

Discourse construction in the multipolar world order: A synthetic analysis of the United States - China technology competition

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Abstract: The evolving multipolar world order is being significantly influenced by the intensifying technological rivalry between the United States and China. This article argues that the competition between these two global powers has transcended traditional material and economic dimensions, emerging as a critical arena for discursive struggle. Through a synthetic analytical approach, this study examines and deconstructs dominant geopolitical discourses as represented in scholarly literature and official policy documents. The analysis identifies three prevailing interpretive frameworks: (1) a Western discourse emphasizing the securitization of technology and a confrontation of ideological values; (2) a Chinese discourse focused on counter-hegemony and strategic self-reliance; and (3) a Global South discourse that prioritizes pragmatic non-alignment and developmental objectives. By positioning discourse as a central mechanism in shaping global perceptions and power relations, this study contributes to the theoretical discourse in international and political communication. It also underscores the increasing agency of the Global South in articulating alternative narratives that challenge binary geopolitical framings.

Keywords: Geopolitical discourse; Multipolar world order; Technological rivalry; U.S. - China competition; Global South.

1. Introduction

The contemporary global order is undergoing a significant transformation, signaling the end of the hyper - globalization era and the rise of an era marked by intensified geopolitical competition. At the heart of this shift lies the strategic rivalry between the United States and China - a relationship increasingly

characterized by scholars as a Tech Cold War (Tung, Zander, & Fang, 2023). This confrontation has moved beyond conventional trade disputes and now embodies a deeper antagonism, centered on the struggle for supremacy over critical technologies that are closely tied to national security. Some analysts argue that the current tensions are even more prone to escalation than those of the original Cold War (Tung, Zander, & Fang, 2023, p. 3).

A defining characteristic of this new phase is the rise of techno-nationalism, a doctrine that views technological capability not only as an economic asset but also as a fundamental indicator of national geopolitical strength and influence (Luo, 2022, as cited in Tung, Zander, & Fang, 2023, p. 1). This perspective has prompted both the United States and China to implement protectionist strategies and reconfigure critical technology supply chains. As a consequence, the global order is shifting from one of mutual interdependence to one of structural competition - where trust, legitimacy, and narrative authority are becoming central to strategic positioning.

Within this evolving landscape, the U.S. - China competition plays out not only in material and technological terms but also on a less tangible yet equally consequential terrain: the discursive arena. The war of discourse constitutes a race to define global reality, assert legitimacy, and shape the narratives that inform international understanding and policymaking. As Tung, Zander and Fang (2023, p.5) observe, Western narratives frequently depict the technological rivalry as a clash of civilizations-framing it as a confrontation between the democratic West and a non - Caucasian authoritarian challenger. This framing often invokes ethnic, civilizational, and ideological dimensions that go beyond simple geopolitical rivalry.

However, this binary interpretation is increasingly being contested by actors in the Global South. No longer passive observers, many countries in the Global South are actively constructing alternative narratives and asserting their strategic autonomy through new cooperative frameworks-most notably the expanding

BRICS alliance, which is increasingly viewed as a counterbalance to the G7 (Tung, Zander, & Fang, 2023). These developments reflect a growing sense of agency and identity among Global South nations, which are not only rejecting alignment with either superpower but also formulating independent discursive frameworks that challenge the dominance of Western - centric narratives.

Despite a growing body of scholarship on the geopolitical and technological dimensions of the U.S. - China rivalry, there remains a critical gap in the systematic analysis of how discourse is being constructed across different geopolitical blocs - namely, the West, China, and the Global South. This paper seeks to fill that gap by addressing the following research question: *What are the dominant discursive frameworks being developed by the West, China, and the Global South in relation to the U.S. - China technology competition, and what do these discourses reveal about the shifting dynamics of the multipolar world order?*

To answer this question, the paper adopts a synthetic analytical approach, drawing upon key academic and policy - oriented texts to identify and interpret the three principal discursive formations. These frameworks reflect contrasting worldviews and strategic logics regarding the U.S. - China confrontation. The study argues that discourse is no longer a secondary feature of international competition but has become a primary site of geopolitical contestation. On this front, the Global South emerges not merely as a reactive bloc but as a proactive agent engaged in the construction of alternative global narratives capable of reshaping perceptions and behaviors within the emerging international order.

This paper is organized into five sections. Section One introduces the research problem and situates it within relevant theoretical and empirical contexts. Section Two outlines the theoretical framework, with a particular focus on constructivist perspectives in international relations and discourse studies, especially as they relate to global power and legitimacy. Section Three analyzes the discursive formations articulated by the West, China, and the Global South,

highlighting their ideological assumptions, normative foundations, and strategic objectives. Section Four discusses the study's key findings, drawing attention to their implications for global communication, policymaking, and the trajectory of a multipolar world order. Finally, Section Five concludes the paper and suggests avenues for future research, particularly in relation to the role of narrative and discursive power in shaping global political and communicative structures.

2. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

2.1. The crisis of global governance and the shift toward a multipolar order

The liberal, rules - based international order that emerged in the aftermath of the Cold War - anchored in U.S. hegemonic leadership - is now undergoing a deep crisis of legitimacy and functionality. The so-called unipolar moment has given way to a more contested and fragmented international environment, signaling a systemic transition toward a multipolar world order. This shift involves not merely a redistribution of material power but also a fundamental contestation of the institutional frameworks and normative structures that have underpinned global governance for decades (Acharya, 2018; McKeil, 2024).

At the heart of this crisis is a growing perception-particularly among states in the Global South - that key international institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization (WTO) have become increasingly obsolete and structurally biased. These organizations are frequently criticized for reproducing the strategic interests and value systems of the Global North while failing to reflect the developmental realities and political aspirations of emerging economies (G-24, 2010; Tung, Zander, & Fang, 2023). In this context, United Nations Secretary - General António Guterres has pointedly remarked that these institutions remain outdated, having been established in an era when many of today's sovereign states were still colonial territories (Tung, Zander, & Fang, 2023, p.2).

To conceptualize the evolving distribution of power and the institutional asymmetries embedded within the current system, Acharya (2018) introduces the idea of a Multiplex World Order. This model posits a decentered and multilayered

global structure composed of diverse state and non-state actors operating within overlapping institutional networks. Unlike hierarchical or bipolar configurations, the multiplex order allows for flexible alignments, regional autonomy, and pluralistic norm contestation.

One of the most visible manifestations of this multipolar shift is the rising influence of the BRICS coalition (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa). In 2023, the combined share of global GDP (measured by purchasing power parity) of the BRICS countries officially surpassed that of the G7, reaching 32.1% compared to 29.9%. This gap is expected to widen further following the 2024 expansion of the bloc to include countries such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, and the United Arab Emirates (Tung, Zander, & Fang, 2023, p. 2). Institutions like the New Development Bank (NDB), initiated by BRICS, serve as alternatives to Bretton Woods institutions and aim to establish a more inclusive and multipolar financial architecture that reduces dependence on the U.S. dollar and Western-dominated mechanisms.

Further insights into this geopolitical reconfiguration come from Minko (2024), who examines the shifting dynamics of influence in the Middle East and South Asia. The study highlights how proxy conflicts, emerging strategic alliances, and economic diplomacy are not only transforming regional security complexes but are also contributing to a recalibration of global power relations. Particularly, Gulf states such as the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia are increasingly asserting themselves as strategic intermediaries, seeking to construct a new balance among global power centers while expanding their discursive and economic influence.

2.2. Order - construction theory and the active role of the Global South

Traditional international relations theories, such as realism and liberalism, have often been critiqued for their Eurocentric perspective, portraying non-Western states as passive actors within an international order largely shaped by Western powers. In contrast, the constructivist approach emphasizes the

significance of ideas, norms, and identity in the construction of international order (Acharya, 2018). Accordingly, international order is conceptualized not as a fixed entity but as the outcome of ongoing social interactions, where discourse plays a central role in shaping shared understandings of power, roles, and rules.

Within this framework, Amitav Acharya's (2018) theory of a Multiplex World offers a compelling analytical lens. Acharya posits that actors from the Global South do not merely react to global norms but actively reshape the international order through processes of norm localization and norm subsidiarity - mechanisms whereby global norms are reinterpreted and adapted to align with local cultural and political contexts.

Consequently, the Global South is no longer a passive periphery but a dynamic arena of institutional innovation and norm diffusion. A salient example is ASEAN's proactive development of the ASEAN Guide on AI Governance and Ethics, a regional normative framework that exemplifies efforts to articulate autonomous standards rather than passively adopting Western-imposed norms (ASEAN, 2024).

This active role is further evidenced through South - South cooperation initiatives. According to a report by the United Nations Office for South - South Cooperation (UNOSSC, 2022), developing countries have strengthened networks for knowledge sharing, technical assistance, and the institutionalization of peer - to - peer cooperation. These initiatives have expanded beyond traditional development aid frameworks to include innovation, technology transfer, and financial institution reform (UNOSSC, 2022; United Nations, 2024).

Moreover, policy advocacy by the G-24 group within the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank demonstrates that developing countries are not only seeking alternative models but are actively pursuing reforms within existing international financial institutions (G-24, 2009).

Therefore, the active role of the Global South transcends theoretical postulation; it is evidenced in institutionalization and multilateral diplomacy that

convert soft power into substantial institutional influence. Rather than passively accepting norms established by dominant powers, the Global South increasingly asserts its capacity for norm entrepreneurship, contributing to a global order that is more polycentric, flexible, and reflective of diverse values.

2.3. Discourse in geopolitical competition and the Tech Cold War

In contemporary international relations, power is not solely expressed through material capabilities but is also exercised through discourse. Discourse, understood as a system of language and representation, functions as a crucial instrument of soft power, shaping realities, constructing identities, and conferring or denying legitimacy. States and other actors engage in discursive struggles to define problems, identify threats, and justify policy actions on the global stage. Recent studies on the Tech Cold War demonstrate that media discourse can decisively undermine the legitimacy of multinational corporations by framing them not merely as commercial entities but as proxies of rival states, thus exposing them to geopolitical pressures rather than market mechanisms (Zhang, Xu, & Robson, 2023).

To analyze these discursive struggles, this paper employs two central analytical concepts from communication and security studies: framing and securitization. Framing theory elucidates how actors select and emphasize particular facets of perceived reality to promote specific interpretations, problem definitions, and policy solutions (Tung, Zander, & Fang, 2023). Securitization represents a more intense form of framing, conceptualized as a speech act wherein an issue is presented as an existential threat to the survival of a state. If successful, this discursive move legitimizes extraordinary political measures that exceed normal political procedures (Tung, Zander, & Fang, 2023). The U.S. government's 2019 executive order prohibiting technology from foreign adversaries on grounds of critical national security threats exemplifies a successful securitizing move directly targeting Chinese technology firms (The White House, 2019, as cited in Tung, Zander, & Fang, 2023, p. 5).

The Tech Cold War itself constitutes a potent discursive frame that constructs the U.S. - China relationship as a zero - sum, antagonistic rivalry rather than mere economic competition. This framing underpins policies such as heightened scrutiny of technology acquisitions and efforts toward technological sovereignty (Wang, Yan, Ciabuschi, & Su, 2023). In response to this hostile discursive environment, targeted firms and states craft counter - narratives. For instance, several Chinese high - tech firms have responded to the pressures of the Tech Cold War by fostering organizational cultures rooted in narratives of patriotism, elitism, and resilience, pursuing indigenous innovation as a strategic form of resistance (Zhang, Zhao, Kern, Edwards, & Zhang, 2023). This dynamic highlights that geopolitical competition is shaped not only by material policy measures but also by the discursive battles that legitimize, contest, and respond to those measures.

3. Deconstructing the competing geopolitical discourses

3.1. The Western frame of securitization and a clash of values

The dominant discourse originating from the West, especially the United States, constructs China's technological advancement not merely as economic competition but as a multifaceted security threat. This narrative is underpinned by two interconnected interpretive frames: the securitization of technology and the framing of the confrontation as a fundamental clash of values and civilizations. Together, these frames serve to legitimize confrontational policies and mobilize both domestic and international support.

The primary discursive strategy employed is the securitization of Chinese technology, a process that transforms an issue traditionally situated within the economic or political domain into a perceived existential threat. This reframing justifies the adoption of exceptional and restrictive measures. The case of Huawei exemplifies this approach. The U.S. government explicitly framed Huawei as a national security risk in official communications, culminating in the 2019 executive order prohibiting the use of technologies from foreign adversaries due to national

security concerns (The White House, 2019, as cited in Tung, Zander, & Fang, 2023, p. 5). This governmental stance was further amplified by Western media outlets. Zhang, Xu, and Robson (2023) describe this process as the legitimacy defeat of Huawei on the international stage. Their analysis of British press coverage reveals a consistent association of Huawei with the Chinese government, alongside negative portrayals of China and an emphasis on geopolitical suspicion and tension. This securitizing discourse helped legitimize robust sanctions and regulatory restrictions, effectively transforming a commercial enterprise into an instrument of geopolitical contestation (Zhang, Xu, & Robson, 2023).

This securitization is reinforced by a deeper ideological frame depicting the rivalry as a conflict of values and civilizations. The confrontation is often portrayed as a fundamental struggle between democracy and authoritarianism (Tung, Zander, & Fang, 2023, p. 1). More explicitly, some Western policymakers frame the rivalry in civilizational and even racial terms. Tung, Zander, and Fang (2023, p. 5) cite a former senior U.S. State Department official who characterized the competition with China as a confrontation with a fundamentally different civilization, noting this as the first instance of a great power competitor that is not Caucasian. This framing elevates the conflict from a contest of interests to an existential struggle between inherently incompatible worldviews. It constructs a clear in-group identity (the Western family) and an out - group (China), making compromise difficult and confrontation appear inevitable (Tung, Zander, & Fang, 2023, p. 5).

These interpretive frames are further supported by a persistent narrative of unfair and untrustworthy competition. The roots of the U.S. - China trade war lie in the U.S. Trade Representative's (USTR) Section 301 investigation into China's policies and practices related to technology transfer, intellectual property, and innovation (Office of the United States Trade Representative, 2018, as cited in Tung, Zander, & Fang, 2023, p.1). Scholarly analyses emphasize China's perceived weaknesses in its Intellectual Property Rights Protection (IPRP) regime as evidence of non - compliance with international market norms, justifying

protectionist measures and heightened scrutiny of Chinese technology acquisitions (Wang, Yan, Ciabuschi, & Su, 2023). This narrative positions China not as a legitimate competitor but as a rule - breaking actor whose technological gains are attributed to illicit means, thereby legitimizing the West's confrontational stance.

3.2. The Chinese frame of counter - hegemony and self - eliance

In response to the Western securitization narrative, China has constructed a powerful and coherent counter - discourse. This narrative is not merely defensive; it represents a proactive effort to reframe the conflict, assert national dignity, and articulate an alternative vision of the global order. The discourse is grounded in three core strategies: directly challenging what China perceives as U.S. technological hegemony, cultivating a narrative of strategic self - reliance, and promoting an alternative model of international relations tailored to the Global South.

China's discourse explicitly confronts what it characterizes as U.S. technological hegemony and unilateral coercion. Rather than accepting the legitimacy of U.S. sanctions, Chinese official narratives depict these measures as protectionist attempts to unjustly stifle China's technological advancement. This counter - narrative is substantiated by concrete policy responses, such as the establishment of China's own list of unreliable entities and restrictions on critical metal exports in retaliation against the U.S. CHIPS Act. This interpretive frame was forcefully articulated during the 2021 U.S. - China meeting in Anchorage, where Chinese officials publicly asserted that the United States lacked the qualification to address China from a position of strength (Tung, Zander, & Fang, 2023, p. 4).

Furthermore, China reframes the narrative of victimhood into one of strategic self-reliance and indigenous innovation. This interpretive frame posits that external pressures, though challenging, serve as a catalyst compelling China to accelerate its technological independence. A case study of a Chinese high - tech firm operating amid the Tech Cold War reveals that its organizational culture is deliberately cultivated around three fundamental principles: patriotism (i.e.,

fostering national pride through self - reliance), elitism, and endurance of hardship (Zhang, Zhao, Kern, Edwards, & Zhang, 2023, p. 6). This narrative of overcoming adversity to achieve national objectives functions as a potent internal motivator. The tangible outcomes of this approach are increasingly evident; as Tung, Zander, and Fang (2023, p. 10) observe, Huawei's recent breakthrough in developing its own 7-nanometer chip accomplished under unprecedented U.S. sanctions, symbolizes this narrative of technological resilience.

At the international level, China promotes a broader vision of an alternative world order, a discourse primarily targeted at the Global South. This narrative contrasts perceived Western unilateralism and hypocrisy with the concept of a "community with a shared future for mankind" (Tung, Zander, & Fang, 2023, p. 1). Resonating with Global South nations skeptical of Western - led institutions, this vision emphasizes principles of win-win cooperation and respect for sovereignty. By championing the aspirations of developing countries, China seeks to forge a broad coalition that supports a more multipolar international system - one consistent with the Multiplex World order theorized by scholars such as Acharya (2018). Together, these layered discursive strategies form a multi - dimensional counter - narrative that not only resists Western framing but also actively endeavors to shape a new global consensus.

3.3. The Global South's frame of pragmatism, development, and proactive construction

Beyond the bipolar confrontation between the Western and Chinese interpretive frames, a third, more complex and heterogeneous discursive field is emerging from the Global South. This discourse is not monolithic but characterized by a set of shared tendencies that prioritize strategic autonomy, economic development, and the proactive construction of alternative norms. It reflects a shift from passive objects of great power politics to active agents shaping a multipolar order (Acharya, 2018).

A key characteristic of this discourse is strategic neutrality and hedging. Many Global South nations clearly reject the pressure to choose sides in the U.S.-China confrontation. This is not a passive stance but a proactive strategy aimed at maximizing national interests and maintaining policy space. As Tung, Zander, and Fang (2023, p. 2) observe, most countries prefer to operate in an “à la carte world,” cooperating with different great powers on different issues. In international relations terminology, this strategy is often described as strategic balancing or hedging. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) exemplifies this approach by leveraging U.S. security partnerships while deepening economic ties with China, thereby resisting domination by any single great power (Paikin, 2024). This pragmatic strategy also manifests in the shifting alliances across the Middle East and South Asia, where regional actors recalibrate partnerships to secure influence (Minko, 2024, p. 1).

Furthermore, the Global South’s discourse is predominantly filtered through the lens of developmentalism and pragmatic economic interests. For these nations, geopolitical competition often takes a backseat to its tangible impacts on their primary goals, such as poverty reduction and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The United Nations’ 2024 report on development financing warns that “geopolitical tensions are spilling over into the global economy, further dimming prospects for the world’s poorest” (United Nations, 2024, p.1). Consequently, the discourse from developing countries frequently emphasizes reforming international financial architecture. Through platforms like the G - 24, they advocate for reforms including greater representation and influence in the IMF and World Bank to ensure these institutions better support their development aspirations (G - 24, 2009).

The Global South’s discourse is also increasingly characterized by active norm construction and institutional innovation. As theorized by Acharya (2018), these actors not only adapt or resist external norms but also actively create their

own. The establishment of the BRICS New Development Bank (NDB), aimed at promoting a more multipolar international financial system, exemplifies this effort to build alternative institutions (Tung, Zander, & Fang, 2023, p. 2). Perhaps the most forward-looking example is ASEAN's initiative to create its own Guide on AI Governance and Ethics. By proactively setting standards for this critical emerging technology, ASEAN demonstrates a sophisticated form of agency, shaping governance frameworks rather than passively accepting those established by the U.S. or China (ASEAN, 2024). This trend of parallel institution-building and norm-setting signifies the practical construction of a Multiplex World, wherein the Global South acts as a co-architect of the evolving global order.

4.1. The Narrative Battle and the Future of the Multipolar Order

The preceding analysis of the three competing discourse streams offers more than a mere mapping of divergent perspectives; it reveals significant implications for the evolution of the global order. The findings point to a world marked by profound narrative fragmentation, the limitations of a simplistic bipolar framework, and the increasing centrality of discursive power in shaping international relations.

Firstly, the coexistence of three coherent yet largely irreconcilable discursive worlds underscores a fragmented global order. The transition from an era of hyper-globalization to one characterized by antagonistic competition has precipitated a fracturing of the global economy, whereby a shared consensus on international challenges becomes increasingly elusive (Tung, Zander, & Fang, 2023, p. 8). This is not merely a policy disagreement but a contestation over the very rules-based order itself, with various actors advancing divergent interpretations of international norms (Paikin, 2024). Such narrative fragmentation undermines the foundation for collective action necessary to address pressing global issues, thereby exacerbating uncertainty and volatility in the international system.

Secondly, the coherence and resilience of the Global South's discourse highlight the inadequacy of a binary bipolar model for understanding contemporary geopolitics. The practice of “à la carte” diplomacy, wherein middle powers resist the pressure to choose sides, challenges the simplistic US - China dichotomy (Tung, Zander, & Fang, 2023, p. 2). This reality lends credence to the concept of a Multiplex World - a decentralized, multilayered, and complex order wherein regional actors play significant, active roles in shaping their geopolitical environments (Acharya, 2018). ASEAN's strategic hedging, for example, exemplifies a deliberate effort to preserve autonomy and avoid entanglement in great power rivalry, thereby actively fostering a more multipolar regional dynamic (Paikin, 2024). Accordingly, the future global order is unlikely to mirror the bipolar Cold War model of the twentieth century; instead, it will be shaped by complex interactions among at least three major narrative and political blocs.

Thirdly, the analysis reveals a fundamental transformation in the nature of power in the twenty - first century. While material capabilities remain critical, the capacity to construct and disseminate persuasive narratives discursive power has emerged as a vital arena of great power competition. The example of Huawei's delegitimization in Western media illustrates how discursive attacks can inflict tangible damage on a global corporation, independent of its technical or commercial merits. Zhang, Xu, and Robson (2023) contend that media framing can effectively delegitimize foreign investors by invoking negative stereotypes about their home countries and linking corporate concerns to geopolitical threats. In this environment, success depends not solely on economic or technological strength but also on whose narrative is more compelling. As global interconnectivity deepens, the struggle to control narratives as manifested in the clash of civilizations framing during the Tech Cold War (Tung, Zander, & Fang, 2023, p.5) is poised to become as consequential as competition in the material realm.

4.2. Implications for Small and Medium-Sized States

The complex discursive environment of the multipolar world presents both significant challenges and unique opportunities for small and medium - sized states. On one hand, the risk of being caught in geopolitical crossfire is acute. Rising tensions disrupt trade, slow economic growth, and stifle innovation, with smaller and developing economies among the most vulnerable. These nations face immense pressure to choose sides, potentially compromising their sovereignty and constraining their policy options.

On the other hand, this environment of great power competition creates new avenues for influence and agency. The rivalry for the support of non-aligned nations means smaller states now possess greater bargaining power than in the previous unipolar system. They operate in what Tung, Zander, and Fang (2023, p.2) describe as an “à la carte world,” leveraging competition among great powers to secure favorable terms in trade, investment, and technology transfer. ASEAN’s hedging strategy demonstrates that smaller states can collectively manage great power rivalry by maintaining both security partnerships and economic integration to their advantage (Paikin, 2024). This evolving reality necessitates a shift from reactive to proactive foreign policy, where strategic positioning and skilled diplomacy are paramount.

In this context, where legitimacy is contested and narratives can inflict real-world damage (Zhang, Xu, & Robson, 2023) developing a robust national discursive capacity becomes a strategic imperative rather than a luxury. Merely being an efficient, silent economic actor is insufficient when external actors can shape a nation’s identity and intentions to serve their geopolitical aims. Small and medium-sized states must therefore proactively construct and project coherent narratives that clearly define their national identity, articulate their interests, and present their vision for regional and global order. As Acharya (2018) argues, this

discursive agency transforms states from passive objects to active agents in world order construction.

For Vietnam, these implications hold particular relevance. The established concept of bamboo diplomacy which emphasizes firmness in principle combined with flexibility in method offers a useful narrative framework for developing a national discourse strategy. Vietnam can build on its identity as a resilient nation that has overcome conflict to achieve remarkable development, positioning itself as a model for other developing countries. By underscoring its commitment to international law - a crucial factor amid South China Sea disputes - and its active, constructive role within ASEAN, Vietnam can craft a compelling narrative as a reliable and responsible partner to all major powers. This strategy of proactive, positive self - representation is a vital tool for navigating the complexities of the multipolar narrative battle.

5. Conclusion and future research directions

This paper has argued that the contemporary technology competition between the United States and China should be understood not merely as a geopolitical and economic rivalry but fundamentally as a war of discourse. By synthesizing a broad spectrum of academic and policy literature, this study deconstructed three dominant, competing discursive frames shaping international perceptions of this confrontation. The analysis revealed a Western frame focused on the securitization of technology and a clash of values; a Chinese counter-frame emphasizing anti - hegemony and strategic self - reliance; and a third, more complex frame emerging from the Global South that prioritizes pragmatic non - alignment and developmental interests. The existence of these largely irreconcilable narratives is a defining feature of the fragmented, multipolar world order, where the active agency of the Global South is increasingly consequential.

The primary contribution of this research is twofold. Theoretically, it provides a concrete, synthetic case study that validates and illustrates core tenets of Global

International Relations theory, particularly Acharya's (2018) concepts of a Multiplex World and the active role of non - Western actors in shaping global norms. Analytically, it offers a tripartite framework that transcends a simplistic bipolar analysis of the U.S. - China rivalry. By systematically incorporating the discourse of the Global South, the paper delivers a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics shaping the contemporary global order.

This study is subject to certain limitations, which in turn open avenues for future research. First, as a synthetic analysis grounded in existing literature, it does not conduct primary, large - scale content analysis of media texts. Future research could quantitatively measure the prevalence and evolution of the identified frames to empirically test the propositions advanced here. Second, while this paper analyzes discourse construction, it does not explore discourse reception. Future studies could employ reception analysis to examine how different audiences interpret and respond to these competing narratives. Third, more in-depth case studies are needed to investigate how other influential middle powers - such as Brazil or Turkey - craft their own national discourses to navigate the complexities of the Tech Cold War. Such research will be vital to further elucidate the critical role of narrative and discourse in shaping the modern world order./.

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