

# THE US STEPS UP AGAINST CHINA - EDITORIALS - HINDUSTAN TIMES

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed & developing countries on India's interests

Jul 15, 2020-Wednesday

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China has developed a reckless track record, of antagonising country after country, with little regard for consequences. The only country China is wary of acting against is the United States (US). This is why Washington's announcement of measures against the Chinese regime in the past few weeks is noteworthy. The US formally announced on Monday that it did not recognise China's claims on submerged shoals and reefs in the South China Sea (SCS), diluting Washington's traditional stance of remaining neutral in third party territorial disputes. The US foreshadowed this by its earlier statements blaming the Chinese aggression for the situation in Ladakh. Washington has also imposed sanctions against individual Chinese officials involved in its gulags for Uighur minority members. It also took measures, against China's repressive moves in Hong Kong. The US' actions against China on the economic front are equally important. It is now expected that a bilateral US-China agreement on accounting standards will fall apart. This will result in many Chinese firms being forced out of US capital markets and stock exchanges, a form of financial decoupling.

Superpowers on a collision course is a recipe for global war, which is why the US and China tend to pull their punches against each other. The US preferred to attack the Chinese claim on the SCS on a legal point, namely that international law does not allow countries to stake territorial claims on the basis of partially submerged reefs and rocks. It avoided going after the genuine islands that China has illegally captured. Nonetheless, the US has laid the basis for potentially more assertive warship movements inside Chinese-claimed waters.

In the last 15 years, the world has seen Washington blow hot and cold in its responses to Beijing's assertiveness. Barack Obama's administration was willing to sacrifice strategic interests in return for cooperation on issues such as the climate crisis. President Donald Trump has wobbled on the security side when China seemed willing to grant trade concessions. Now, the US is not interested in safeguarding any element of its relationship from the bitter strategic relations. However, there should be no doubt as to who is to blame for this — Beijing. The international community has been more than accommodative of China's aspirations. Over the past few years, and especially the past few months, it is evident Beijing sees its interests best

advanced by using its power to instil fear rather than admiration.

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