

FEATURE

Is Cold War back?

Cold War is back:

Bannon helps revive U.S. committee to target ‘aggressive totalitarian foe’
China



Steve Bannon helped revive *The Committee on the Present Danger: China*, or CPDC, which will be launched to facilitate “public education and advocacy against the full array of conventional and non-conventional dangers” posed by the ruling Chinese Communist Party. | Alberto Pizzoli/AFP/Getty Images

By WENDY WU

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A group of Washington policy advisers and former U.S. government officials including Steve Bannon have revived a cold war-era

advocacy organization to take aim at China, which it called “an aggressive totalitarian foe.”

The Committee on the Present Danger: China, or CPDC, will be launched to facilitate “public education and advocacy against the full array of conventional and non-conventional dangers” posed by the ruling Chinese Communist

Party, the group said in an announcement on Monday.

The committee's latest iteration underscores the growth of opposition to Beijing in Washington's policymaking circles, which has helped to fuel a bilateral tariff war started by President Donald Trump last year and a new law that will tighten oversight of Chinese investments in the United States.

The Committee on the Present Danger (CPD) was first established in the early 1950s as a bulwark against the influence of communism in the U.S. The group disbanded after some leading members were drafted into the administration of Dwight Eisenhower, but in 1976 was reformed by U.S. foreign policy hawks to counter the Soviet Union during the cold war.

The committee members warned at a press event in Washington on Monday that China had posed a broad range of threats to the U.S.: expanding military power, strengthening strategic nuclear capability, stealing U.S. technology, repressing religions, human rights and minority groups, initiating "chemical warfare" by being the prime source of [fentanyl reaching the U.S.](#) and influencing U.S. campuses and corporations.

"As with the Soviet Union in the past, communist China represents an existential and ideological threat to the United States and to the idea of freedom – one that requires a new American consensus regarding the policies and priorities required to defeat this threat," the committee's announcement said.

The group's vice-chairman, Frank Gaffney, a defense adviser to former president Ronald Reagan, said the committee hoped to "set the stage for a series of national debates about China" to address the threats the country posed. Gaffney has spent much of his time since leaving government in the 1980s propagating stridently anti-Islamic views.

Even if Beijing faithfully kept its commitments under a trade agreement that

Washington is trying to negotiate with China, the U.S. would still face serious threats in other areas and must address those, Gaffney said.

"China's arsenal for global supremacy includes economic, informational, political and military warfare," read a statement by James Fanell, a former U.S. Navy intelligence official focusing on Pacific security affairs. The U.S. "has witnessed already China's expansion into the vacuum of a diminishing U.S. presence in East Asia," he said.

Fanell argued that Washington needed to regain a military deterrence position in the Indo-Pacific. "We already have slipped," he said. "If we fall any further, we may not recover."

Sasha Gong, also a member of the new CPD, said China was "waging an ideological war" against the U.S., which was "losing ground" and should consider it "as urgent as military defense."

"We are disarming ourselves; meanwhile Chinese are taking our ground, broadcasting here, taking our people and winning hearts and minds," said Gong, adding that the U.S. response to China's aggression was "very inadequate."

Gong is the former chief of Voice of America's Mandarin service. She [was sacked](#) by the U.S. government-funded broadcaster along with two others in November for their involvement in a live-streamed 2017 interview with Chinese fugitive tycoon Guo Wengui, who has used social media to make [corruption accusations](#) against senior Chinese officials including Vice-President Wang Qishan.

In a faxed reply to the South China Morning Post, China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that it had not heard about the organization and that it was a "dead end" to revisit the cold war-era zero-sum mindset.

"We have repeatedly stated our stances with regard to the 'China threat' cliché," the ministry said.

“We hope some people in the United States view China’s development in proper perspective, stop groundless accusations and defamation against China, and instead, be more engaged in deeds that would benefit China-U.S. relations, the peace, stability and prosperity of the world,” the ministry said.

Although the committee boasts a roster of China experts, it also features a number of U.S. public figures not known primarily as authorities on the country’s aff

The founders of the committee also include Bannon, the former White House chief strategist and co-founder of [far-right news outlet Breitbart](#), which he described in an interview with American magazine Mother Jones as a “platform for the alt-right”.

Bannon is also known for being a former vice-president of [Cambridge Analytica](#), the now-defunct data analysis firm that harvested the data of millions of Facebook users to predict and influence political movements.

The CPD gained notoriety in its first iteration when it issued NSC 68, a policy directive that called on Congress to triple the U.S. defense budget to counter the Soviet Union’s expansion, according to a 2004 report by The Hill.

The second CPD was formed in 1976 by hawks from the Democratic and Republican parties who believed that “detente [had] lulled everybody into complacency”, The Hill quoted Yale University cold war scholar John Gaddis as saying.

The report described that CPD’s members as the original “neoconservatives” – former liberals who became disillusioned with the Democratic Party during the Jimmy Carter administration and advocated that the U.S. initiate an arms build-up.

Additional reporting by Owen Churchill, Robert Delaney and Laura Zhou.