



# The fault lines of diplomatic recrimination

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## **The Huawei episode raises serious concerns over issues that are germane to international business and trade**

- One of the world's largest telecom companies, Huawei, is at war with a few powerful western nations led by the United States.
- The more recent conviction of a Canadian national Robert Lloyd Schellenberg to death by a court in China for drug trafficking has only aggravated the controversy.
- Significantly, this conviction was based on a retrial that took place after the arrest of Ms. Meng.
- The fact that Canada does not have a death sentence on its statute books complicates relations between the two countries.
- Additionally the recent detention in China of two other Canadian citizens (one, a diplomat on leave) on national security grounds has muddied the waters further.
- The Chinese assessment is that the U.S. is exercised over the growing stature of Huawei and the resultant threat to U.S. technology companies and links this to the action against Ms. Meng.
- It must be remembered that Huawei has overtaken Apple to become the second largest maker of smartphones, and its investments in research and development are growing at a frenetic pace.

## **Need for protocol**

- The conflict between China and the West, especially the U.S., raises serious concerns over issues that are germane to international business and trade.
- The first is its impact on the troubled state of international relations and international law that operates in such cases.
- There is also the issue of the apparent ease and arbitrariness with which a nation determined to outwit a rival can hit the latter hard.

- There does not seem to be an ethical set of rules.
- On the other side, the detention of Ms. Meng was obviously meant to send out a signal not only to China but also to prospective violators of U.S. sanctions.

## **Issue of cybersecurity**

- Another important issue relates to cybersecurity.
- China, along with Russia, has long been suspect in the eyes of the West for spying, the basis for this being proven instances of online attacks and unestablished cases of breaches in western computer systems.
- The issue of the continued fragility of cybersecurity as far as the average computer user is concerned.
- Breaches even in highly protected environments across the globe hardly instil confidence in ordinary customers who have bought devices and follow procedures, often at great expense, to plugging security loopholes in their systems.
- There is, therefore, a growing reluctance on the part of many large corporations to invest more in cybersecurity.
- From this perspective, an emerging philosophy is that security can never be 100%, and that one should not be unduly agitated over inevitable cyberattacks, as long as they do as they do not cause major loss, economic or reputational.
- There is no means to guess the impact of the U.S. action on to-be-released and game-changing 5G technology, and in which Huawei has great stakes.
- China suspects that the anti-Huawei campaign is only at the instance of its competitors to cut it down to size on the eve of the launch of a valuable product.
- But this again is in the realm of speculation.