

SKYROCKETING TENSIONS: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON U.S.-CHINA TIES

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

The U.S. government's decision to [bar passenger planes from China](#) from June 16 is but another instance of rising tensions between the two countries. A trade war which President Donald Trump launched in 2018 is yet to be resolved fully. In recent months, Mr. Trump and other officials in the administration had attacked China over its handling of the [COVID-19 pandemic](#). The U.S. has also decided to end Hong Kong's special trade status in protest against Beijing's move to introduce a new national security law for the Special Administrative Region. Repeated targeting of China by Washington and Beijing's retaliatory moves make it look like the world's largest and second largest economies have entered into a new cold war. Administration officials say the decision on flights is in response to China's refusal to allow U.S. airlines to resume flights to the country. China had introduced restrictions on international flights in March, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, and most of those curbs are still in place. Disputes such as this could be resolved through talks and cooperation. China has already sent signals of de-escalation, allowing foreign airlines to resume flights on a limited scale starting June 8. Whether or not Mr. Trump has a rethink, the larger problem is the U.S.'s overall approach towards China, which has taken an increasingly hostile turn in the last four years.

From trade and technology to the pandemic and Hong Kong, the battle lines have been drawn — China, which the Pentagon called “a revisionist power” in 2018, is the main rival of Washington, a position which the Soviet Union held during the Cold War. Ties between China and the U.S. are still not as bad as they were between the Soviet Union and the U.S. Beijing and Washington are still economically and financially entangled. The world is not divided into two ideological blocs, as it had been during the Cold War. The possibility of a military confrontation is very low. But the era of cooperation, peaceful trade and pragmatism that had defined U.S.-China partnership since President Richard Nixon's reset in the 1970s seems to have made way for an aggressive leadership contest and deepening mutual mistrust. And with Mr. Trump desperately looking for an enemy to blame for the misfortunes that fell on America in an election year that has been battered by the pandemic and the deepest economic downturn since the Great Depression, tensions with China are expected to skyrocket in the coming months. Washington wanted an enemy and it found it in China. Unless the leaders of both countries change their course and rebuild the lost mutual confidence, a new kind of cold war would be forced upon the world.

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