

Sino-American Trade War is a Struggle for American Supremacy

News:

Recently, China has accused the United States of starting the “biggest trade war in history”. The Trump administration's 25% tariffs affect more than 800 Chinese products worth \$34 billion such as industrial machinery, medical devices and auto parts [1]. Meanwhile, Beijing has promised to respond in kind. Are we really looking at a large-scale trade war or something far worse?

Comment:

The current tiff between Washington and Beijing is not merely about trade. There are numerous other flashpoints between the two countries that could quickly escalate into a new great war. Currency manipulation by Beijing. North Korea's reluctance to acquiesce to US nuclear demands, Taiwan's assertion of independence, China's territorial disputes with its neighbors and tensions with the US navy in the South China Sea are just some of the areas of confrontation.

While some may balk at the prospects of war, others view it as inevitable and part of the rise and fall of great nations. The latter category basis its assessment on the precepts of the transition theory. Advocates of power transition regard the likelihood of war high, whenever a rising power possesses enough strength to challenge the incumbent power in the region for supremacy. In the Asian Pacific, China is the challenger and America is the default power presiding over the existing order.

Viewed from this perspective, the trade war between China and US carries more significance and confirms along with several other flashpoints China's trajectory from a backwater regional power to one that has the propensity to displace America's hegemony. Simply put, America is struggling to contain China within the rules of the existing international system and this is a sign of America's demise as the leading state in the world.

The Trump administration is cognizant of America's weakness and the limitations of the international system to counter the rising challenges of great powers—China, Russia and Europe. In a world transitioning from uni-polarity to multi-polarity rewriting rules is a gambit the Trump administration believes will serve America's interest best. Trump cares little about international trade treaties and trade bodies like the WTO. China can complain all it wants to WTO, but Trump's America will not budge an inch.

From this vantage point, Trump's innuendos of peace with Putin and grievances with traditional allies is quite understandable. Trump believes that a new alliance with Russia can help America stymie the undercurrents of global change, and act as a bulwark against the ascendancy of China and Europe. This fuels Trump's brash attitude towards trade with China and drives his repeated questioning of EU's integrity and NATO's usefulness. All of which signals that Trump is prepared to jettison ties with longstanding allies and recalibrate global relationships.

The opening salvos of a trade war with China and the EU has irked the Europeans so much that they are exploring ways to cement stronger ties with China [2,3]. Trump's America first rhetoric is fast becoming a wakeup call for all global players apart from the Muslim world.

The Islamic world remains oblivious to America's demise, the unravelling of the international system and the re-configuration of global alliances. The current leadership of the Islamic world is mired in subservience to foreign powers unable to rescue its people from subjugation and exploitation. How long will this situation last is entirely dependent on the Muslim Ummah. Allah (swt) says: ﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّىٰ يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنفُسِهِمْ﴾ **“Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves.”** [TMQ: Al-Raad: 11]

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References:

[1] <https://money.cnn.com/2018/07/06/news/economy/us-china-trade-war-tariffs/index.html>

[2] <https://www.dw.com/en/germany-china-seek-closer-alliance-over-trade-spat-with-us/a-44581097>

[3] <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201805/18/WS5afe4562a3103f6866ee93f8.html>