



Press Release

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2005 could be seen as first year of US-China cold war

On the eve of the state visit of the Chinese Premier, Mr Hu Jintao, STEPHEN TWIGG, Director of the Foreign Policy Centre, today said:

“There is a growing risk of a new cold war between the US and China, if tensions are not averted.”

“The recent slide in relations between the two countries has set alarm bells ringing amongst moderates on both sides. There is a growing risk of a descent into open geopolitical rivalry. This would affect everything from global free trade to the proliferation of WMD.

“On the US side, there have been efforts to prevent third parties from selling arms to China; heightened constraints on China’s access to strategic resources and technology; a stepping up of the US military presence in East Asia; and a drive to develop a balancing coalition of democratic allies in the region, led by Japan and, it is hoped, India.

“China, meanwhile, is flexing its muscles globally. Military exercises with Russia on an unprecedented scale; demands from the Shanghai Co-operation Organization for the closure of US bases in Central Asia; and an increasing preparedness to stand by unpopular allies in Zimbabwe, Uzbekistan and Sudan are all worrying examples.

“There is an urgent need for a relationship framework with stronger foundations than trade and piecemeal strategic cooperation. The sheer depth of mutual suspicion is such that a couple of catalytic incidents could tip the balance. The two sides need to find a stable settlement over the main conflict drivers - such as Taiwan, and accommodate each other through regional institutions rather than encouraging rivalry among the East Asian powers.

“If China and the US don’t start making conflict prevention their overriding objective over the coming period, 2005 may come to be seen as the first year of the next Cold War.”

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Editor’s Notes

‘Preventing the Next Cold War: A View from Beijing’, authored by Andrew Small is published by the Foreign Policy Centre, a progressive global think tank based in London and Beijing.

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