

Abstract

This thesis examines the way in which China's share of the rare earths global industry is constructed as a threat. The central argument of the research is that the US discourse presented a new form of danger through the lens of classical geopolitical thinking, thus, creating a new type of prospective conflict derived from resources that are perceived to be scarce and yet relatively abundant. It argues that the construction of this 'threat' that the US faces is a constant articulation of perceived vulnerabilities in shaping geopolitical identities and reinforcing ideologies through which are carried out by different actors.

Rare earths are crucial for modern conditions and their applications include commercial, military and green technology but mining and production are neither economical nor environmentally friendly. The People's Republic of China is the principal exporter of these rare metals, but because of a territorial dispute in the South China Sea in 2010 it has been labelled as a monopoly power. This study seeks to examine the constructed threat that China poses to the US. China, here, is not only constructed to be a resource hungry giant but also a malicious state that would utilise its 'monopoly' status as geopolitical leverage. The thesis will employ discourse analysis and wisdoms of critical geopolitics which provide a critical framework for examining the political consequences of a particular mode of representation. The approaches used here helped to understand how geopolitical identities are repackaged and ideological assumptions that attest to the hegemony of the US of the Post-Cold War era.

Key words: rare earths, critical geopolitics, US discourse, geopolitical identities