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Concours externe et interne pour l'accès à l'emploi de secrétaire des affaires étrangères (cadre général) au titre de l'année 2025

Épreuve écrite d'admissibilité

Jeudi 26 septembre 2024

Anglais

Épreuve de langue obligatoire

Durée totale de l'épreuve : 3 heures - Coefficient : 2
Toute note globale inférieure à 10 sur 20 est éliminatoire
Barème de notation : composition en anglais 12 points ; traduction en français 8 points
Aucun dictionnaire n'est autorisé.

Composition

Composition en anglais à partir d'une question rédigée dans cette même langue, liée à l'actualité
(500 mots avec une tolérance de plus ou moins 10%)

Sujet

Can we still talk about an international order?

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Traduction en français

Traduction en français d'un texte rédigé en anglais

TEXTE AU VERSO

The tech wars are about to enter a fiery new phase

America, China and the battle for supremacy

Apr 25th 2024|Washington, DC

FLOWS OF INFORMATION and energy underpin all economic activity, and advanced technologies support both. Hence the sky-high stakes in the tech wars between America and China. Started during Donald Trump's first term in office, between 2017 and 2021, they have continued under Joe Biden. China's leader, Xi Jinping, bridles at America's export controls on "chokehold technologies". The struggle is reshaping relationships and supply chains the world over. And its costs are mounting. Estimates vary, but the IMF reckons that the elimination of high-tech trade across rival blocs could cost as much as 1.2% of global GDP each year—about $1trn.

Whether China or America controls energy and information technologies is an "ethno-civilisational question", says Evan Ellis of the Army War College. The temperature of the confrontation is likely to rise over the coming years. Neither Mr Biden nor Mr Trump will shrink from challenging China, perhaps the issue which enjoys the highest level of bipartisan support in Washington. And for China to back down from what it sees as its rightful place in the global order is unthinkable for Mr Xi.

The next stage of the tech wars will play out in two major arenas. One is chipmaking, which creates the world's information-processing infrastructure, including the one that trains and runs artificially intelligent software. Any degree of Chinese control over the production of chips is intolerable to America. The other is green technology, as its components may become the backbone of the entire global economy. For China the strength of its companies in this arena is not just a natural consequence of two decades of focused industrial policy, but a confirmation of its important role as a global leader.

At the moment the battle is over apps. On April 23rd Congress passed a bill asking the Chinese owners of TikTok, a video platform used by 170m Americans, to sell up in 270 days or face a ban. Days before Chinese authorities forced Apple to drop WhatsApp and Threads, platforms owned by Meta, from its Chinese app store. But despite the outcries, apps are a second-order concern as they require chips and energy to run—not the reverse.

Consider the current positions of the two countries. America is pushing chipmakers to expand cutting-edge production on its shores. On April 8th the government announced $6.6bn in subsidies for Taiwan's TSMC for three new fabs in Arizona. On April 15th came $6.4bn for South Korea's Samsung to build fabs in Texas. The moves fall under its $280bn Chips and Science Act, an industrial policy introduced in 2022, which incentivises the creation of fabs and the training of staff for them. Also in America's toolkit is the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), a $369bn green-subsidy package passed in 2022. It supports domestic production of green gear through tax credits. Meanwhile, America maintains high tariffs on Chinese solar panels and EVs, of 14.25% and 25% respectively.

China has nonetheless raced ahead in green tech. Longi is the world's largest solar-panel manufacturer; CATL is the largest battery maker and BYD is wrestling with Tesla for the title of the world's largest maker of EVs. Chinese chipmaking has not panned out so spectacularly, however, despite government subsidies of about $150bn over the past ten years. That is to some degree a measure of America's success in blocking the flow of chipmaking technology into the country over the past two years.

So what next when it comes to chipmaking? The first casualty in the tech wars was Huawei. It was the company on which the Trump administration honed the export controls that are now used on China as a whole. The question is what comes after America's election in November. Whoever wins, the next president will almost certainly launch a new, Huawei-style campaign against other Chinese tech firms. This is partly because China hawks will pack any new American cabinet.

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