

Sullivan: Tariffs not a focus in next week's China talks



BY STEVEN OVERLY | 03/12/2021 01:41 PM EST

The U.S. does not plan to focus on the tariffs and export controls imposed on China when senior officials gather for their first in-person meeting next week, national security adviser Jake Sullivan said Friday.

"This is our effort to communicate clearly to the Chinese government how the United States intends to proceed at a strategic level, what we believe our fundamental interests and values are, and what our concerns with their activities are," Sullivan said during the White House press briefing.

"I don't expect that, for example, the phase one trade deal is going to be a major topic of conversation next week," Sullivan said.

More about that meeting: Sullivan and Secretary of State Antony Blinken will meet on March 18 in Anchorage, Alaska, with Chinese diplomat Yang Jiechi, the director of China's Office of the Central Commission for Foreign Affairs, and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi.

U.S. officials plan to raise concerns about China's behavior toward Hong Kong and Taiwan, which many see as anti-democratic, as well as human rights violations against Uighur Muslims. The U.S. has designated China's actions against Uighurs as genocide. Sullivan also said that security concerns along China's border with India and in the East China Sea were likely to arise.

Chinese tech concerns will have their moment: "We will communicate that the United States is going to take steps in terms of what we do on technology to ensure that our technology is not being used in ways that are inimical to our values or adverse to our security," Sullivan said.

But the Biden administration has said repeatedly it wants to tackle grievances about China's trade practices and technology ambitions in concert with its allies, namely Europe. Those conversations need to mature before the U.S. confronts China more directly, Sullivan said.

"We have more work to do with our allies and partners to come up with a common approach, a joint approach, before we go sit down point by point with the Chinese government on these issues," Sullivan said.

"We will also want to bring other key representatives, senior economic representatives of the Biden administration, into those conversations at the point in time when they're appropriate to occur," he added.

The Trump hangover: Former President Donald Trump placed tariffs on more than \$350 billion worth of Chinese goods as part of his trade war.

His administration inked a phase one trade deal that required Beijing to increase its purchase of U.S. agricultural products over two years, although data show that China has already fallen behind in fulfilling its commitments for the first year.

Trump also imposed export controls that prohibit U.S. companies from selling certain cutting-edge technologies to Chinese firms with suspected ties to the government or military. Most notably, Trump used executive orders and export restrictions to hamper China's large technology and telecom companies, including ByteDance and Huawei.

The Biden administration has said it is reviewing those policies as it cements its own strategic approach to China.

Natasha Korecki contributed to this report.

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