



# The Global Consequences of a Sino-American Cold War

May 20, 2019

by Nouriel Roubini  
of Project Syndicate

What started as a trade war between the United States and China is quickly escalating into a death match for global economic, technological, and military dominance. If the two countries' leaders cannot manage the defining relationship of the twenty-first century responsibly, the entire world will bear the costs of their failure.

NEW YORK – A few years ago, as part of a Western delegation to China, I met President Xi Jinping in Beijing's Great Hall of the People. When addressing us, Xi argued that China's rise would be peaceful, and that other countries – namely, the United States – need not worry about the "Thucydides Trap," so named for the Greek historian who chronicled how Sparta's fear of a rising Athens made war between the two inevitable. In his 2017 book *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides's Trap?*, Harvard University's Graham Allison examines 16 earlier rivalries between an emerging and an established power, and finds that 12 of them led to war. No doubt, Xi wanted us to focus on the remaining four.

Despite the mutual awareness of the Thucydides Trap – and the recognition that history is not deterministic – China and the US seem to be falling into it anyway. Though a hot war between the world's two major powers still seems far-fetched, a cold war is becoming more likely.

The US blames China for the current tensions. Since joining the World Trade Organization in 2001, China has reaped the benefits of the global trading and investment system, while failing to meet its obligations and free riding on its rules. According to the US, China has gained an unfair advantage through intellectual-property theft, forced technology transfers, subsidies for domestic firms, and other instruments of state capitalism. At the same time, its government is becoming increasingly authoritarian, transforming China into an Orwellian surveillance state.

[Click here to read more](#)

© Project Syndicate

— The Sino-American conflict syndrome contains several elements. It is based on a regional status competition, which is increasingly becoming global. — This competition for influence has become combined with an ideological antagonism that has recently become more focused on the US side. — In this sense, the talk of a kind of new Cold War often heard in the American debate is not entirely groundless, despite all the problems and limitations of analogies. Analogies, however, do not replace analysis. The aim of this research paper is to understand this evolving global conflict, the structure of the underlying conflict syndrome, the dimensions and dynamics of the current strategic rivalry and the resulting consequences for international politics.

Home >Opinion >Views >Opinion | The global consequences of a Sino-American cold war. China suspect that the US’s real goal is to prevent them from rising any further or projecting legitimate power and influence abroad. Opinion | The global consequences of a Sino-American cold war. 4 min read . Updated: 21 May 2019, 10:48 PM IST Nouriel Roubini. If care is not taken to avert the “Thucydides Trap”, it could get worse than the US-Russia Cold War. Share Via. Read Full Story. A few years ago, as part of a Western delegation to China, I met President Xi Jinping in Beijing’s Great Hall of the People. For two years, the United States has been engaged in a global confrontation with China, based on the Trump administration’s assessment that the policy of engagement pursued for decades has failed; that the growing assertiveness of China’s authoritarian regime is driving a policy disrespectful of international law, with revisionist designs for the international order; and that China’s government is coercive. — The ingredients for a new type of cold war are present, and this forces the Europeans to take into account the potential consequences of a growing deterioration in Sino-American relations and Europe’s possible refusal to choose sides (the preferred position of the two-thirds of Europeans, according to a recent survey). The Cold War was a geopolitical chess match between the United States and the Soviet Union in order to project their respective ideologies across the globe. — Preserving a civil society that would “give the nation the will to persevere during the difficult days of a long war.” Winning the struggle of ideas against “a corrupt vacuous ideology” destined to fail its people. The Eisenhower-Dulles New Look was not, as some have charged, a policy with only two options—the use of local forces or nuclear threats. In an op-ed, Professor Nouriel Roubini discusses the potential economic effects of a Sino-American Cold War. — A few years ago, as part of a Western delegation to China, I met President Xi Jinping in Beijing’s Great Hall of the People. When addressing us, Xi argued that China’s rise would be peaceful, and that other countries — namely, the United States — need not worry about the “Thucydides Trap,” so named for the Greek historian who chronicled how Sparta’s fear of a rising Athens made war between the two inevitable. In his 2017 book *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides’s Trap?*, Harvard University’s Graham Allison examines 16 earlier rivalries between an emerging and an establishe