

## CHAPTER 1

# The Cold War in Asia

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### 1. Europe and Asia

The Cold War began and ended in Europe. The Cold War is a term most suitable to describe the characteristics of European (European-Atlantic) international relations of some forty years that took shape soon after the end of World War II. How suitable it is as a concept for Asian (Asia-Pacific) international relations is another matter. In European international relations, there was a symmetry of the two blocs, the western bloc led by the United States and the communist bloc led by the Soviet Union. The conflict and rivalry of those two blocs dominated international issues in Europe, and these conflicts remained "cold," sparing Europe from war for more than forty years. Thus the Cold War era in Europe, which we may consider continued from 1947 to 1989, was a period of "long peace."

During the Cold War era, the situation in Asia was quite different from Europe, and it still is. Although the conflict and rivalry between the two superpowers spread into Asia, this rivalry was not as dominant as in Europe. In Asia, there was no solid U.S. or Soviet bloc. There was no unity among the U.S. allies in Asia. They were a heterogeneous group of countries tied only with the United States through bilateral arrangements. Unlike the American allies in Europe, which were blessed with stable liberal democratic regimes, most of the American allies in Asia maintained authoritarian regimes. Moreover, some of America's Asian allies, such as Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, did not get along well with each other because of the memory of Japanese imperialism. The Soviet Union did not dominate the communist countries in Asia as it

did in Eastern Europe. Unlike in Europe, the largest, most populous country in the region, the People's Republic of China, soon became a giant in the Communist world. Rivalries between the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China soon developed, and the two lesser communist countries in Asia, North Korea and former North Vietnam, were therefore able to maintain more independence than their European counterparts.

There were two cold wars in Asia. The U.S.-Chinese cold war as well as the Asian dimension of the U.S.-Soviet Cold War. If the term "cold war" can be applied to a hostile power struggle between powers with similar ideologies, we may say there was a third cold war in Asia, the Sino-Soviet cold war which developed by the 1970s.

The most populous country in Asia, China experienced a large-scale revolutionary civil war between the Nationalist regime and the Communist forces, and several other countries were confronted with armed revolutionary movements from time to time. In addition, there were two "hot" wars in which U.S. military forces were directly involved, the Korean War and the Vietnam War. In contrast with Europe, where no country experienced an internal armed conflict (excepting Greece), Asia was beset with such conflicts, and two full-fledged wars were fought with the United States as a major participant. The Cold War in Asia is a misnomer unless it means simply that the United States and the Soviet Union were engaged in a power struggle in Asia but avoided, as in Europe, a direct military engagement.

Since most of America's European allies

had a liberal democratic regime, the United States could certainly claim that its role in the Cold War in Europe was the defense of liberal democratic values. In Asia, many of America's allies appeared to represent reactionary forces, while her adversaries often seemed to represent forces of national liberation and progress. Thus the United States often seemed to be a defender of corrupt and conservative regimes rather than a champion of liberal democracy. The criticism of the American posture in Asia was very strong among the Japanese left and liberals who were pacifists and posed as faithful defenders of the War-renouncing Constitution. They were opposed to the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty system and fought bitterly against the security treaty revision of 1960, which appeared to make Japan a more active military partner of the United States. The Cold War in Asia divided the Japanese between the pro-American conservatives and the anti-American left. Opposition to the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty system and America's Asian policy was particularly strong in Okinawa, which remained under U.S. military control.

The status of Okinawa as a territory administered by the United States was unique. There was no equivalent in Europe. The status of Okinawa was a symbol of the hegemonic position of the United States in the Pacific. Even when official Washington considered the U.S. presence in Europe to be temporary, it intended to make the Pacific an "American lake." It was Washington's postwar plan to control the former Japanese mandates as strategic trust territories. Okinawa, too, was considered as a possible trust territory. When the Pacific War ended, the U.S. military was considering retaining Okinawa permanently for military purposes. The United States separated the administration of Okinawa from that of mainland Japan from the beginning, firmly kept the islands under the military control, and tried to foster Okinawan separatism for a while. Although the United States practically lost interest in making Okinawa a U.S. trust territory by 1951, Article Three of the San Francisco Peace Treaty reflected America's earlier interest in trusteeship.

## 2. The Coming of the U.S.-Soviet Cold War in Asia

Because the Cold War was not a real war, it cannot be exactly determined when it started and when it ended. The question of its beginning and ending dates is closely related to the question of its definition. As a matter of fact, the state of Cold War was declared by international journalism, not by the two superpowers. Although most historians agree that the Cold War began soon after World War II and had definitely begun by the time of the announcement of the Truman Doctrine in March 1947, their opinions vary with regard to its end. Every time there was a certain degree of détente between the two superpowers, it was said that the Cold War was over. It was said in 1955, when an East-West summit was held ten years after the end of World War II; in 1963, when the partial nuclear test-ban treaty was signed; and in 1972, when Richard Nixon visited both Beijing and Moscow and agreed with Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev to develop U.S.-Soviet relations. I once wrote that the Cold War was over in 1972. Each time détente deteriorated later. In 1989, however, the communist regimes in most of the East European countries collapsed and the Berlin Wall came down. People began to say that the Cold War had come to an end at last. It may be said that the fall of the Wall, the symbol of Cold War stability, symbolically marked the end of the Cold War and opened a new hopeful, but turbulent, era for Europe. Even if some suspected the Cold War had not ended in 1989, it certainly ended in 1991 when the Communist party was disbanded in the Soviet Union and subsequently the Soviet Union itself was dissolved.

Instead of mere détente, a great structural change took place this time. Formerly, the Cold War was defined in terms of mutual perceptions of U.S.-Soviet relations. Professor Yonosuke Nagai, for instance, defined the Cold War as a hostile relationship in which both sides recognized the impossibility of a negotiated settlement of their conflicts and attempted to defend their respective interests through unilateral actions. If this definition is adopted, the end of the Cold War should be dated early, perhaps in 1955. If we set the end of the Cold

War in 1989, we must define the Cold War in terms of the structure of international relations: the rivalry between the U.S.-led Western liberal democratic bloc and the Soviet-led Eastern communist bloc which shaped the basic structure of international relations. The rivalry was sometimes very intense, sometimes more relaxed; nevertheless, it always existed as the fundamental condition of international relations. Such a structure existed in Europe, but not in Asia.

The beginning of the Cold War made it difficult for the United States and the Soviet Union to reach agreement on Asian issues as well as European issues. They disagreed over problems relating to the administration of Korea and the occupation policy toward Japan. Because of their disagreement, the creation of two Koreas became inevitable. In Japan, the United States was able to ignore Soviet opposition and reorient occupation policy toward rebuilding Japan as a potential ally. In this sense, the Cold War spread to Asia. But the United States did not draw the line against Communist expansion in Asia for a while. Although the United States and the Soviet Union established rival regimes in Korea, they were able to agree at least to withdraw their respective military forces from the peninsula. When a civil war developed in China between the Nationalist government and the Communist forces, Washington did not invoke the Truman Doctrine to aid the former. Instead, Washington pursued a policy of giving minimum aid to the Nationalists just to placate the pro-Nationalists in Congress.

It was in respect to Europe that Harry S. Truman had to create a Cold War atmosphere at home with his famous address to launch a new policy to contain Soviet expansion. In Asia, he saw no necessity for a dramatic policy change. He rather resisted pressure to apply the framework of the Cold War to the Chinese civil war. The United States would not try to prevent the Chinese Communists from winning the civil war. Even if it was possible, it would be very costly for the United States, and the Truman administration did not consider it a sensible policy to divert to China excessive resources, which were needed in more vitally important

Europe. When the Nationalists seemed doomed, Truman and his Secretary of State Dean Acheson only hoped that the Communists, the new masters of China, would pursue a policy independent from the Soviet Union.

As Acheson stated in January 1950, America's defensive perimeter in the Pacific ran from the Aleutians to the Philippines, through Japan and Okinawa. Because of her industrial and military potential, Japan was the most important asset for the United States in Asia. Okinawa was also very important, because it offered strategic bases for the U.S. military. Once Okinawa had been eyed as a future U.S. outpost to keep postwar Japan on a leash. But the island chain became a keystone in the defensive perimeter against the Communist countries in Asia. Neither South Korea nor Taiwan, on the other hand, was included within the perimeter. It was unclear whether the United States would defend South Korea if it was attacked by communist forces. As for Taiwan, in January 1950 Truman declared the United States would not intervene if the island was attacked by the Chinese Communists, hoping the Chinese would pursue an independent policy. The theme of the famous Acheson speech in which he mentioned the defensive perimeter was U.S. respect for Asian nationalism. It was a message to Beijing that, if Beijing was not going to align itself with Moscow, Washington would not take a hostile attitude toward Beijing. But Beijing concluded an alliance with Moscow in February 1950. Washington's hope for a more or less neutral China was lost, at least for the time being.

### 3. The United States and the Korea War

The Cold War era roughly corresponds to the Pax Americana. It was the age during which the United States played the role of the global policeman. The Soviet Union played the role of policeman only within its own bloc. It used its military forces to crush rebellions in Hungary in 1955 and in Czechoslovakia in 1968. Until the Soviet Union intervened in 1979 in Afghanistan, which it considered within its sphere, its forces had not engaged in a protracted war. U.S. military forces were more active in the Cold War world. First they fought a limited but full-fledged

war in Korea from 1950 through 1953. In 1954, the United States was on the verge of another war in Indochina. It did not actually fight that time, but 11 years later it involved itself in a long, bitter war in Vietnam.

Because the Soviet diplomatic archives are in the process of being opened to historians, the degree of Soviet involvement in the decision to instigate a war in Korea may soon be known. Probably the initiative to make war against the South came from Pyong-yang. But Moscow was certainly consulted and approved the plan. If the North Koreans were successful, it would enhance Soviet prestige in Asia. If they failed, it would not affect the vital interests of the Soviet Union. Both North Korea and the Soviet Union gambled on a quick military conquest of South Korea. Since the North Koreans aimed to create a fait accompli before the United States could begin any effective counteraction, they could not wait too long. The United States was planning to strengthen its military position in East Asia: it had concluded a mutual security assistance agreement with South Korea; it was to begin negotiating a separate peace treaty with Japan to make the latter an American ally; and it had begun improving military bases in Okinawa. But the United States did not yet appear prepared to take speedy military action in Korea. Therefore, June 1950 may have seemed to the North Koreans to be a good time to begin a war.

The concept of a defensive perimeter was a product of the military thinking that anticipated a third world war whose main theatre would be Europe. Thus official Washington was confronted with a new situation it had not anticipated. But Washington quickly responded to the outbreak of war in Korea. Because North Korea began the war with an all-out offensive, it was a clear case of military aggression. The United States could not remain inactive in the face of such an act of overt aggression. Its inaction would weaken U.S. prestige in Asia, particularly in Japan and the Philippines. The failure of the United States to act promptly in the face of communist aggression against its own client state might affect the confidence of Western European nations in the United States. Thus the Truman administration acted quickly.

Thanks to the absence of a Soviet representative in the U.N. Security Council, U.S. forces were able to act under the banner of the United Nations in accordance with a resolution of the Security Council.

As an orthodox war between regular armed forces, the Korea War was the kind of conflict the United States had become accustomed to fighting in the two world wars. Thus U.S. forces were soon able to turn the tide of war against North Korea. When U.S. forces seemed to be able to pacify the northern part of the peninsula, the Chinese army massively intervened, and U.S. forces were forced to retreat to the southern edge of the peninsula. But the U.S. side was able to resume an offensive to stabilize the front line around the 38th parallel by the spring of 1951. The new feature of the Korean War in the American experience was its nature as a limited war. Even when U.S. troops were forced to retreat to the southern edge of the peninsula, Washington did not want to extend the war into Chinese territory. It did not want to get involved in a large-scale war in Asia against a secondary enemy and weaken its position in Europe against its primary adversary, the Soviet Union.

The outbreak of the Korean War changed U.S. policy toward Taiwan. The United States sent the 7th fleet to the Taiwan Strait to prevent attack from the continent. The action was called "neutralization" of the strait so as not to unduly antagonize the People's Republic. When Chinese troops intervened in the Korean War, the People's Republic became an enemy of the United States. The fact that the United States and the People's Republic fought a "hot" war in Korea was the most important determinant of the nature of the Sino-American cold war. It became out of the question for Washington to recognize the Beijing regime. It was significant that Chinese, not Soviet, forces entered the war when North Korea was about to fall under U.S. military control. Washington understood that the Soviet Union would not employ its own military forces, only those of its proxies to achieve its expansionist aims in East Asia. In Washington's view, China was a Soviet junior partner that was willing to play a more active role than the Soviet Union in communist military expansion in Asia.

The United States became even more hostile toward the People's Republic, whose army had been engaged with U.S. forces in fierce battles in Korea, than toward the Soviet Union.

The outbreak of the Korean War did not delay the peace settlement with Japan. It became more urgent than ever for the United States to have Japan as a partner in East Asia. Thus the San Francisco Peace Conference was called in September 1951. It was not simply an occasion to end the Pacific War formally. The purpose of the peace settlement was to make Japan an American ally. The United States persuaded most of Japan's former enemies to grant Japan a generous peace. But it was not a comprehensive peace. Because of the cold- and hot-war situation, no Chinese government was invited to the conference, and neither the Soviet Union nor its East European allies signed the peace treaty. The Korean War strengthened the desire of the U.S. military to maintain bases it could use a freely in territory under its own administration. Thus the peace treaty granted the United States the right to administer Okinawa, although the United States did not deny Japan's residual sovereignty over Okinawa. Because the United States intended to make Japan a partner in the Cold War, it became unwise for the United States to detach Okinawa from her permanently. American officials suggested that the United States would return the islands to Japan in some future in spite of the provision of the Okinawa article of the peace treaty. The United States wanted to administer the islands indefinitely while placating Japanese irredentism.

#### **4. The United States and the Vietnam War**

The Vietnam War was quite different from the Korean War. It developed in dissimilar circumstances and differed in nature. The Cold War in Europe stabilized after the erection of the Berlin Wall in 1961. Tensions in U.S.-Soviet relations, which had reached a peak during the Cuban missile crisis of 1962, were greatly reduced in 1963, when the partial nuclear test ban treaty was signed by the United States, the Soviet Union and Great Britain. Many spoke of the end of the Cold War. Meanwhile, Sino-Soviet relations had visibly deteriorated. Since

China was more openly hostile to the United States, U.S. leaders began to single out China as the major menace to be contained in East Asia in 1963.

In the mid-1960s, Americans did not have a sense of crisis comparable to that which had prevailed at the outbreak of the Korean War, since there was no longer a monolithic Communist bloc. Everyone had assumed a Soviet decision was behind the North Korean attack, but no one believed that North Vietnam was an agent of the Soviet Union. In view of China's advocacy of anti-American revolutions for national liberation, it was more plausible to argue that the North Vietnamese and their southern allies were under Chinese influence. But this was not convincing because of the very limited Chinese aid to North Vietnam and because of Vietnam's historic animosity toward China. North Vietnam seemed really to be an independent actor. Thus officially, Washington was able to emphasize only North Vietnamese aggression toward South Vietnam. But this was not so apparent either, since the war in Vietnam was a guerilla war. There was no dramatic invasion of the South by regular Vietnamese troops. Most of the North Vietnamese soldiers sneaked into South Vietnam under the guise of South Vietnamese National Liberation fighters.

The United States public and the Congress supported military involvement in Vietnam at first despite the lack of a sense of serious threat or of overt aggression from North Vietnam, because Americans had been accustomed by that time to the use of American military forces to contain communist expansion in various parts of the world. Because of the absence of a sense of serious threat, however, they could not support a large-scale war in Vietnam for long, particularly a war fought with a large army of drafted youths. Because a guerilla war was not the kind of war the United States could fight with skill, the United States was unable to win the war. Although the United States had at one time more than 500,000 soldiers in South Vietnam, it failed in its pacifying mission. Americans began to question the moral and practical basis of the Vietnam War. To cope with the rise of a vigorous antiwar movement and the decline of

domestic support for the war, the Nixon administration found it necessary to substantially reduce U.S. forces in Vietnam well before the armistice agreement was finally signed in January 1973. The armistice was really a victory for the North Vietnamese. They succeeded in absorbing South Vietnam in little more than two years. But their victory turned out to be an empty one. They went on to wage a war in Cambodia to install a government of their choice. Meanwhile, they let many Vietnamese leave the country as "boat people." Engaged in war perpetually and isolated from the world (except for the Soviet Union), the Vietnamese remained mired in a poverty that contrasted sharply with the prosperity the ASEAN nations achieved in the 1980s. Vietnamese victory was the last hurrah for revolutions of national liberation. After Vietnam, such revolutions lost their charm for the Third World. The Americans wasted sizable resources in the Vietnam War, but the Vietnamese lost much more for a vain victory. This was the tragic irony of the Vietnam War.

Just as the outbreak of the Korean War had triggered the militarization of U.S. foreign policy, failure in Vietnam led to a degree of demilitarization. Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger began a new policy toward the Communist World, which emphasized the use of creative diplomacy as its instrument. During the Vietnam War, the United States did not call on Japan to make an active military contribution to the Vietnam War, understanding the latter's constitutional limitations. But it needed more active political support from Japan for its East Asian policy. Partly to secure Japan as a permanent ally, the Johnson administration promised Japan that the United States would return Okinawa to Japan in the near future. Nixon's decision to disengage gradually from Vietnam facilitated the early reversion of Okinawa. Thus the two "hot" wars in Asia had considerable impact upon the political fate of Okinawa. The reversion, however, did not completely satisfy the Okinawans who wished to see U.S. bases much reduced in the islands. Nevertheless, it tamed the anti-American movement in both Okinawa and Japan proper.

## **5. 1972—A Great Turning Point in Asia-Pacific International Relations**

In 1972, Nixon's new policy toward the Communist World marked a dramatic development. His visit to China signaled the end of the U.S.-Chinese cold war. His summit with Brezhnev opened a new phase of U.S.-Soviet détente. The impact of Nixon's new policy was limited in Europe, for West European countries had achieved their own détente with the Soviet Union and other East European neighbors. Its impact was much greater in East Asia, for Sino-American antagonism has been a very important factor in East Asian international relations.

The sudden announcement of what appeared to be Sino-American rapprochement without any prior notice or consultation in 1971 was a shock to Japan and other American allies in East Asia. But the Chinese leadership was interested in building up relations with Japan as well as the United States to improve the diplomatic position of their country, which was in a cold war with the Soviet Union. Because of the Sino-American rapprochement, Japan felt free to seek to establish formal diplomatic relation with the People's Republic of China, severing its diplomatic relationship with the Nationalist regime in Taiwan. With the establishment of diplomatic relations in September 1972, the period in which the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty had been incompatible with Sino-Japanese friendship was over. This change also mellowed the conflicts in Japanese domestic politics. The only remaining cold war in East Asia appeared to be the Sino-Soviet cold war. Indochina after the Vietnam War became a theater of this Sino-Soviet conflict, in which the Soviet Union came to support Vietnamese expansionism while China was vigorously opposed to it.

## **6. The Impact of the End of the European Cold War on Asia**

Taking advantage of the reluctance of post-Vietnam United States intervene in Third World countries, the Soviet Union tried actively to extend its influence in the Third World, involving itself in conflicts in Third World countries. Such a policy seemed to extend the

Soviet sphere. But it also increased the country's financial burden and, in the case of Afghanistan, led the Soviets into a prolonged anti-guerilla war. The Soviet expansionist drive of the 1970s, which reached its culmination in the Afghanistan intervention, provoked the United States to increase its defense expenditures again and take countermeasures in the Third World. Thus U.S.-Soviet relations fell into a state one might term a "new cold war." in the first half of the 1980s. The United States pursued a policy of destabilizing the Soviet-supported regimes in the various countries, trading places with the Soviet Union, which had previously helped revolutionary forces destabilize U.S.-supported regimes.

Meanwhile, considerable change was taking place in the domestic and foreign economic policy of the People's Republic. It began to develop trade relations vigorously with the capitalist nations and build up a market-oriented domestic economy. The planned economy of the Soviet Union, on the other hand, was rather stagnant in the 1970s and 1980s. When the economies of industrial democracies began to recover from the two oil shocks of the 1970s, the gaps in technological and productive capability between the West and the Soviet Union became visible. The rude awakening of the Soviet leadership to this fact brought forth the Gorbachev Revolution, the unexpected development of which finally resulted in the demise not only of the Soviet bloc but also of the Soviet Union itself.

This development fundamentally changed the structure of international relations in Europe. Its impact on international relations in East Asia was considerable, but very limited in scope compared with the great change in Europe. After all, the presence of the Soviet Union was much less important in East Asia than in Europe. U.S.-Soviet rivalry was only part of the whole picture of international relations in East Asia. The end of the Cold War removed this source of tension in East Asian international relations. Gorbachev's reorientation of Soviet foreign policy in a peaceful direction also brought forth the end of the Soviet-Chinese cold war. The future of the countries which inherited the various portions of

the Soviet Union is still uncertain. Whatever happens, however, it will not shake East Asia so profoundly as it will shake Europe.

Changes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union did not bring similar changes among the communist states in Asia. Only Mongolia, which had been a client state of the Soviet Union, experienced a democratic revolution which ended the one-party control of the Communists. China was affected by the fever of democracy, but it managed to maintain the authoritarian regime of the Communist Party by suppressing the democratic activists. Although the West imposed mild economic sanctions upon China after the Tiananmen massacre, the Chinese leadership continued the policy of developing a market economy, and recently has confirmed its commitment to the policy.

One-party rule has survived also in North Korea and Vietnam. However, this does not mean that the end of the Cold War did not affect North Korea and Vietnam. The Soviet Union, later Russia, and East European countries developed relations with South Korea, and the People's Republic, too, began to trade with the South Koreans. Spurred by these developments, politically isolated and economically stagnant North Korea began to attempt to improve its relations with the United States and Japan. It became more serious about developing dialogue with the republic in the south. Vietnam, which had been involved in a war in Cambodia with Soviet aid, began to pursue a more peaceful policy in Cambodia and a policy of economic development at home. The poverty of war-weary Vietnam has contrasted sharply with the prosperous ASEAN countries in the past decade. In recent years, Vietnam has improved its relations with ASEAN countries and Japan and expressed its hope to establish diplomatic relations with the United States. Thus tensions have been reduced in both the Korean peninsula and Indochina.

Since the United States no longer regards the Russian navy as a menace in the Pacific, Washington has lost interest in securing the military bases in the Philippines at a high price. Washington appears to think it can afford a partial military withdrawal from Asia. In this

situation, Washington had better consider scaling down the U.S. military presence in Okinawa. As the Filipinos were more inclined to end the U.S. military presence after the end of the Cold War, the passing of the Cold War era has certainly strengthened the desire of the people in Okinawa to reduce the size of the U.S. military facilities which still occupy much of their land.

The end of the Cold War did not bring to East Asia such a victory of liberal democratic ideals as Europe witnessed. Even among the non-communist states, liberal democracy does not yet prevail. On the other hand, the end of the Cold War has not produced in East Asia such a state of profound confusion as now exists in Yugoslavia or such political instability as now threatens Russia. Thus the international scene in East Asia seems to be more serene than that of Europe. But Europe has a framework of cooperation in the forms of the European Community and NATO, which developed during the Cold War era. The importance of NATO is declining, but the EC will remain as the core stabilizing force in post-Cold War Europe. Non-communist countries in East Asia did not develop a solid general framework of cooperation which can serve as the core stabilizing force. Besides, countries in East Asia do not share a common political and cultural tradition. Although there are some promising developments, such as APEC, it is more difficult to institutionalize cooperative relations in East

Asia. Therefore it is important for Japan and the United States to maintain cooperative relations as the core stabilizing force in post-Cold War East Asia. However, the end of the Cold War deprived U.S.-Japanese relations of a lid on economic friction. Given the increasingly inward-looking tendency of the American public, it is somewhat doubtful whether the United States will have much interest in forming a cooperative framework for Asia-Pacific international relations in the future. The end of the Cold War also removed a strategic link from U.S.-Chinese relations. Together with the Tiananmen incident, the end of the Cold War weakened U.S. interest in close relations with China. Having improved relations with Russia, China, too, considers friendly relations with the United States less important. While there are movements for closer relationships among nations in the Asia-Pacific region, there are also centrifugal forces affecting once closer relationships among them. Although there is now no acute crisis in East Asia, there are clouds which make the future shape of Asia-Pacific international relations uncertain.

Note: In this paper, the Cold War between U.S.-led western bloc and Soviet-led communist bloc is capitalized. When the term is used in such a context as the 'U.S.-Chinese cold war' or the 'Sino-Soviet cold war,' it is written in small letters.