

Casualties of the Old Cold War Should Inform Opposition to U.S.' New Cold War Against China

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The US share of the global economy has shrunk dramatically [since 1960](#). On the other hand, China is on pace to surpass the U.S. in GDP terms in 2030.

This past week, the United States celebrated another Martin Luther King Jr. holiday. King's murder occurred not a year after he came out in full opposition to the U.S. imperialist invasion of Vietnam. In the spirit of King's anti-imperialist legacy and in remembrance of the "Cold War" which shaped the historical moment from which King arose, this is a previously unpublished article explaining why the U.S.' New Cold War on China must be approached from a historical perspective as Biden replaces Trump at the helm of Commander in Chief of imperialism.

On September 3rd, China celebrated the 75th anniversary of its victory against Japanese aggression. Earlier this summer, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) joined Russian military forces to celebrate the anniversary of Victory Day. China and the Soviet Union lost upwards of [fifty million people](#) in total during the Second World War. The end of the Second World War also marked the beginning of the Cold War. Unlike the Second World War, which was largely a war between capitalist countries over the redivision of the world, the Cold War set the stage for a decades-long battle between contending social systems: capitalism and socialism.

The United States came out of World War II as the imperial hegemon and the largest capitalist economy in the world. Despite devastating losses to life and economic infrastructure, the Soviet Union emerged as a global power by employing a socialist model of development. There are many tragedies associated with the "old Cold War" between the United States-led capitalist bloc and the Soviet Union-led socialist bloc. Perhaps the biggest is that the U.S. maintained a monopoly on the ways in which the Cold War has been narrated historically. In the name of defeating the existential threat of socialism, the United States spent more than fifty years downplaying imperial violence during the Cold War as a benign and necessary precondition toward the preservation of democracy and liberty.

At no other point in history has it become more important to remember the casualties of the first Cold War to inform opposition to the New Cold War that has emerged against China. The dangers of the New Cold War against China are clear. According to renowned documentary filmmaker John Pilger, more than 400 military bases form a ring [around China in the Asia Pacific](#). On July 3rd 2020, two naval aircraft carriers and a B-52 bomber with nuclear capacity were deployed [to the South China Sea](#). The Indo-Pacific Command will be in charge of over fifty percent of all U.S. military assets and sixty percent of U.S. naval assets [by the end of 2020](#). U.S. President Donald Trump and his administration has

rebranded the Obama Administration's "Pivot to Asia" with a strategy of "Great Power Competition" at the barrel of a gun.

The U.S.-led New Cold War is not merely fought on the military front. Sanctions on Chinese Communist Party officials for evidence-free claims of [Uyghur oppression](#), covert support from the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) for "pro-democracy" [protestors in Hong Kong](#), threats to ban popular Chinese apps such as [Tik Tok and WeChat](#), the closure of the [Chinese consulate in Houston](#), and a host of other hostile measures have been taken by the United States to foment tensions with China. All of these measures foster an atmosphere of war not dissimilar to the one that existed throughout the latter half of the 20th century. The COVID-19 pandemic, which China contained in three months, has only given the United States further reason to scapegoat China to deflect from its own criminality. And because China possesses a different social system to the United States, peace-loving people should be very much concerned that the U.S. will commit further war crimes in its bid to contain China as it did during the first Cold War.

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The U.S. operated as a force of mass destruction throughout the duration of its crusade against communism from 1945-1991. U.S.-led covert military operations and occupations were commonplace in Latin America, Asia, and Africa. Two of the most notable U.S. occupations in Asia during the Cold War took place in Korea and Vietnam. From 1950-53, the Truman administration deployed weapons of mass destruction to prevent the Korean revolution from uniting the country along socialist lines. Over three million Koreans died over this period and cities such as Pyongyang were completely obliterated by the U.S. strategy of ["bombing anything that moved."](#) An armistice was signed in 1953, but the U.S. has yet to sign a formal peace treaty to truly put an end to the war.

While the U.S. invasion of Korea is known as the "Forgotten War," many activists remember the U.S. war in Vietnam as the spark that set the anti-war movement ablaze. The U.S. initially provided indirect support to the brutal puppet regime in South Vietnam after the ouster of French colonial forces in the mid-1950s. However, by the latter half of the 1960s, the U.S. stepped up its campaign to defeat the National Liberation Front of Vietnam. Carpet bombings, torture campaigns, and massacres of women and children were just some of the brutal atrocities [conducted by U.S. forces](#). An estimated four million Vietnamese were killed before the war's formal end in 1975 and three million liters of deadly toxins of Agent Orange dropped [onto Vietnam's agricultural lands](#). Both the Vietnamese diaspora and former U.S. soldiers continue to struggle with the wide-ranging biological effects of [Agent Orange toxins](#).

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Much of the Cold War was characterized by U.S. coups and proxy wars that installed compliant governments in countries deemed vulnerable to the influence of communism. In 1954, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) engineered a coup of the progressive and democratically-elected president of Guatemala, [Jacobo Arbenz](#). Arbenz's violent ouster laid the basis for a three-decade long "civil war" that took the lives of over 200,000 Guatemalans, with the U.S. consistently supporting the puppet government militarily [throughout the war](#). Guatemala was but one country in Latin America that was devastated by U.S. Cold War interventions. U.S.-backed contra wars, coups, and death

squads murdered hundreds of thousands of people in Brazil, Chile, and Nicaragua over the course of the so-called Cold War.

Africa was viewed as an equally important battleground in the U.S. Cold War against communism. One of the most prominent examples of U.S. meddling in Africa during the Cold War occurred in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The CIA, Belgium, and Congolese elites collaborated to assassinate the nation's first democratically-elected president, [Patrice Lumumba](#), in 1961. In 1966, Ghana's first post-independence president, Kwame Nkrumah, was [overthrown by a CIA-backed coup](#). Thomas Sankara of Burkina Faso met a similar fate [not two decades later](#). Each one of these leaders were viewed as threats for their potential to align an independent Africa with the Soviet Union. Their demise laid the basis for the proxy wars, sanctions, and Western financial debt traps that plague the continent to this very day.

This only scratches the surface of the U.S.' destructive role in the Cold War. Another casualty of the old Cold War was the struggle for a more egalitarian world. The Soviet Union's collapse in 1991 paved the way for the normalization of capitalist and imperialist ideology, namely the notion that no alternative exists to the U.S. hegemony. All sectors of official society in the U.S. participated in the erasure of the domestic consequences of the Cold War such as the heavy-handed repression of socialists, communists, peace activists, and Black movement leaders throughout the 20th century. Hegemonic imperial narratives of American exceptionalism concocted and repeated ad nauseam since the fall of the socialist bloc have justified the decline of living standards for much of the world, including workers and poor people in the U.S.

A New Cold War against China has emerged from this backdrop to shine a light on a changing global landscape. China survived the onslaught of U.S. unipolar dominance and Cold War hostilities by integrating into the global capitalist economy. Few remember that China was once a very poor country that found itself completely isolated diplomatically and economically for more than two decades after the Chinese Revolution of 1949. China is no longer in such a position. China not only carries prestige in world affairs as the second largest economy in the world, but is also highly integrated with the economies of both the Global South and the Western world in ways that the Soviet Union was not.

China's rise has also come during a period of U.S. decline in many areas, not least in the economic realm. The U.S. share of the global economy has shrunk dramatically [since 1960](#). On the other hand, China is on pace to surpass the U.S. in [GDP terms by 2030](#). This is likely to accelerate due to the role that the uncontrolled spread of COVID-19 in the United States is playing in sinking the U.S. capitalist economy into a prolonged depression. The Trump administration has thus taken the position that if the U.S. cannot compete with China economically, then it will use whatever weapons possible to bully China into submitting to the dictates of the United States.

Make no mistake, the New Cold War against China is a bipartisan project. Biden and Trump used a great portion of the 2020 presidential election campaign to chastise each other over [who is softer on China](#). The bipartisan character of the New Cold War is most starkly represented by the recent passage of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) in July. Both chambers of Congress agreed to counter the "China threat" with a two billion dollar increase in the defense spending budget from [738 billion to 740 billion for fiscal year 2021](#). While Republican Congressmen Mitt Romney, Joshua Hawley, and Jim Inhofe have been the most visible advocates of increased military hostilities toward China, the Democratic Party

has done little to nothing to stem the tide of the New Cold War.

What this means is that the military industrial complex and its handful of private contractors have free reign to use anti-China hostilities to fuel a dangerous militarization of the Asia Pacific. The influence of the military industrial complex in the New Cold War against China is clearly spelled out in the Trump administration's approval of up to [ten billion USD worth in arms sales to Taiwan](#)—a blatant violation of the One China policy. That the New Cold War against China is quite literally being fought on China's doorstep should be enough to garner opposition from peace loving people in the United States and the world at large.

However, there are many more reasons why the U.S.' New Cold War should be rejected. Increased hostilities toward China come at a time when U.S.-based workers are facing a devastating economic crisis on top of a pandemic that the U.S. government has utterly failed to contain. Furthermore, the U.S. has absolutely no authority to lecture China or any other nation on the treatment of ethnic minorities. Massive protests occurred nearly every day over the summer to protest the regularity with which Black Americans such as George Floyd are killed by U.S. police departments and incarcerated in U.S. jails.

Lastly, support for the New Cold War against China has reached dangerous levels of popularity in the United States. Over seventy percent of people in the U.S. hold [a negative view of China](#). Anti-China racism is nearly two centuries old, and has been encouraged by both political parties in recent years to deflect blame onto China for the negative effects of globalization. Blaming China for U.S. economic policy detracts from the solidarity that is needed to address pressing global problems such as poverty, climate change, and war. No amount of hatred toward China will change the fact that its economic influence is here to stay. China *will* be a global leader in high-tech industrial production, green technology, and infrastructure development for years to come. The only question is whether the people of the United States will continue to abide by a hostile posture toward China which serves no one but the ultra-rich overlords of the American Empire.

This question cannot be answered without reference to historical memory. Tens of millions were sacrificed by the old Cold War to fulfill U.S. foreign policy objectives. The U.S. remains dedicated to endless war and its New Cold War against China only makes the world a more dangerous place for humanity. U.S. military expansion in the Asia Pacific only adds to the possibility of catastrophic confrontations between the U.S. and China, or more likely China and its regional neighbors. A more peaceful world where domestic and international problems can be resolved is only possible if and when the U.S. is forced to relate to other countries on the basis of cooperation and respect for self-determination.

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