a comparative analysis of the strategies of the middle powers within the architecture of containment and on developing practical recommendations for Ukraine's integration into global value chains while preserving its capacity for development.

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**ПОЛІТИКА СТРИМУВАННЯ
В КОНТЕКСТІ ПРОТИСТОЯННЯ США І КНР:
ІСТОРИЧНІ ПАРАЛЕЛІ У ТРАНСФОРМАЦІЇ ТІНЬОВИХ
МЕХАНІЗМІВ ЕКОНОМІЧНОЇ ДИПЛОМАТІЇ**

Анотація. Метою статті є обґрунтування концептуальної рамки сучасної політики стримування у протистоянні США і КНР, що, на основі історичних порівнянь та узагальнень наявного досвіду, інтерпретується не як торговельна, а як безпекова політика, реалізована економічними засобами. Гіпотеза полягає в тому, що сучасна політика стримування реалізується передусім через управління глобальними виробничими мережами та глобальними ланцюгами доданої вартості, а не через класичні тарифні бар'єри, і що така трансформація породжує феномен примусового переформатування та розриву ланцюгів створення вартості і ланцюгів поставок, у межах якого середні держави змушені балансувати між безпековим тиском гегемона та власними економічними інтересами. Показано, що риторичний зсув від декаплінгу до зниження ризиків відображає об'єктивну неможливість повного розриву США із Китаєм, тож нинішня фаза стримування є не блокадою, а селективним стримуванням у критичних технологіях. Окрему увагу приділено категорії економіки санкцій та її місцю в системі економічного стримування, оскільки санкції, експортний контроль та обумовлений доступ до технологій і капіталу становлять примусовий полюс тіньової економічної дипломатії. Обґрунтовано, що геополітичний контекст легітимізує повернення девелопменталістської держави та активної промислової політики, а деглобалізація не послаблює, а посилює роль держави в управлінні виробничими мережами, формуючи нову, блокову архітектуру світової економіки.

Ключові слова: економічна дипломатія; економічне суперництво; економічні санкції; примусовий декаплінг; мілітаризована взаємозалежність; глобальні виробничі мережі; глобальні ланцюги доданої вартості; контроль ланцюгів постачання; експортний контроль; індустріальна політика; напівпровідники; критичні технології; технологічний суверенітет.

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