
A Never Ending “War”: the Continuous Effects from 1991 – so-called “End of Cold War”

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The last leader of Democratic Germany (East Germany), Egon Krenz, said in an interview about whether the current international situation is returning to the Cold War: His view on the Cold War is different from that of most people who talk about it. Personally, he believed that the Cold War has never come to an end. The events that occurred in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union from 1989 to 1991 can be considered as a phased end to the struggle between European socialism and European capitalism. At the same time, the Cold War between Western capitalist forces and China and Russia began and continues to this day. From the international situation in recent years, especially the tense relations between China, the United States, and Russia, Katz's analysis and understanding are not unreasonable.

Introduction

The struggle between the Proletariat and the Bourgeoisie has been a significant theme in the history of Russia, specifically during the Soviet era. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 is widely regarded as the end of the Cold War, which was a political conflict between the United States and the former Soviet Union. However, there are arguments that suggest that the Cold War is ongoing and that we are currently experiencing its second phase. This article examines whether or not the Cold War truly ended in 1991, and if not, what implications this has for the world today.

Cold War

For what is a "cold war", it can be clearly stated that "all means of confrontation between opposing sides except for hot wars are the Cold War", including political pressure, ideological output, interference in the internal affairs of other countries, economic sanctions, technological blockades, and arms races.¹ Compared to this standard of thought, the "Cold War" that emerged after World War II has never stopped. The dramatic changes in Eastern Europe in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, and the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Eastern Europe only indicate a significant adjustment in the foundation of the Cold War and a significant easing of the Cold War situation.

Understanding the Proletariat and the Bourgeoisie

The words Proletariat and Bourgeoisie have strong communistic origins, and they refer to people with no assets and people with assets, respectively. These terms were famously used by Karl Marx in his communist manifesto. In the context of the Soviet Union, the Proletariat referred to the working class, while the Bourgeoisie referred to the capitalist class. The struggle between the two classes was central to the ideology of communism, which aimed to create a classless society where everyone had equal access to resources.

The depth of the ideological differences between the Proletariat and the Bourgeoisie can be seen as evidence that the Cold War did not end in 1991. This view is supported by different scholars who argue that the end of the Cold War was not a victory for the West and capitalism, but rather a shift to an era defined by a new balance of power and different global challenges.

According to *Stephen Kotkin*, a historian of Soviet Union, the collapse of the Soviet Union was not the result of a decisive victory for the West, but rather the consequence of internal economic and political factors within the Soviet system. He points out that even after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia still holds an important role as a cultural

¹ Blakemore, Erin, "What Was the Cold War and Are We Headed to Another One?" *Culture*, March 31, 2022, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/article/cold-war>.

and intellectual force. In this sense, the ideological conflict between communism and capitalism still exists, albeit in a different form. He states:²

Despite all the talk of 'the end of history' and a decisive victory for market democracy and liberal capitalism over all alternatives, the change of regime in Moscow that began in 1985 remains a historically significant event whose ramifications are still evolving.

Similarly, other academics like *Alexander Dugin* suggest that the end of the Cold War did not mean the triumph of liberal democracy and market capitalism over communism. Instead, he argues that the current era is marked by a geopolitical struggle between the Atlanticist and Eurasianist ideologies, each representing different visions of the future world order. He contends:³

The world experienced not a triumph of the West, but merely the end of one stage, marked by a unilateral triumphalism, and the beginning of another, characterized by multipolarity and open competition among various ways of being.

In total, while the end of the Cold War marked a significant historical moment, the ideological differences between the Proletariat and the Bourgeoisie continue to shape global politics and reveal ongoing power struggles. Consequently, the Cold War may be considered as an ongoing phenomenon, albeit with different forms and manifestations, rather than a simple event that ended in 1991.

The End of the Cold War

The Cold War typically refers to a political conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union that lasted from 1945 to 1991. The conflict arose from ideological differences between the two superpowers, as well as their desire for global influence.

² Kotkin, Stephen. “Armageddon averted: The Soviet Collapse, 1970-2000.” *New York: Oxford University Press*, 2009.

³ Dugin, Aleksandr, Mark Sleboda, and Michael Millerman. *The fourth political theory*. London: Arktos Media LTD, 2012.

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The Cold War was characterized by proxy wars, espionage, and arms race, but it never escalated into a direct military confrontation between the two sides.

In December 1989, President George H.W. Bush of the United States and President Mikhail Gorbachev of the President of the Soviet Union held a “*historic meeting*” in Malta. Gorbachev publicly declared that “*the world has left the cold war era*”, “*as if relieved of the burden*”.⁴ World public opinion has concluded that the “*end of the Cold War*” probably came about this way, but it is actually just Gorbachev's “*wishful thinking*”.⁵

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 marked the end of the Cold War. The Soviet economy had faltered under the burden of defense expenditures, and Soviet citizens had grown disenchanted with the Communist Party. Mikhail Gorbachev, who served as the General Secretary of the Communist Party from 1985 to 1991, introduced a series of reforms that aimed to restructure the communist system under the name “*Perestroika*” and “*Glasnost*”. However, these reforms had unintended consequences and ultimately led to the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

Since then, the United States has never abandoned the strategic means of the “*Cold War*” to deal with Russia, which had gained independence from the former Soviet Union. For example, offering many conditions to provide “*aid*” in an attempt to incorporate Yeltsin era Russian reforms into the desired trajectory of the West, and after the disintegration of the former Soviet Union, attempting to weaken or even disintegrate Russia.

The “Second Cold War”

While many historians would argue that the collapse of the Soviet Union marked the end of the Cold War, others believe that the conflict continued in new forms after 1991. Some scholars refer to this as the Second Cold War or the New/Neo Cold War. This new phase of the conflict involves different countries and actors than those that were involved in the first phase. The primary players include the United States, China, and Russia, which is the successor state of the former Soviet Union.

⁴ Hodge, Nathan, “How George H.W. Bush Helped End the Cold War Peacefully | CNN Politics.” *CNN*, December 1, 2018. <https://edition.cnn.com/2018/12/01/politics/george-bush-cold-war-end/index.html>.

⁵ *Ibid.*

One of the key features of this new Cold War is that it is not only political but also economic in nature. The rise of China as a global economic power has challenged the dominance of the United States, which has led to tensions between the two countries. The United States and its allies have launched trade wars and imposed tariffs on Chinese goods, while China has responded with its own retaliatory measures.⁶

Russia has also played a significant role in this new phase of the Cold War. Its annexation of Crimea through referendum in 2014 was seen as a violation of international law, and it has been accused of interfering in the 2016 US presidential election.⁷ The United States and its allies have responded with economic sanctions against Russia, which have had a significant impact on its economy.

So, by the Putin era, the United States had resumed its "cold war" approach to Russia, led NATO to accelerate its eastward expansion, constantly squeezed Russia's strategic space in Europe, and stirred up the "Colour revolution" in the former Soviet Union, making the Russian led "CIS"⁸ exist in name only. ³Especially in the issues of Crimea and eastern Ukraine, the West has adopted double standards to criticize Russia in various ways and has repeatedly imposed economic sanctions.⁹ This is no different from the economic blockade of the former Soviet Union in the past.

With the rise and increasing strength of China, the United States continued to implement the Cold War strategy in the new stage and later listed China and Russia as the main Cold War opponents. This was already very clear during the Trump administration. The first National Security Strategy and National Defense Strategy released by the Trump administration listed China and Russia as both "revisionist countries" and "strategic competitors".

⁶ Hua, Shiping, and Ka Zeng, "The US–China Trade War: Economic Statecraft, Multinational Corporations, and Public Opinion." *Business and Politics* 27, no. 3 (2022): 253–71, <https://doi.org/10.1017/bap.2022.18>.

⁷ Snyder, Timothy, "Ukraine: The Haze of Propaganda: Timothy Snyder." *The New York Review of Books*, July 23, 2020, <https://www.nybooks.com/online/2014/03/01/ukraine-haze-propaganda/>.

⁸ Commonwealth of Independent States, or CIS for short.

⁹ Carpenter, Ted Galen, "The U.S. and NATO Helped Trigger the Ukraine War. It's Not 'Siding With Putin' to Admit It." *Cato.org*, March 7, 2022, <https://www.cato.org/commentary/us-nato-helped-trigger-ukraine-war-its-not-siding-putin-admit-it>.

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However, China is different from Russia in terms of military strength, and there is a significant gap between China and the United States, even compared to Russia.¹⁰ Therefore, China's military strength is currently not something that the United States is afraid of or very concerned about. What worries and fears most is China's rapidly developing economy, science and technology, and the "*Belt and Road*" foreign development strategy, especially the "*China system*", "*Chinese model*", "*Beijing Consensus*" and other threats to the Western democratic system, the "*Washington Consensus*", and fundamentally shaking the United States' hegemony in the world.¹¹ Therefore, the United States imposes a "*new cold war*" on China, which is different from that of Russia: The United States focuses on economic repression, scientific and technological blocking, and the use of Hong Kong, Taiwan and other regions to create turmoil and trouble, and various means to curb Chinese Century's rise.

The China–United States trade war initiated by the United States is actually an important component of the "*new cold war*" strategy of the United States against China, which will be long-term.¹² Trump has repeatedly stated that he is not in a hurry to reach the "*great agreement*" of the war, and the United States insists at the negotiating table that even if a trade agreement is reached, tariffs on the "*important*" and "*core*" trade areas will not be lifted.

The competition in science and technology is the home ground of the Cold War between the East and the West in the new era, and also highlights the new characteristics of the "*New Cold War*" era. Therefore, the United States' use of "*unnecessary*" national security as an excuse to suppress high-tech companies such as Huawei and ZTE in China is essentially a part of the "*New Cold War*" and has long been planned.¹³

For example, after more than two months of riots in Hong Kong, the direct driving force behind this incident was the Western "*Cold War*" forces led by the United

¹⁰ Rakich, Anna, Franklin and Marshall College, Craig Kanalley, Cindy de Gouveia, Taylor Belle, Culture360 Stories, Glorie Martinez, et al., "The Arctic Arms Race: The New Cold War." *The Odyssey Online*, October 15, 2019, <https://www.theodysseyonline.com/the-arctic-arms-race-the-new-cold-war>.

¹¹ Koberg, Kelsey, and Andrew Murray, "Greatest Threats to the US, According to Foreign Policy Experts: 'How Scared Do You Want to Be?'" *Fox News*, July 28, 2022, <https://www.foxnews.com/media/greatest-threats-us-according-foreign-policy-experts-scared>.

¹² Hua, Shiping, and Ka Zeng. "The US–China Trade War."

¹³ "Trump Signs Order Setting Stage to Ban Huawei from U.S." *POLITICO*, Accessed July 1, 2023, <https://www.politico.com/story/2019/05/15/trump-ban-huawei-us-1042046>.

States.¹⁴ The intention of the United States is very clear, attempting to use Hong Kong's "*Hong Kong independence*" and "*riot*" forces to split China and form a new anti-China "*cold war*" base.¹⁵

The declining United States engaged in the "*New Cold War*", listing China and Russia as both enemies and opponents, which is the difference between the West's continued Cold War in the new era. This is different from the way Nixon and Kissinger played the Chinese card against the Soviet Union back then.

Arms Race

The arms race is an important symbol and main content of the Cold War confrontation. The United States acted recklessly, unilaterally tearing up the hard-earned China Missile Treaty, and immediately conducted pre prepared tests of new land-based cruise missiles, with serious consequences that could be foreseen. From Putin's recent statements, a new arms race between China and Russia is likely to be unavoidable.

The disintegration of the Soviet Union and the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact marked a new stage of the Cold War between the East and the West, also known as the "*New Cold War*".¹⁶ At the beginning, the United States continued to focus on Russia as the main target of the Cold War. At this time, Russia's strength was no longer comparable to that of the former Soviet Union, with only "*a few trump cards left up her sleeves*".¹⁷ The main threat to the United States was military power, especially strategic nuclear power. Therefore, in the new stage, the United States' implementation of the "*New Cold War*" against Russia mainly focuses on military affairs.¹⁸ The United States' eagerness to tear down the China Missile Navigation Treaty is actually an urgent practical need for the United States' "*new Cold War*" with Russia.

¹⁴ Times, Global, "US Double Standards on Domestic Riots and Hong Kong Turmoil Mocked on Chinese Internet." *Global Times*, Accessed July 1, 2023, <https://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1190110.shtml>.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Rakich, Anna, Franklin et.al. "The Arctic Arms Race."

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Toda Peace Institute, "On the Way to an Arms Race and a New Cold War?" *Toda Peace Institute*, Accessed July 1, 2023, <https://toda.org/global-outlook/2021/on-the-way-to-an-arms-race-and-a-new-cold-war.html>.

Korean Peninsula Issue

The Korean Peninsula issue can be seen as evidence that the Cold War did not end in 1991, as well. Despite efforts at reconciliation and denuclearization since the 1990s, tensions between North Korea and the international community, led by the United States, have persisted. This ongoing conflict highlights the complex power dynamics and ideological differences that continue to shape global politics.

According to *John Delury*, Professor of Chinese studies at Yonsei University, the legacy of the Cold War continues to influence the relationship between North Korea and the United States. He argues:¹⁹

At its core, the problem is still ideology...That Cold War baggage hasn't been chucked. It keeps roiling up.

Despite various attempts at engagement, including the 2018 Singapore Summit between North Korea and the United States, progress towards peace on the Korean Peninsula has been slow and difficult. This can be attributed, in part, to the ongoing ideological differences between North Korea and the West.

For example, North Korea's "*Juche*" philosophy emphasizes self-reliance and independence from outside powers, which contrasts with Western values of capitalism, globalization and free trade. This ideological divide has made negotiations challenging and underscores how deeply ingrained the Cold War-era divides remain.

Additionally, the continued presence of American military forces in South Korea plays a significant role in the ongoing tensions on the Korean Peninsula. North Korea sees the US military presence as a threat to its sovereignty, while the United States views it as necessary for regional stability.

The ongoing conflict on the Korean Peninsula is evidence that the Cold War did not end in 1991. Deep-seated ideological divisions persist, making negotiations around peace and denuclearization difficult. The legacy of the Cold War era continues to impact global politics and power dynamics.

¹⁹ Baker, Peter et. al., "Trump Steps into North Korea and Agrees with Kim Jong-Un to Resume Talks."

Implications for the World Today

The ongoing Cold War has significant implications for the world today. The rising tensions between the United States and China have already had an impact on the global economy, and there are concerns that the conflict could escalate into a military confrontation. The rivalry between these two superpowers is likely to shape global politics for years to come.

The conflict between the West and Russia is also likely to continue. The European Union and Canada have imposed economic sanctions on Russia, and there is little sign that these will be lifted anytime soon. The conflict in Ukraine, which was partially sparked by Russia's annexation of Crimea, remains unresolved.

On the other hand, China has a strong economy and technology, and it is likely to replace the United States as the world's number one in the near future. Russia has a strong military, its comprehensive strength is recovering, and the relationship between the two countries is becoming increasingly friendly and close. The United States is confronting two major powers at the same time, and the "*New Cold War*" implemented in the new era is unlikely to result in favorable outcomes for the United States and the entire Western world. Krenz, who has always been confident in socialism and socialist China, is very clear about the prospects of the new Cold War.

Conclusion

While the collapse of the Soviet Union marked the end of the Cold War between the United States and the former Soviet Union, there are arguments suggesting that the conflict has continued in new forms. The second phase of the Cold War involves different actors and is characterized by economic as well as political rivalry. The ongoing conflict has significant implications for the world today, particularly in terms of global politics and the economy. It is essential that we acknowledge this new phase of the Cold War and develop alternative ways to cope with the events that are shaping the world today.

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