

The Narrative of “New Cold War” and China’s Response



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20世紀後半の東西冷戦が終わると平和の代わりに「新冷戦」なる用語が登場した。それは主としてアメリカと中国の経済・貿易面の競争関係を指す語として使われているが、果たして中国はこの語をどう受け止めているか。

Abstract

The “New Cold War” has been widely used in the media and academia in recent years to refer to the competitive relationship between the US and China. However, the “New Cold War” is not a recent term and did not start out as a concept of US-China competition. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1992, the term “New Cold War” has been used to refer to US-Russian relations, US-Arabic world/terrorist relations. Since 2010, when China became the world’s second-largest economy, the “New Cold War” narrative has begun to refer to US-China relations and has proliferated in the aftermath of the 2018 US-China trade war. While the narrative of “New Cold War” has been widely spread and used in East Asia, China has responded by “rejecting” and “criticizing” it. This study will analyze how the US academy use the concept of the “New Cold War” and how China rejects its use, to analyze the different strategies and potential reasons for the “competition narrative” between China and the US. The purpose of this study is to provide a thorough understanding of the “New Cold War” narrative, to reject antagonism and decoupling in Asia, and to provide ideas for reconnection across Asia.

Keywords New Cold War, narrative, US-China relation, East Asia

Introduction

The term “New Cold War” has become an inescapable concept when assessing the international strategic environment in East Asia. The research questions for this study are what is the “New Cold War,” how is the New Cold War narrated, and how does China recognize the New Cold War? The arguments of this study can be summarized as follows.

(1) The “New Cold War” is a term that emerged in the post-Cold War period and has existed as a term that refers to the relationship between nations that are in strategic competition with the US, the only world power after the end of the Cold War. Now it mainly refers to US-Russia and US-China relations.

(2) Rather than examining whether the current US-China relationship is a New Cold War or has the

potential to become a New Cold War, or what the differences are between a New Cold War and a Cold War, we should reconsider the meaning of the term “New Cold War”. The term “New Cold War” implies a West-centered mindset.

(3) China, which was included in the New Cold War narrative, was found to have gone through a stage of “rejecting” the term New Cold War and was using it in the sense of “criticizing” it.

Regarding the New Cold War between the US and China, the main concern is whether the relationship between China and the US has entered a New Cold War, and if not, what is the likelihood that it will develop into a New Cold War. Political commentators’ statements and international political scholars’ essays have also focused on whether the US-China competition is a New

Cold War or whether US-China relations have the potential to become a New Cold War.

There is a lot of support for a new Cold War between the US and China in The US political world and in Western public opinion. Trump administration Secretary of State Pompeo is representative of top politicians in the US who judge US-China relations to be currently in a Cold War-like situation. Pompeo has even said in public diplomacy that the threat from China is now beyond the New Cold War.¹ And others, including Australian security expert Alan Dupont², US reporter John Kemp³, and British historian Niall Ferguson⁴, have argued that the US-China is in a New Cold War.

At the same time, however, there is a movement to soften the New Cold War narrative. Blinken, Secretary of State in the Biden administration, appears to be avoiding the New Cold War narrative, saying, “We are determined not to seek a conflict [with China] or a New Cold War, but on the contrary to avoid it.”⁵ I believe that Blinken fully understood that the current international situation makes it less likely that a third country will choose between China and the US. In fact, Richard et al. do not judge the current US-China relationship as the New Cold War. They suggest that most US allies would choose between the US and China to get security and economic benefits from both.⁶

1. Research Background and Previous Studies

Chinese scholars face this situation with two different schools of thought. One is the idea that denies the current US-China relationship is the New Cold War and the possibility of becoming one, and the other is the idea that the New Cold War is a strategy that the US has already invoked and must be prepared to face, recognizing it as a possibility well in advance.

First, there are many studies that deny the New Cold War from 2012 to the present.

Yan and Qi (2012) raised the argument that the US-China competition is not the New Cold War, using the metaphor of “false friends”.⁷ And Zhao (2018) argues that the expression New Cold War should be rejected as an aggravated hostility.⁸ Furthermore, Yu and Ma (2020), while saying that US policy toward China is “colored by the Cold War,” judges that the current US-China relationship cannot be defined as the New Cold War. The reasons for this are explained by “economic integration, historical inertia, and the permeability of the international community.”⁹

Tao (2021) directly addresses the reasons for economic interdependence, weakened ideological disputes, and the absence of camp dichotomization in his article entitled “US-China Relations Are Not the New Cold War.” His main argument is the idea that good relations can be rebuilt between US-China.¹⁰

Some are comparing the current US-China relationship to the Cold War and judging that the current US-China relationship does not meet the conditions of the Cold War. For example, a power vacuum in the international system, irreconcilable conflicts of economic, political, and security interests, ideological confrontations, and differences in cultural and psychological

1 Politico. “Pompeo: Chinese threat may be worse than a ‘Cold War 2.0’” <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/08/12/pompeo-chinese-threat-may-be-worse-than-cold-war-communism-394350/>

2 Alan Dupont. “The US-China Cold War Has Already Started”. The Diplomat. <https://thediplomat.com/2020/07/the-us-china-cold-war-has-already-started/>

3 John Kemp. “United States and China Enter a New Cold War”. Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSKCN24S11E/>

4 Niall Ferguson. “The New Cold War? It’s With China, and It Has Already Begun”. New York Times. <https://cn.nytimes.com/opinion/20191204/china-cold-war/>

5 清宮涼. 米國務長官「衝突や新冷戦は避ける決意」 バイデン政権の対中国戦略. 朝日新聞. <https://www.asahi.com/articles/ASQ5W0BFLQ5VUHBI00H.html>

6 Richard Fontaine and Ely Ratner. “The US-China Confrontation Is Not Another Cold War. It’s Something New”. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/07/02/us-china-confrontation-is-not-another-cold-war-its-something-new/>

7 阎学通, & 漆海霞. (2012). 中美竞争前景: 假朋友而非新冷战. 国际政治科学, (3), 1-23.

8 赵明昊. (2018). 从“新冷战论”看中美关系面临的主要挑战. 现代国际关系(6), 3.

9 于海洋, & 马跃. (2020). 新铁幕抑或新冷战: 中美关系现状及中国应对之道. 社会科学(4), 13.

10 陶文钊. (2021). 中美关系不是“新冷战”. 前线(6), 4.

recognize are the conditions for the establishment of the Cold War, and there is a judgment that the US-China relationship does not meet these conditions (Huang, 2022:76).¹¹

Instead of denying the New Cold War, some scholars advise a positive response, accepting the New Cold War as an already existing Western strategy.

Already since 2013, scholars in China have criticized the expression “New Cold War thinking” when evaluating US policy toward China (Yang, 2013).¹² Based on the composite conflict theory, Yang et al. (2021) explain why the US has launched the New Cold War against China on three fronts: power, institutions, and ideas. They argue that the differences in the system of response to the Covid-19 deepened the systemic antagonism more.¹³

Then there are warmongers like Wang (2021), who present the ample possibility of a New Cold War but argue that there are areas of US-China relations that can be joined if efforts are made.¹⁴ Instead, Zheng (2018) directly states that the Western New Cold War logic is “to make China a second Soviet Union,” and China “should not be afraid of becoming the New Cold War,” while also presenting the possibility of a New Cold War and describing China’s proactive measures to respond.¹⁵

From a practical point of view, it has become meaningless to ask whether we are in a New Cold War or to deny it.

As evidenced by a survey of 100 scholars of various ages in China about the New Cold War between the US and China, the judgment that US-China relations are in a New Cold War has already become mainstream in Chinese academic circles, albeit to a lesser or greater degree. According to the survey, which was conducted

at a research institute of Renmin University of China, more than 60% of Chinese scholars said that the “New Cold War” offensive by the US has begun. About 35% of the scholars said that we are not in a New Cold War, but they agree that relations are growing colder.¹⁶

Therefore, in recent years, “New Cold War thinking” has emerged to the surface as a “narrative,” and Chinese scholars have focused on the “narrative” of the New Cold War. This is consistent with the research question of this study, which starts from the recognition that the “New Cold War” is a strategy already used by the US and will persist, and therefore the nature of such a narrative should be known.

For example, Zhao (2018) recognizes the New Cold War as a kind of “narrative” and argues that the accurate response is to beware of the traps of the West’s narrative and to enhance China’s international narrative capacity. In line with this argument, Feng et al. (2020) recognize the “New Cold War narrative system” as already in existence and discuss how to improve the communicative ability of Chinese media in the international arena.¹⁷

However, when considering the concept of the New Cold War, these studies primarily analyze US-Russia and US-China relations, which have been the focus of recent attention, and do not discuss the New Cold War narrative vis-à-vis the Islamic world. In addition, they do not summarize the essence of the New Cold War narrative as being West-centric, and it is hoped that this study will fill this void.

Like these studies, this study focuses on the New Cold War narrative rather than determining whether it is the New Cold War. This study examines how the New Cold War narrative in the US has changed and how China is responding to the New Cold War narrative and, conversely, how it is using the term New Cold War. This study is significant in three ways: as a supplement to the explanation of the New Cold War narrative, as a

11 黄忠. (2022). “冷战”视角下的中美“新冷战”. 国际论坛, 24(2), 76-99.

12 杨维东. (2013). 新冷战思维下美国大政府趋势及对中国的影响. 理论界, (6), 166-168.

13 杨勇萍 & 潘迎春. (2021). 美国对华“新冷战”的演进逻辑. 国际观察 (02), 49-84.

14 王帆. (2021). 中美关系的未来: 走向“新冷战”抑或战略合作重启?. 中国国际问题研究2021, (001), 102-118

15 郑永年. (2018). 特朗普对中国的新冷战将如何进行. 特区经济(10), 1.

16 环球网. 人大重阳问卷调查百名中国学者, 九成受访者相信: 中国能应对好美国“新冷战”攻势.

<https://m.huanqiu.com/article/9CaKrnrKrkAp/>

17 冯小桐, 荆江. (2020). “新冷战”话语体系下中国国际传播的应对. 对外传播(12), 3.

West-centric judgment of the New Cold War narrative, and as a study of China's response to the New Cold War narrative.

2. Origins and Development of the New Cold War Narrative

While some scholars look for the origins of the term “New Cold War” in the Cold War period (Zhao, 2018:29), this study will explore how the “New Cold War” was narrated from the 1990s to the 2020s, after the end of the Cold War. This study will discuss how the New Cold War was narrated in the 1990s, 2000s, and 2010s.

2.1 *Eager to find new enemy in the end of history*

The 1990s were a triumphant time for the Western world, with the collapse of the Soviet Union after more than 40 years of confrontation, to the point where Fukuyama uttered triumphalist judgments of “the end of history”. Regardless of the implications of Fukuyama's statement about the end of history, this attitude in fact represents what US academics and the US government consider to be a victory and a bright vision for the future.

Yet a world without enemies is impossible, and the conflicts and contradictions that were held hostage by the US-Soviet rivalry during the Cold War were more visually displayed to the US after shedding the veneer of the two camps of capitalism and socialism. And these conflicts became the next enemy of the US.

The US attention to political Islamism was strongly influenced by the Iranian Revolution. With the rise of political Islamism, a trend of Islamic revival became apparent in the Middle East, and the US was concerned that such a movement would run counter to its own regional interests.

The US has adjusted its regional foreign policy in the Middle East since the Iranian Revolution. Prior to the Iranian Revolution, the US was heavily focused on “security policy toward the Soviet Union,” and no Islamic elements could be found in US policy making (Izumi, 2011:307).¹⁸ However, with the Iranian Revolution, the

US began to get involved in the Middle East as a function of its policy toward the Soviet Union while taking a stance against Islamic radicalism (Izumi, 2011:309).

However, with the end of the Cold War, political Islamism, which had been sporadic, became the subject of US foreign policy in earnest. The Bush administration period also saw the Gulf War, which directly intervened in the Middle East, but it was also during this period that the Meridian House speech, a policy of production against Islam, was finalized. This policy was “a bifurcated approach to the Islamic world, a policy of supporting and working with the mainstream (moderates) and isolating the radicals” (Izumi, 2011:311).

The 1993 World Trade Center bombing in New York was the result of Islamist extremists provoked by the Gulf War. This incident led to a more extensive confrontation between the US and Islamist extremists. The Clinton administration adopted an oppressive policy despite its pro-Muslim statements (Izumi, 2011:311-312). Scholars who are aware of the antagonistic composition of “the Islamic world” versus “the West” are concerned about this situation and calling it the New Cold War.

In 1993, for example, Mark Juergensmeyer, in his book *The New Cold War? Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State*, he discussed the possibility of a New Cold War between religious nationalism (in the Islamic world) and secular nationalism (in the West). The author's judgment that the ideological New Cold War will continue is probably still valid today in view of the West's diplomatic position in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.¹⁹

Then, in 1997, a paper entitled “Political Islam and the West: a new Cold War or convergence?” was published. The paper argues that the West's triumphalist explanation for the end of Cold War has influenced its response to political Islam. It finds it difficult to alter Islam's foreign policy toward the West if there are “the triumphalist cold war assumptions (that) underpin

18 泉淳. (2011). イスラーム復興と米国のイスラーム地域政策. イスラーム世界研究 (京都大学イスラーム地域研究センター発行), 4.

19 Juergensmeyer, M. (1993). *The New Cold War?: Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State* (Vol. 5). Univ of California Press

Western foreign policy making” (Salla, 1997:740).²⁰

The West’s triumphalist explanation is typified by “the theory of the end of history,” as articulated by Fukuyama and other scholars. Although there have been many criticisms of such triumphalist thinking, this paper presents the possibility that triumphalist thinking toward the Cold War will lead to the New Cold War. In other words, the inertia exists here to believe that the experience of victory in the Cold War will lead the US to another Cold War-like conflict in which new enemies will also be put into a Cold War-like struggle and will also win.

There were other new enemies for the US. It was Russia, the successor to the Soviet Union. The US proceeded with the proliferation of NATO, compressing Russia’s sphere of influence. In 1998, US strategist George Kennan warned that the proliferation of NATO risked creating a new geopolitical crisis, which he termed the “New Cold War”.

He said “I think it is the beginning of a new cold war. I think the Russians will gradually react quite adversely and it will affect their policies. I think it is a tragic mistake.”²¹

2.2 *Global War on Terrorism Meets Threat Deficit*

In the 2000s, an enemy emerged that could be materialized for the US. It was terrorists.

In 2001, the Bush administration took an extremely hard-liner attitude toward the 9/11 terrorist attacks and began more aggressive involvement in the Middle East, fostering a “war on terrorism”.

The provocations and gaffes of the Bush administration against Islam and the violation of Muslim human rights by the “Patriot Act” in the US have led to the judgment that the Islamic movements that originally took place in various places were solidarized by “making the US the enemy” (Izumi, 2011:315). In addition, there

are other signs of placing the Middle East at the center of its foreign policy, such as plans to export democracy to the Middle East, prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons or weapons of mass destruction, and promote capitalization.

It was in this context that Ivo H. Daalder and James M. Lindsay coined the term “New Cold War” in 2001 to refer to the war on terrorism.²² Furthermore, a judgment began to form in academic circles that the war on terrorism is like a new Cold War in which everything is subordinated to a single objective.²³

And Buzan, in his book “Will the ‘global war on terrorism’ be the new Cold War?”, clearly compared the ‘global war on terrorism’ or ‘war on terrorism’ to the Cold War as a zero-sum, global, generational struggle against anti-liberal ideological extremists who seek to dominate the world (Buzan 2006:1101).

In other words, he said, the war on terrorism has come to share the same characteristics as the Cold War, and both are defenses against the West, or attempts to destroy Western civilization.

Buzan argued that the war on terrorism functions to fill the long “threat deficit” felt by the US after the end of the Cold War. The war on terrorism includes the actual wars of aggression, the invasion of Afghanistan beginning in 2001 and the invasion of Iraq in 2003, in which the Taliban and Hussein regimes served as enemies of the US.²⁴

The launching of new wars by the US in the 2000s and the creation of a new cold war atmosphere are also related to the decline of the US economic power. The US share of the global economy began to decline in the 2000s.

In the 1990s, the popularization of computers and the Internet brought the US into unprecedented prosperity and global technological leadership, but in 2001, the Internet bubble burst, resulting in a 0% economic

20 Salla, M. E. (1997). Political Islam and the West: a new Cold War or convergence?. *Third World Quarterly*, 18(4), 729-742.

21 Thomas L. Friedman. *Foreign Affairs; Now a Word From X.* <https://www.nytimes.com/1998/05/02/opinion/foreign-affairs-now-a-word-from-x.html>

22 Ivo H. Daalder and James M. Lindsay. *The new cold war.* <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-new-cold-war/>

23 Cosgrave, J. (2004). *The impact of the war on terror on aid flows.* London: Action Aid.

24 Buzan, B. (2006). Will the ‘global war on terrorism’ be the new Cold War?. *International affairs*, 82(6), 1101-1118.

growth rate in the US that year. Although the US economy resumed better growth after 2003, Subprime mortgage crisis erupted in 2007, which spread to a financial crisis in 2008, causing the US economy to suffer a severe blow.

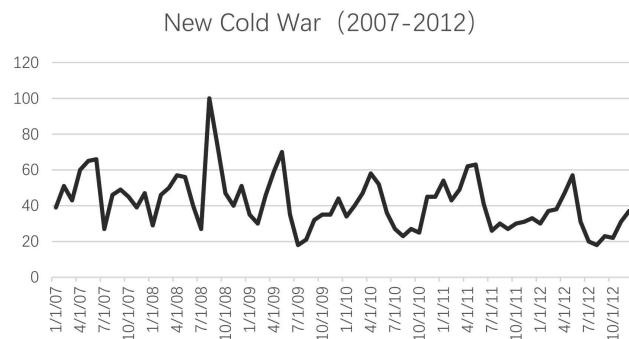
2.3 The Post-Global Financial Crisis Period

The US-Russia appeared to have found a point of agreement in the war on terrorism beginning in 2001, but then the 2003 Georgian Rose Revolution and Ukrainian Orange Revolution, in which the US was deemed to have been involved, were anti-Russian movements in the former Soviet sphere of influence from the Russian perspective. Putin was concerned that these revolutions were “oriented toward the blue stuff” and the compression of Russia’s strategic space by the proliferation of the EU and NATO.

Amid such tensions, Georgia and Ukraine applied to join NATO in 2008, leading to claims by journalist Lucas that “the New Cold War with Russia has already begun.” In fact, in August of the same year, the Georgian war broke out, exacerbating the US-Russia confrontation through NATO proliferation.

In fact, as you can see from Google’s search heat from 2007 to 2012, the keyword New Cold War reached its highest value in six years in August 2008. Meaning that global fears of a new Cold War peaked at the outbreak of the Georgia war.

Table 1. New Cold War (2007-2012)



Source: Google Trends²⁵

²⁵ Google. <https://trends.google.com/trends/explore?date=2007-01-01%202012-12-31&q=new%20cold%20war&hl=en-US>

Although the “China threat” theory existed even before 2008, the adjustment of the diplomatic focus from the Middle East to the Asia-Pacific and China’s economic rise to the world’s second largest power have led scholars such as Odgaard (2008) and Cooney (2008) to begin to recognize China as the Rising Power and to discuss the possibility of a “New Cold War” between the US-China.²⁶

In fact, 2008 to 2010 was also a period of transition between the economic turmoil in the US and the convergence of China’s economy into the world’s second largest. The US experienced consecutive negative growth in 2008 and 2009, while China became the world’s second largest economy in 2010.

This shift in economic power also influenced subsequent US foreign policy, with the Obama administration proposing a return to the Asia-Pacific in 2012, showing that the US had noticed this change in economic power.

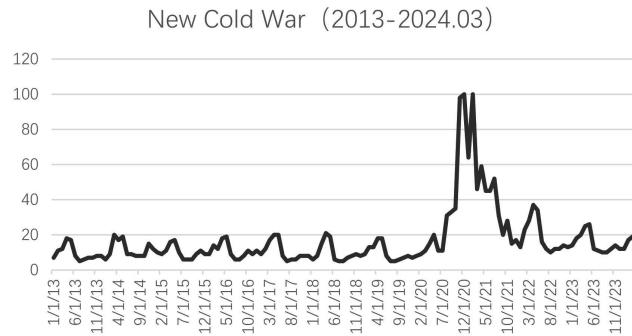
Vasile Rotaru (2019) collates the subtle changes in the New Cold War narrative in Russian public space since 2014. From this article we know that the US-Russia New Cold War narrative has been present since the Crimean crisis in 2014, but Russia’s approach to the New Cold War narrative has also been changing.²⁷

However, as can be seen in Table 2, the search heat for the New Cold War has reached a 10-year high around 2020, which is clearly linked to the trade war between the US and China.

²⁶ Cooney, K. (2008). Chinese–American hegemonic competition in East Asia: A new cold war or into the arms of America?. In *The Rise of China and International Security* (pp. 52-72). Routledge.

²⁷ Odgaard, L. (2008). *A New Cold War? The Consequences of China Rising*.

²⁷ Vasile Rotaru (2019) Instrumentalizing the recent past? The new Cold War narrative in Russian

Table 2. New Cold War (2013-2024.03)

Source: Google Trends²⁸

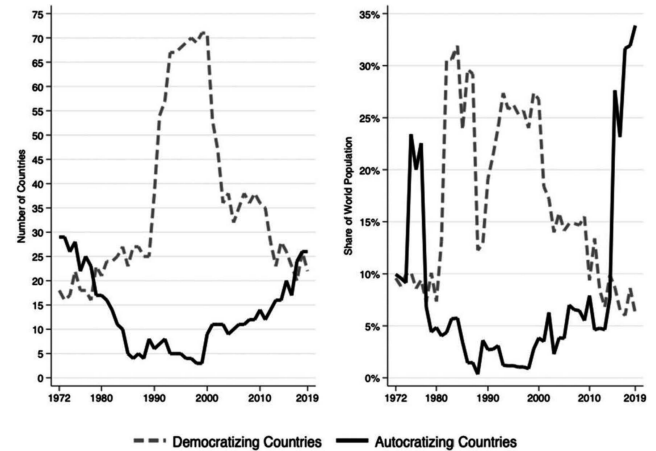
Indeed, since 2015, arguments about the application of the New Cold War to US-China relations have become even more prolific.

Bill Powell, for example, says that the US's New Cold War opponent is not Russia, but China. And he argues that it is time for the US to wake up and be wary of China's power dream. And Robert of the Foreign Policy Research Institute, a US think tank, argues that the US-China is in a decades-long competitive relationship, which he describes as the New Cold War.

Brands et al. (2021) answered "yes" to the question of whether this rivalry is the New Cold War, although US-China relations are not like the Cold War.²⁹

And 2020 could be a year of even deeper institutional antagonism. Since 2010, there has been a global trend towards democratic retrogression and deeper authoritarianization. And the Covid-19 outbreak has deepened policy conflicts between countries with different institutional responses to the epidemic.

As shown in Table 3, the number of countries experiencing authoritarianism has increased by more than 15 since 2010, and the global population experiencing authoritarianism has increased from around 5 per cent to 35 per cent since 2010, implying a decline in democracy and a deepening of global authoritarianism.

Table 3. Autocratizing vs democratizing countries by the Liberal Democracy Index, 1972–2019 (left side – number of countries; right side – share of world population)

Source: Seraphine F. Maerz et al. (2020)³⁰

From the information above, for the US, the relative decline in economic power and the global democratic recession may be the main reasons for the discourse on the New Cold War in the post-2008 financial crisis era.

3. China's Response to the New Cold War Narrative

Regarding what is the response of China to the new Cold War narrative, it has already been said that there are two different views on the new Cold War in the academic circle, one is to refute that the current US-China relationship is not a new Cold War, and the other is to actively face and respond to the new Cold War. Therefore, in the following, I will focus on the Chinese government's statement. To infer what kind of attitude and usage of the term New Cold War China has.

In this paper I have used resources from Harvard University's Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs Press Conferences Corpus (CMFA PressCon)³¹ and the official

²⁸ Google. <https://trends.google.com/trends/explore?date=2013-01-01%202024-03-31&q=new%20cold%20war&hl=en-US>

²⁹ Brands, H., & Gaddis, J. L. (2021). The new cold war: America, China, and the echoes of history. *Foreign Aff.*, 100, 10.

³⁰ Seraphine F. Maerz, Anna Lührmann, Sebastian Hellmeier, Sandra Grahn & Staffan I. Lindberg (2020) State of the world 2019: autocratization surges – resistance grows, *Democratization*, 27:6, 909-927

³¹ Mochtak, M. and R. Q. Turcsanyi (2021). Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs Press Conferences Corpus (CMFA PressCon),

website of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs³² for coverage.

3.1 *Reject: Not a new cold war (2019-2021.08)*

The official website of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs yielded a total of 254 results on the “New Cold War”, of which the most noteworthy are the statements made by the ministers and vice-ministers of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on public occasions and the articles signed by the ambassadors of the Chinese embassies abroad published in the local media.

In December 2018, China’s ambassador to the US, Cui Tiankai, said in an interview on China Global TV when asked about issues related to the New Cold War: Their claims run counter to the fundamental interests of the two peoples, and China is always willing to work with the US side to expand common interests, manage differences and prevent confrontation.

Later, in June 2019, the Chinese Ambassador to Grenada said, “There is no such thing as a new cold war between China and the US.” And in October 2019, China’s Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs said at the Xiangshan Forum that “what the world needs is openness, not barriers; cooperation, not decoupling; and new opportunities, not a new cold war,” both denying the new cold war and rejecting it.

It was used to quote the text “Rejecting the New Cold War” published by Ambassador Chilly in July 2020. In August 2020, an interview with Wang Yi, the head of China’s Foreign Ministry, was reported through the Chinese government media Xinhua, with the content “China is firmly opposed to artificially creating the so-called ‘New Cold War,’” and on the 25th of the same month, a press conference was held in which China claimed that “China has no intention of starting the New Cold War,” and “the New Cold War is history The new

Cold War is a reversal of history.

Furthermore, Wang Yi, in a speech to a Foreign Ministry study group in December 2020, stated that “anti-Chinese forces in the US, motivated by their own selfish interests and political prejudices, are spreading unscrupulous rumors and slander against China, unreasonable repression and sanctions, and even causing ideological confrontations that will plunge the world into the abyss of the ‘New Cold War’ and plunging the world into the abyss of a ‘new Cold War.’” He stated.

And according to CMFA PressCon Corpus, the first time a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson publicly used the term “New Cold War” in an answer was on December 10, 2019. It is also rejecting the new Cold War and the arguments against the new Cold War narrative.

3.2 *Change from reject to criticize (2021.09-2023)*

Biden made a speech at the UN General Assembly on September 21, 2021, stating that the US does not seek a new Cold War, a statement that was triple-emphasized in the subsequent US-China meetings in Bali and San Francisco. The Global Times published an editorial criticizing Biden for this statement, but foreign ministry spokespersons began to use Biden’s statement to answer questions and began to subtly use the new Cold War narrative.

At a press conference on September 23, the spokesman used the phrase “All parties set great store by the US President’s statement that he is not seeking a “new Cold War”.

Since then, China has begun to repeatedly reiterate Biden’s statement that he is not seeking a “new Cold War”, and not only that, but in his December 6, 2021 reply, he also used the phrase, “The US should honor its words of not seeking a new Cold War with action, and do things that help to rally the international community to address such urgent global challenges as COVID-19, slow economic growth and the climate change crisis. slow economic growth and the climate change crisis, rather than violating the spirit of solidarity.” Satirizing the US inconsistency between words and deeds with statements like these.

In fact, statements by foreign ministry spokespersons

Harvard Dataverse.

<https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataset.xhtml?persistentId=doi:10.7910/DVN/BAKGET>

32 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China. <https://www.mfa.gov.cn/irs-c-web/search.shtml?code=17e50b77dab&codes=&configCode=&searchWord=%E6%96%B0%E5%86%B7%E6%88%98&dataTypeId=758&sign=4602cfce-3a3d-4d6d-f350-693e88600bfa>

referring to the term New Cold War have increased considerably after September 2019. Between 2019 and 2023, the term New Cold War appears in a total of 50 statements.

However, after only one instance in 2019 and four in 2020, it becomes 11 in 2021, 10 of which are after September. The subsequent years 2022 and 2023 are 21 and 13 cases respectively.

This means that September 2019 through December 2023 accounts for a high percentage of 88 percent of the cases in less than half of this five-year period.

This shift from passive to active shows that China has moved from simply rejecting the new Cold War narrative to proactively utilizing it to strengthen itself in criticizing its opponents.

There is also a shift that began in 2022, when the Foreign Ministry's spokesperson responded by actively using the term New Cold War on NATO-related issues.²⁰²² Between March and June, the Foreign Ministry's spokesperson received NATO-related questions on seven occasions, and the spokespersons linked some of NATO's behavior to the New Cold War.²⁰²³ The Foreign Ministry's spokespersons also responded by using the term New Cold War.

For example, considering NATO as a product of the Cold War, such as the following statement, "NATO should stop drawing ideological lines, stoking political confrontation, or seeking to start a new Cold War."

The Ambassador has likewise criticized NATO's actions in diplomatic contexts, and there is a need to be wary of a new cold war. In 2023, Ambassador to Canada Criticized NATO's 2023 Vilnius Summit, criticizing it as a gathering that will "bring about the winds of the New Cold War."

Another keyword that is highly synchronized with the emergence of the new Cold War is "Taiwan Independence". Since October 2021, the number of times the New Cold War has co-occurred with Taiwan is 14 times. This is because the Foreign Ministry often cites Biden's five-point pledge at the Bali meeting, which, in addition to not seeking a new Cold War, also includes not supporting Taiwan's independence.

4. Conclusion

Why does the US uses the word "new cold war"?

First, in terms of the main targets of the New Cold War discourse, it is all countries or actors that have hostile or potentially hostile relations with the US that have been included in the New Cold War. At first it was the Islamic world, and then it shifted to terrorism. Then later Russia, the main successor to the Soviet Union, and China, the main rival of the US economy, were also called objects of the New Cold War. The very act of challenging US hegemony was seen as the New Cold War, which clearly reflects a Western-centered ideology.

Secondly, in terms of the reasons for the use of the new cold war narrative, the US habitually thought of the hostile relationship between civilizations as a cold war in the 1990s, mainly because of the existence of the idea of triumphalism after the victory in the cold war. Later, in the early 2000s, the US also took on terrorism as a hostile force and established a new enemy, which gave rise to the new cold war. Then the repression of Russia and the economic blockade of China were called the New Cold War, also due to the fact that since the financial crisis of 2008, the US economy's share of the world's relative decline, the US held up the banner of democracy also ushered in more than 10 years of recession, so that the US urgently need an anti-authoritarian flag to unite forces to defend the US's global hegemony, and then the discourse of the New Cold War will be reintroduced.

Therefore, the main reasons for the use of the new cold war narrative can be attributed to the following three points: firstly, the triumphalist thinking of the cold war, secondly, the relative decline in the economic power of Europe and the US, and thirdly, the sense of uneasiness brought about by the retrogression of global democracy.

How China responds to the "new cold war" narrative?

This paper analyzes the answers given by spokespersons at regular press conferences of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs through the CMFA PressCon database and analyzes how the term "New Cold War" is used in the speeches of ministerial Tables and Chinese ambassadors abroad through the official website of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In conclusion, China's response to the "New Cold War" narrative will begin in the period from 2019 to September 2021, when the Chinese government will be forced to respond to the intensification of the New Cold War offensive by some US politicians and media organizations. But at this point, it adopted a policy of "rejecting" the New Cold War by refusing to recognize it and opposing it.

Later, after Biden became president and took the initiative to propose not to seek a new Cold War in September 2021, China also began to actively use this to criticize the new Cold War, and then demanded that the US be consistent in its words and actions, and that if it did not seek a new Cold War, it should do the same in its actions. Not only that, on the issues of NATO and Taiwan, China has also begun to actively utilize the "new cold war" narrative to refute and criticize the US, which can be said to have entered the "criticizing" stage.

Asia has been under the shadow of a new Cold War between the US and China since 2018, but as this paper analyzes, the new Cold War narrative is not new; it has existed long after the Cold War and has been used to describe the relationship between the US and its rivals. It is therefore very Western-centered. The three contexts that emphasize the New Cold War are Cold War triumphalism, the relative decline of economic power in Europe and the US, and global democratic regression. China's response to this has shifted from silence until 2019, to rejection from 2019 to 2021, and then to "critique", providing a sample of the opposition to the New Cold War in Asia. The Asian region wants peace and development, not conflict and instability. Rejecting the new cold war and criticizing it will give the Asian region more room for development.