

Cold War II: U.S. and China

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Cold War II

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The first decade of the 21st century witnessed invasions and change of regimes in Afghanistan and Iraq without any solid reason by the US and its allies. The second decade is more violent and Syria is facing a civil war with the clear interference of Western powers. Iran is being threatened and Pakistan is facing continuous violations against its national sovereignty in the shape of drone attacks.

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The Cold War term was used for the first time in 1945 by George Orwell, an English writer, in his article, ‘You and the Atomic Bomb’. It denotes indirect conflict between two atomic superpowers — the United States (US) and the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). Their hostility started soon after the end of World War II. Although both powers fought as allies in that war, they considered each side a danger for world peace after the victory of the allied forces. The US feared Soviet expansionism and thought the Soviets would control the whole world. Communists were also not happy with US interference in world affairs and its growing military power. The Cold War ended with the dismemberment of the USSR, following great losses in the Afghan war.

The world was called ‘uni-polar’ from then on and the US became free to interfere and dominate it. The first decade of the 21st century witnessed invasions and change of regimes in Afghanistan and Iraq without any solid reason by the US and its allies. The second decade is more violent and Syria is facing a civil war with the clear interference of Western powers. Iran is being threatened and Pakistan is facing continuous violations against its national sovereignty in the shape of drone attacks.

China, yet another communist state without an expansionist policy, has emerged as another world power. Although the Chinese economy started growth from 1949 onward, in recent years the country has shown enormous progress, covering almost the whole of the world market. The US and China have clarified on a number of occasions in the near past that they are not rivals, but some recent developments and a difference of opinion in several aspects of world affairs give evidence that the second cold war has started, and that too without a declaration.

In 1962, a month-long war (from October 20 to November 20) was fought between India and

China over a number of border disputes, which ended with a decisive victory by China. The war coincided with the US-Cuba missile crisis and, no doubt, the US did not play any direct role in the Indo-China war at that point. However, in the following years India was supported by the US to become a regional power. India also provided political asylum to the Tibetan spiritual and political leader, the Dalai Lama, who escaped to India during the uprising in Tibet in 1959. The Dalai Lama is still a thorn in Indo-Chinese relationship.

India, as a large country and economy, is important for US foreign policy in the region, and growing strategic relations between the US and India during the last few years have alarmed China.

In 2003, when the US was busy with the Iraq war, the Bush administration, on a number of occasions, had said they supported the one-China policy and were against an independent Taiwan. China claims Taiwan is a part of its territory. However, after seven years, the Obama administration in January 2010, announced the sale of \$6 billion worth of Patriot anti-missile systems to Taiwan. Chinese officials on that occasion called the step “a stab in the back”. China cut off military ties with the US soon after the deal.

In September 2011, although denying having sold new F-16 fighter jets, the US made a deal of \$5.85 billion to upgrade Taiwan’s fleet of F-16s. The Chinese deputy foreign minister demanded an immediate cancellation of “the wrong decision”. People’s Daily, a top Chinese newspaper and mouthpiece of China’s Communist Party, called it a “huge mistake” and wrote, “If American politicians feel that the United States can irresponsibly and randomly damage China’s core interests without paying a price, that is a major and huge mistake.”

According to some analysts, the Taliban while they were in power in Afghanistan had nothing to do with the terrorist attacks on the US, and the US had other strategic motives behind the occupation of Afghanistan. One of those motives was to establish bases near the Chinese border. Besides the 11-year long war and the loss of more than 3,000 soldiers of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), no major changes have occurred in Afghanistan. The US has agreed with the Afghan government to maintain military bases in the country until 2014.

China has a dispute over islands in the East China Sea with Japan and tension between the two nations has grown during the last few days. Although the US has not shown a clear position on the dispute, Tokyo is a longtime ally of Washington and under the US-Japan Security Treaty the US is obliged to respond to any attack on Japan or its territory.

Asia is not a limit to this undeclared cold war; in fact, Africa is also witnessing the growing influence of both powers. China is investing \$490 billion in Africa, making the continent the third largest recipient of its Outward Foreign Direct Investment (OFDI), following Asia and Europe.

Recently (in August 2012), US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton visited Africa with a number of executives from leading American companies to assure Africans that the US was interested in investing in the continent. Although late, the US has realised that China benefits from African potential by investing there.

Australia is the third continent where growing rivalry between the two powers can be witnessed. Addressing the Australian parliament during his visit last November, US President Barack Obama announced an agreement between the two nations under which the US

would send an additional 2,500 marines to the port city of Darwin in northern Australia. Both China and the US want to increase their influence in Australia, which is mostly a militarily dependent state. China considers the Australian decision as a sign of joining sides. The arrival of US marines is a sign that the establishment of a land base will take place there and it is considered as a move against China.

War is a misery for humans, it does not matter if it is cold or hot, and the world, especially the US and China, must realise that before it is too late.

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