

**PRESIDENT BIDEN'S US-CHINA  
GUARDRAILS CONCEPT:  
IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES**

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## Synopsis in English, [Chinese](#), [French](#) and [Spanish](#)

*The bilateral relationship between China and the United States is the most important geopolitical force in the world today as it will shape the present and future in innumerable ways. The Biden administration has made numerous attempts to implement mutually agreed 'rules of the road' with Beijing, referring to it as 'guardrails'. Biden has also attempted to apply historical lessons from the Cold War period and the presidency of Gerald Ford (1974-1977) in particular. During the Ford administration, there were multi-faceted geopolitical tensions between the United States and the West on the one hand and the Soviet Union on the other. Most of these issues with the Soviet Union were very similar to the current challenges with China. However, unlike during the Cold War, the Biden administration has not been able to implement any type of meaningful guardrails in the US-China relationship. Part of this is due to the lack of official documentation and policy articulation of the guardrails concept from the Biden administration. The other is the lack of Chinese interest and trust. It is also unclear if China and the United States have the same vision of the future international order.*

### **Chinese:**

#### **拜登总统的美中护栏概念：如何实施面临挑战**

中国与美国之间的双边关系是当今世界上最重要的地缘政治力量，它将以无数种方式塑造现在和未来。拜登政府曾多次试图与北京达成相互同意的被称之为“护栏”的“道路规则”。拜登还试图应用冷战时期，尤其是杰拉尔德·福特总统（1974-1977）在任时期的历史教训。在福特总统任内，美国和西方与苏联之间存在多方面的地缘政治紧张局势，与当前美中关系面临的挑战非常相似。然而，与冷战时期不同，拜登政府未能在美中关系中实施任何有意义的护栏，一方面是由于拜登政府未提供有关护栏概念的正式文件和政策表述，另一方面是因为中国缺乏兴趣和信任。此外，中国和美国对未来的国际秩序是否有相同的愿景也尚不清楚。

### **French:**

#### **LE CONCEPT DE GARDE-FOUS DES RELATIONS SINO-AMERICAINES DU PRESIDENT BIDEN: LES DÉFIS DE LA MISE EN ŒUVRE**

Les relations bilatérales entre la Chine et les États-Unis constituent aujourd'hui la principale force géopolitique globale et façonneront le présent et l'avenir d'innombrables manières. L'administration Biden a fait de nombreuses tentatives pour mettre en œuvre des « règles de conduite » mutuellement convenues avec Pékin, les qualifiant de « garde-fous ». Biden a également tenté d'appliquer les leçons historiques de la période de la guerre froide et de la présidence de Gerald Ford (1974-1977) en particulier. Sous l'administration Ford, il

existait des tensions géopolitiques multidimensionnelles entre les États-Unis et l'Occident d'une part, et l'Union soviétique de l'autre. La plupart des problèmes avec l'Union soviétique étaient très similaires aux défis actuels avec la Chine. Cependant, contrairement à la guerre froide, l'administration Biden n'a pas été en mesure de mettre en place des garde-fous significatifs dans les relations avec la Chine. Cela est dû en partie au manque de documentation officielle et d'articulation politique du concept de garde-fous de la part de l'administration Biden, tout comme au manque d'intérêt et de confiance côté chinois. Il est par ailleurs difficile de savoir si la Chine et les États-Unis partagent la même vision du futur ordre international.

*Spanish:*

### **CONCEPTO DE BARANDILLAS DEL PRESIDENTE BIDEN ESTADOS UNIDOS-CHINA: DESAFÍOS DE IMPLEMENTACIÓN**

La relación bilateral entre China y Estados Unidos es la fuerza geopolítica más importante del mundo hoy en día, ya que moldeará el presente y el futuro de innumerables maneras. La administración Biden ha hecho numerosos intentos de implementar “reglas de tránsito” mutuamente acordadas con Beijing, refiriéndose a ellas como “barandillas”. Biden también ha intentado aplicar lecciones históricas del período de la Guerra Fría y de la presidencia de Gerald Ford (1974-1977) en particular. Durante la administración Ford, hubo tensiones geopolíticas multifacéticas entre Estados Unidos y Occidente, por un lado, y la Unión Soviética, por el otro. La mayoría de estos problemas con la Unión Soviética eran muy similares a los desafíos actuales con China. Sin embargo, a diferencia de lo ocurrido durante la Guerra Fría, la administración Biden no ha podido implementar ningún tipo de barreras significativas en la relación entre Estados Unidos y China. Parte de esto se debe a la falta de documentación oficial y de articulación de políticas del concepto de barreras de seguridad por parte de la administración Biden. La otra es la falta de interés y confianza de China. Tampoco está claro si China y Estados Unidos tienen la misma visión del futuro orden internacional.

## **Executive Summary**

1. US President Biden's initial grand bargain concept was central to his strategic vision for the US-China relationship, a likely reason for his proposed guardrails in 2021.
2. In July 2022, Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs Wang Yi downplayed the relevance of Biden's guardrails and stated that the three China-US Joint Communiqués from 1972, 1979 and 1982 are already the most reliable guardrails for the two countries.
3. China appears to distrust the Biden administration's approach on the grounds that it is designed to limit China's freedom of action and force Beijing to play by America's rules that prioritise Washington's interests over Beijing's.
4. In February 2023, China held security talks with Japan for the first time in four years. By the end of March, a defence hotline between the Japanese Self-Defence Forces and People's Liberation Army had already been established.
5. When the Helsinki Act of 1975 between the United States and Soviet Union is directly compared to the China-US guardrails concept proposed by the Biden administration, fundamental differences become clear.
6. In the 1970s, the United States and Soviet Union had been enemies for decades during the post-World War II period. The two had separate geopolitical blocs with nearly mutually exclusive economic, trade and educational systems.
7. The United States was still able to conduct complex, sustained negotiations from 1972 to 1975 with the Soviet Union to establish Cold War-era guardrails across political and military affairs, trade, scientific cooperation and human rights.
8. These areas are virtually identical to the current challenges in the China-US bilateral relationship that the Biden administration has attempted to unsuccessfully construct guardrails around.

9. Biden's unliteral establishment of national security guardrails around America's own advanced semiconductor sector while overtly referring to China as the key justification has likely intensified concerns around the China-US guardrails concept in Beijing.
  
10. These various challenges are symptomatic of a broader issue in China-US relations. China and the United States have completely different and mutually incompatible forms of government and views on the structure of the international order.