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THE EFFECT OF COVID-19 ON CHINA AND CHILE'S ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIP

RACHEL FARMER

Since establishing diplomatic relations in 1971, China's and Chile's economic ties have grown rapidly. With its strategic location and over 4,000 kilometers of Pacific coastline, China views Chile as its door to Latin America.^① Following the signing of a Free Trade Agreement in 2006, and China's expanding search for natural resources, economic relations between the two countries have continued to strengthen in recent years,^② with China becoming Chile's largest trading partner, and Chile becoming China's third largest Latin American trading partner, behind Brazil and Mexico.^③ In 2019, China's export trade value to Chile surpassed \$16.5 billion, and Chile's export trade value to China surpassed \$22.5 billion. As one of the largest consumers of natural resources in the world, China's interest in Chile, the world's largest producer of copper, is understandable. China is the main market for Chilean copper, and also imports other mineral and agricultural products.^④ According to recent figures, China receives more than 47 percent of Chile's total mining exports.^⑤ China also exports heavily to Chile, though generally in terms of manufactured goods.

① Sascha Hannig, "Chile: The Door to China's Influence in Latin America?" *China Observers in Central and Eastern Europe (CHOICE)*, October 15, 2020, accessed December 29, 2020, <https://chinaobservers.eu/chile-the-door-to-chinas-influence-in-latin-america/>.

② "China's Growth Benefits Chile Copper Export: Report," *People's Daily Online*, October 27, 2009, accessed December 29, 2020, <http://en.people.cn/90001/90778/90861/6795202.html>.

③ Mark P. Sullivan and Thomas Lum, U.S. Congressional Research Service, *China's Engagement with Latin America and the Caribbean*, 2020, Report IF10982, Washington, D.C., 1.

④ "UN Comtrade: International Trade Statistics," *United Nations*, accessed November 1, 2020, <https://comtrade.un.org/data>.

⑤ "Coronavirus Impact on China to Weaken Latin American Exports and Growth in H1," *HIS Markit*, February 13, 2020, accessed December 28, 2020, https://cdn.ihsmarkit.com/www/pdf/0220/Coronavirus_impact_on_China_to_weaken_Latin_American_exports_and_growth_in_H1.pdf.

The 2019 outbreak of COVID-19 first appeared in China, but quickly became an international crisis, reaching all corners of the globe. While 96,417 confirmed cases and 4,778 deaths to date are by no means negligible figures, China has fared well in comparison to the rest of the world.^{①②} Its organized response and strict containment measures meant that China was able to control the spread of the virus and therefore begin economic recovery much more quickly. Chile, on the other hand, is fighting a long, slow battle against the coronavirus, like most nations. Despite being the richest country in Latin America and having an advanced healthcare system, Chile was one of the hardest hit by COVID-19 in the region.^③ The first case was reported March 3, 2020, but as of December 28, Chile has recorded 600,105 confirmed cases and 16,443 deaths.^{④⑤} As Chile only spends 4.5 percent of its GDP on its state health system, rather than the WHO-recommended six percent, and only has 11.78 health personnel per 10,000 population, it was not prepared to manage a sudden public health emergency of such scale.^⑥ Hospital beds, ventilators, and other necessary medical equipment ran out quickly. Stinginess of the government's relief package and political strife only exacerbated Chile's struggle to get back on its feet.^⑦ Initial forecasts therefore expected Chile to experience a six percent contraction in GDP in 2020.^⑧ Due to the economic havoc that COVID-19 has wreaked worldwide, China and Chile's economic

① "China: WHO Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Dashboard," *World Health Organization*, December 28, 2020. accessed December 28, 2020, <https://covid19.who.int/region/wpro/country/cn>.

② Data reflects the number of cases and deaths as of the time of writing (December 2020).

③ Merike Blofield, Bert Hoffmann, and Mariana Llanos, "Assessing the Political and Social Impact of the COVID-19 Crisis in Latin America." Report, German Institute of Global and Area Studies (GIGA), 2020, 6.

④ "Chile: WHO Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Dashboard," *World Health Organization*, December 28, 2020. accessed December 28, 2020, <https://covid19.who.int/region/amro/country/cl>.

⑤ Data reflects the number of cases and deaths as of the time of writing (December 2020).

⑥ Barry Cannon, "COVID-19 in Latin America: Uneven Responses, Uneven Impacts, Shared Challenges," in *COVID-19 in the Global South: Impacts and Responses*, ed. Pádraig et al. (Bristol: Bristol University Press, 2020), 109.

⑦ Merike Blofield, Bert Hoffmann, and Mariana Llanos, "Assessing the Political and Social Impact of the COVID-19 Crisis in Latin America," 6.

⑧ Joaquín Cottani, "The Effects of Covid-19 on Latin America's Economy," *Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)*, 2020, 3.

relationship has certainly also been affected. With China as its greatest trading partner, Chile's economic recovery and development prospects are and will continue to be significantly linked to China's. However, as China's economy will likely see growth as all other nations forecast losses, this linkage could be Chile's saving grace. This paper aims to briefly address how COVID-19 has and will potentially continue to affect the economic relationship between China and Chile, primarily in terms of trade.

In the early stages of the pandemic, it was predicted that global trade would be greatly affected by commodity price depression and supply chain disruption. Indeed, the global demand for most commodities has decreased in the past year, and will remain low "as long as the industrialized countries in the Global North remain in crisis mode."^① Chile's mineral sector has been no exception, and will continue to see lower prices as long as there is lower demand.^② Latin America saw decline in most mineral and metal prices, with copper specifically decreasing by 15 percent. Such a drop is significant, as just a ten percent decrease in commodity prices could cost the country more than one percent in GDP growth.^③ Chile's high dependency on the export of minerals and agricultural products means that further fluctuation of these international commodity markets, which have already experienced decline in recent years, will have detrimental effects on an already weakened economy.^④

Another trade-related concern brought forth by COVID-19 is the potential fragmentation and regionalization of supply chains, leading to reshoring of production in key markets and therefore dividing Asian

① Blofield, Hoffmann, and Llanos, 7.

② Ibid.

③ Lee Corrick, et al., "Mining Tax Policy Responses to COVID-19" (International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), 2020), 2.

④ Karolien Van Teijlingen and Barbara Hogenboom, "COVID-19 Impact on the Value Chain in Latin America," Clingendael Institute, 2020, 2.

and non-Asian markets.^① At the beginning of the outbreak, when China was hit hardest, supply chain disruption did become an issue for nations in Latin America that have China as a key trading partner. Disruption at Chinese ports caused delays in incoming shipments from Chile as confinement measures meant reduced operating capacity.^② However, this does not appear to be a lasting detrimental factor to China-Chile trade, as Chinese ports have returned to full operating capacity, and the Chilean government has thus far not applied consistent lockdown measures, meaning mining operations have been able to continue more or less as before.^③

Although China's reduced economic activity in the first few months of 2020 played a part in diminishing demand and weakening the price of copper,^④ its need for the mineral has since risen immensely. Early emergence from lockdown and its ability to ramp up production meant that China was able to begin applying its economic recovery plans—of which copper is an integral part—earlier than most. In the first seven months of the year, China was the only significant market to increase its purchases from Chile, and in these seven months, 35.2 percent of all Chile's exports went to China. July 2020 alone accounted for a 25 percent increase in Chilean exports to China as compared to the previous year.^⑤ Due to the mineral's importance and continued demand from China, Chile's mining and agricultural sectors, the backbone of its export-led development model, have been able to continue operating at only a slightly reduced tempo.^⑥

① Samuel Brannen, Habiba Ahmed, and Henry Newton, "Covid-19 Reshapes the Future," Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), 2020, 16.

② Blofield, Hoffmann, and Llanos, 7.

③ Jorge Heine, "Early Glimpses of Post-Pandemic China-Latin America Relations," Kissinger Institute on China and the United States, Wilson Center, 2020, 1.

④ "Coronavirus Impact on China to Weaken Latin American Exports and Growth in H1," *HIS Markit*, February 13, 2020, https://cdn.ihsmarkit.com/www/pdf/0220/Coronavirus_impact_on_China_to_weaken_Latin_American_exports_and_growth_in_H1.pdf (accessed December 28, 2020).

⑤ Jorge Heine, "Early Glimpses of Post-Pandemic China-Latin America Relations," 1.

⑥ *Ibid.*

COVID-19 has severely impacted the global economy, with few countries exempt from its effects. For Chile and most of Latin America, next year's recovery will be relatively weak, and follow years of low growth. The Chilean economy is expected to recover in 2021, growing around 4.5 percent, but a new constitution and President Piñera's declining legitimacy clouds the long-term horizon.^① Chile's strong ties with China have in part enabled it to avoid more drastic costs to its domestic economy. China's rigorous pandemic response permitted it to restart industries and international commerce, in which Chilean imports play a key role. As China was one of the few large economies to have positive growth in 2020, it was not surprising that some of Latin America's leading countries did more, rather than less, trade with Beijing in 2020.^② For Chile, the primary reason for such an increase is China's dependency on Chilean mineral commodities. The trillion-dollar, multiyear recovery plans in China and other leading nations require significant quantities of copper and will therefore accelerate the demand for the metal which has already increased due to its vital role in the digital, green economy of the future. COVID-19 has also expanded copper's importance due to its antimicrobial properties, creating entirely new sources of demand. Essentially, as a result of the pandemic, the "fundamentals of copper demand have changed for the better."^③

In terms of regional influence, COVID-19 seems to have only magnified preexisting trends. The United States' stringent zero-sum approach to relations with Latin America juxtaposed with Beijing's more flexible and ad hoc engagement strategies has decreased its presence and leadership in the region, thus allowing China to "carry the

① Joaquín Cottani, "The Effects of Covid-19 on Latin America's Economy," 5.

② Jorge Heine, "Early Glimpses of Post-Pandemic China-Latin America Relations," 2.

③ Karina Fernandez-Stark et al., "COVID-19 Precipitated the Age of Copper: Are Producing Countries Prepared to Supply the World and Capture Greater Value?" *Inter-American Development Bank*, September 2, 2020. <https://blogs.iadb.org/energia/en/covid-19-precipitated-the-age-of-copper-are-producing-countries-prepared-to-supply-the-world-and-capture-greater-value/> (accessed December 15, 2020).

mantle.”^{①②} Despite continued pressure from the U.S., Chile and other Latin American countries are likely to increase their engagement with China, as it is currently better equipped to expand its own economic development, thereby enabling Chile to do so as well. Finally, the rapidly developed COVID-19 vaccine, now being distributed worldwide, reduces future risks, minimizes the possibility of renewed outbreak, and allows countries to focus more fully on economic recovery in the coming years.^③ During this recovery period, it is likely that the economic ties between China and Chile will continue to expand.

① Mark P. Sullivan and Thomas Lum, U.S. Congressional Research Service, *China’s Engagement with Latin America and the Caribbean*, 2020, Report IF10982, Washington, D.C., 2.

② Paul Angelo and Rebecca Bill Chavez, “‘Gracias China!!!’,” *The New York Times*, April 21, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/21/opinion/china-latin-america-covid.html> (accessed December 29, 2020).

③ “Coronavirus Impact on China to Weaken Latin American Exports and Growth in H1.”

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- [6] "China: WHO Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Dashboard." *World Health Organization*, December 28, 2020. <https://covid19.who.int/region/amro/country/cn> (accessed December 28, 2020).
- [7] "China's Growth Benefits Chile Copper Export: Report." *People's Daily Online*. October 27, 2009. <http://en.people.cn/90001/90778/90861/6795202.html> (accessed December 29, 2020).
- [8] "Coronavirus Impact on China to Weaken Latin American Exports and Growth in H1." *HIS Markit*. February 13, 2020. https://cdn.ihsmarket.com/www/pdf/0220/Coronavirus_impact_on_China_to_weaken_Latin_American_exports_and_growth_in_H1.pdf (accessed December 28, 2020).
- [9] Corrick, Lee, Thomas Lassourd, Alexandra Readhead, and Jaqueline Taquiri. "Mining Tax Policy Responses to COVID-19." International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), 2020.
- [10] Cottani, Joaquín. "The Effects of Covid-19 on Latin America's Economy." Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), 2020.
- [11] Fernandez-Stark, Karina, Penny Bamber, and Martin Walter. "COVID-19 Precipitated the Age of Copper: Are Producing Countries Prepared to Supply the World and Capture Greater Value?" *Inter-American Development Bank*. September 2, 2020. <https://blogs.iadb.org/energia/en/covid-19-precipitated-the-age-of-copper-are-producing-countries-prepared-to-supply-the-world-and-capture-greater-value/> (accessed December 15, 2020).



- [12] Hannig, Sascha. "Chile: The Door to China's Influence in Latin America?" *China Observers in Central and Eastern Europe (CHOICE)*, October 15, 2020. <https://chinaobservers.eu/chile-the-door-to-chinas-influence-in-latin-america/> (accessed December 30, 2020).
- [13] Heine, Jorge. "Early Glimpses of Post-Pandemic China-Latin America Relations." Kissinger Institute on China and the United States, Wilson Center, 2020.
- [14] Sullivan, Mark P., and Thomas Lum, U.S. Congressional Research Service, *China's Engagement with Latin America and the Caribbean*, 2020, Report IF10982, Washington, D.C.
- [15] "UN Comtrade: International Trade Statistics." *United Nations*. <https://comtrade.un.org/data> (accessed November 1, 2020).
- [16] Van Teijlingen, Karolien, and Barbara Hogenboom. "COVID-19 Impact on the Value Chain in Latin America." Clingendael Institute, 2020

EXPLAINING THE BREAKDOWN OF VIETNAMESE-KHMER ROUGE RELATIONS OUTSIDE OF THE CONTEXT OF THE COLD WAR

BAYLEY MURRAY

Introduction

Too often have International Relations scholars used Cold War politics to explain inter-state conflict during the Cold War Period. Although it cannot be said that any inter-state conflict occurred completely independent from the broader geo-political rivalries between the United States, China, and the USSR, these rivalries were not always the central issue. One important example of this is the Vietnamese-Cambodian War in 1979. After a series of smaller border conflicts, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam invaded Cambodia and ousted their former ally, the Khmer Rouge, from power. At first glance, it would appear as if Sino-Soviet rivalries led to the conflict as they each backed the Khmer Rouge and Vietnam respectively. Deng Xiaoping at the time commented that “the Soviet Union will make use of Vietnam to harass China” and that “Vietnam is playing the role of Cuba”.^① This suggests that even state leaders saw the Cambodian conflict in terms of larger hegemonic struggles between China and the USSR. However, this explanation is inadequate for two reasons. Firstly, the Soviet Union’s military support for Vietnam only began to rapidly increase after the subsequent Chinese invasion, not in Vietnam’s preparation for offensive operations in Cambodia.^② Additionally, Deng had criticized

① “Summary of the President’s First Meeting with PRC Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping,” Foreign Relations of the United States, 1977–1980, Volume XIII, China, 1977–1980, eds. Daniel P. Nickles (Washington: Government Printing Office), Document 202. Memorandum of Conversation.

② Sally W. Stoecker, “Clients and Commitments Soviet-Vietnamese Relations, 1978-1988,” RAND Corporation, December 1989, <https://www.rand.org/pubs/notes/N2737.html>.

the Khmer Rouge in 1978 for “the lack of discipline and putschist, anarchic behavior of their troops along the Vietnam border”.^① This at least suggests that the conflict occurred independently from both Soviet and Chinese ambitions. For the conflict to be labeled as a ‘proxy war’ both sides need to benefit from their exploitation of their allies; if both attempted to maintain the peace it is not a ‘proxy war’. I intend to further analyze this by comparing aid numbers over time from both sides to their respective allies. I also hope to use primary evidence to show that leaders on each side reacted to the conflict rather than instigating it. Finally, I use historical evidence to show how racial tensions between the Vietnamese and Cambodians contributed to the conflict. I was not able to completely rule out other factors, but by disproving existing theories about the Sino-Soviet competition in Indochina, and supporting other theories, I hope to give more agency to both Vietnamese and Cambodian people whose stories have often been overlooked.

Literature Review

One of the main arguments used to support the idea that the war between Cambodia and Vietnam was a proxy war is that massive amounts of aid were funneled to each by their respective allies. Could the aid sent from China to Cambodia have been used to encourage its military operations against Vietnam? China only began to halt economic aid to Vietnam in July 1978 after its Fifth Plenum Declaration to remove Pol Pot from power.^② This suggests that Deng was hoping to maintain some form of a relationship with Vietnam despite a growing Soviet influence. If the conflict were to be instigated by China, an increase in its aid to Cambodia along with a reduction in aid to Vietnam would be expected. Finally, primary sources should indicate whether China was

① Philip Short, *Pol Pot: Anatomy of a Nightmare* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2006) 388-389.

② Nicholas Khoo, “Revisiting the Termination of the Sino-Vietnamese Alliance, 1975-1979,” *European Journal of East Asian Studies* 9, no. 2 (2010): 321-361, <https://doi.org/10.1163/156805810x548784>.

constraining or encouraging Pol Pot's "Anti-Vietnamese" domestic and foreign policy. There is very little evidence to support this narrative. Firstly, China did not increase its aid to Kampuchea in any significant manner from 1975-1979. Its initial aid package in 1975 promised a record 1 billion dollars in Chinese aid for the new government of Cambodia.^① Additionally, China promised in 1976 to send tanks and other vehicles, ammunition, communications equipment, and few other pieces of military hardware.^② Since this was occurring simultaneously with Chinese aid to Vietnam, we can begin to reject the hypothesis that this aid was meant to stir conflict between the two countries. This becomes even clearer when analyzing diplomatic conversations between Chinese and Cambodian officials. Deng Xiaoping warned Nuon Chea in 1978 that "Phnom Penh must be less provocative towards Vietnam, but nevertheless continued to send military and nonmilitary aid to DK in increasing numbers"^③. Additionally, China refused to send its soldiers to the Cambodian border to deter Vietnam. This demonstrates an attempt to restrain their ally rather than to embolden it. Furthermore, Soviet aid to Vietnam during this period is also relevant. An increase in military aid to Vietnam before the outbreak of the conflict would suggest that Soviet ambitions were a driving force behind Vietnam's invasion. On the other hand, if this aid arrived after Vietnam had made its intentions known, it would suggest that the USSR was backing the conflict instead of creating it. Multiple scholars support the idea that the Treaty of Friendship emboldened Vietnam and allowed them to conduct the war with Cambodia. Khoo asserts that "If Hanoi had not had Moscow's backing, in all likelihood it would not have attempted to

① Le Monde has called this the "largest aid package that China had ever given to one country." John Ciociari, "China and the Pol Pot Regime," *Cold War History* 14, no. 2 (2014): 6, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2269301.

② Ben Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime: Race, Power, and Genocide in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge, 1975-79* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996), 136.

③ Andrew Mertha, "Chinese Aid to the Khmer Rouge 1975-1979," in *Brothers in Arms: Chinese Aid to the Khmer Rouge, 1975-1979* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2019), 9.

realize its long-sought goal of establishing control over Cambodia”^①. Furthermore, Thayer and Thakur claim that “the treaty was timed to precede Vietnam’s invasion of Cambodia”.^② There are two issues with these arguments. The first is that Vietnamese cadres were warned of the conflict in June/July 1978, nearly 6 months before the signing of the Friendship Treaty with the Soviet Union. Secondly, the offensive into Cambodia was reportedly arranged around the seasonal weather.^③ This is not to say that the treaty was not an important tool used to deter an aggressive reaction from China, just that it was unlikely to be a deciding factor in Vietnam’s already conceived war plans. As Leighton concludes in their analysis of the conflict, “to view the conflict [as a proxy war] implies that the respective big powers seek specific gains through the military actions of their proxies. As it happens, neither Moscow nor Peking stands to benefit from the current fighting”.^④ We can safely conclude that the “proxy war” explanation is lacking for a multitude of reasons.

The next section of my paper will analyze different understandings and racial tensions in the region and how they contributed to both the Khmer-Vietnamese conflict and the Sino-Vietnamese War. Contrasting views of cultural superiority between Vietnam, China, and Cambodia were dampening points in their relationships and a reason for the buildup of tensions in the region.^⑤ Each sought to expand their influence in Indochina and this again

① Nicholas Khoo, “The End of an ‘Indestructible Friendship’: Soviet Resurgence and the Termination of the Sino-Vietnamese Alliance, 1975–1979,” in *Collateral Damage: Sino-Soviet Rivalry and the Termination of the Sino-Vietnamese Alliance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 128.

② Qiang Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975* (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 133–134.

③ Kevin Klose, “Soviets and Vietnamese Sign Treaty, Warn Chinese,” *The Washington Post*, November 4, 1978, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1978/11/04/soviets-and-vietnamese-sign-treaty-warn-chinese/e7be2390-fc73-441d-b91c-2a196d6476b7/>.

④ Marian Kirsch Leighton, “Perspectives on the Vietnam-Cambodia Border Conflict,” *Asian Survey* 18, no. 5 (1978): 448-457, <https://online.ucpress.edu/as/article-abstract/18/5/448/21357/Perspectives-on-the-Vietnam-Cambodia-Border?redirectedFrom=fulltext>.

⑤ Xiaoming Zhang, “The Roots of the Sino-Vietnamese Conflict,” in *Deng Xiaoping’s Long War: the Military Conflict between China and Vietnam 1979-1991* (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2018), 38.

occurred independently from the Sino-Soviet rivalry. Cambodian rejection of Vietnamese authority can be seen through an analysis of Cambodian purges of Vietnamese Cambodians. Their fear of perceived Vietnamese encroachment on their territory dated back to Pre-Colonial times when Vietnam had annexed parts of The Khmer Kingdom.^① Many myths about the annexation persisted through to the Modern Era and contributed to racist sentiment against the “treacherous Vietnamese”.^② Pol Pot worked to reduce Vietnamese influence in the country long before Vietnam had the military strength to demonstrate its authority in the region. In 1976, Pol Pot “sought to consolidate his position within the Khmer Rouge by beginning to purge members who had ties to Vietnam”^③. Further analysis of these purges, along with those conducted against Chinese Cambodians, could provide evidence that Pol Pot’s extremism was unbound and that China was pulled into the conflict as a result. With regard to Chinese Cambodians there are two schools of thought. The first is that they were targeted due to their wealth as “new peoples” and the second is that they were targeted because they weren’t “Khmer”. There is certainly evidence for both, but the latter is more convincing due to the firsthand accounts brought to us by survivors of the massacres. While I will present these accounts through my research, the next portion of the literature review will focus on arguments made previously. Hinton claims that “Khmer nationalists portrayed the Vietnamese (and, to a much lesser extent, ethnic Chinese) as the quintessentially evil ‘other’... wily, greedy, heartless”.^④ One myth titled “The Master’s Tea” featured Yuon – a slur meaning

① Joseph R. Pouvachy, “Cambodian-Vietnamese Relations,” *Asian Survey* 26, no. 4 (1986): 440-51, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2644157>.

② Anna Lewis, “Historical Patterns of the Racialization of Vietnamese in Cambodia, and Their Relevance Today,” *CERS Working Paper*, 2015, <https://cers.leeds.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/97/2016/04/Historical-patterns-of-the-racialisation-of-Vietnamese-in-Cambodia-and-their-relevance-today-Anna-Lewis.pdf>.

③ Edward C. O’Dowd, *Chinese Military Strategy in the Third Indochina War: The Last Maoist War* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 32.

④ Alexander Laban Hinton, “Manufacturing Difference,” in *Why Did They Kill?: Cambodia in the Shadow of Genocide* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2005), 211-51, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctt1pp9zp>.16.

barbarian which was used against the Vietnamese—torturers placing boiling pots of water on ancient Kampuchean prisoners’ heads and then chastising them for squirming so that they don’t spill their master’s tea.^① With regard to the Chinese Cambodians, some scholars claim that their persecution in Cambodia was partially due to their “widespread involvement in trade and usury”.^② While this was the argument made by Pol Pot in defense of his crackdown against ethnic Chinese, there is little evidence to suggest that they were responsible for the indebtedness of Cambodian peasantry. In fact, research shows that Cambodian indebtedness was actually less common near the major cities.^③ Furthermore, we also know that the Chinese in Cambodia inhabited major city centers. Therefore, we can dismiss Pol Pot’s defenses of his purges against them. The Vietnamese used similar tactics to deprive ethnic Chinese of their property in South Vietnam (after reunification).^④ Vietnamese justifications for this are also dubious as they later expelled all ethnic Chinese from the party.

My research focuses on explaining why the Khmer-Vietnamese rivalry was a product of historical racial and nationalistic tension, rather than a result of Sino-Soviet disputes. While I do not have any intention of completely abandoning the usage of “Cold War politics” to explain the Indochina conflicts, I provide a new lens with which to view them. Hopefully, this will give more agency to the parties involved as well as reducing the tendency of Western scholars to put “Great Powers” at the center of every conflict.

① Kiernan, Ben. “Myth, Nationalism and Genocide.” *Journal of Genocide Research* 3, no. 2 (2001): 187–206. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623520120062402>.

② Alexander Laban Hinton, “A Head for an Eye: Disproportionate Revenge,” in *Why Did They Kill?: Cambodia in the Shadow of Genocide* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2005), 45–95, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctt1pp9zp.11>.

③ Jean Delvert, *Le paysan cambodgien* (Paris: Mouton and Company, 1961), 519.

④ Ramses Amer, “Vietnam’s Policies and the Ethnic Chinese since 1975,” *Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia* 11, no. 1 (1996): 76–104, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41056928>.

Research Design

The majority of my research was concentrated on the treatment of Chinese people in Vietnam and Cambodia from 1970 to 1980. The reason that I chose to focus on Chinese rather than Vietnamese peoples is that I wanted to ensure that I was measuring racial tensions rather than Cold War tensions. If the Cambodian-Vietnamese War was indeed a proxy between China and the Soviet Union, an analysis of either Vietnam's or Cambodia's treatment of the others' citizens would not tell us anything about racial tensions. The Soviet Union or China could have been encouraging violence in order to facilitate the proxy conflict. While this was unlikely to be the case, it is not something that we can rule out. By measuring the treatment of Chinese citizens, we can definitively rule out the possibility that China was the one instigating racial violence. As numerical data from Cambodia is unavailable for the time period in question, I will use refugee data procured by Vietnam to measure the exodus of Sino-Cambodians from the country. We also have data from both French and Vietnamese census records which show the population of Sino-Vietnamese or Hoa People. In addition to these I will be using refugee data to show the movement of Chinese people away from Indochina. My results show that both Kampuchea and Vietnam pursued a variety of policies which negatively impacted the wealthier minority Chinese populations in each country. That being said, the harsh treatment of Vietnam's Hoa people paled in comparison to the treatment of Chinese under Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge. Many Vietnamese and Chinese Cambodians fled to Vietnam to escape persecution in Cambodia. The mistreatment of the Chinese in both countries exemplifies the fears and distrust each country had to the imagined hegemonial intentions of the other. It didn't matter that Mao's China was the ideological leader of Pol Pot's revolution, the Chinese Khmer were to be treated with suspension, nonetheless.

Treatment of Chinese Cambodians

Getting numerical data from Cambodia is difficult due to the anarchic nature of the country during the period from 1975-1979. According to multiple sources, the Chinese population in Cambodia was 425,000 in 1975, but by 1979 only 200,000 had survived the regime.^{①,②} We also know from multiple first-hand accounts that Chinese based in Cambodia were targeted by the Khmer Rouge. Refugees often fled to Thailand or Vietnam and these countries allowed them to remain if they were Vietnamese or Chinese.^{③,④} There were reportedly 20,000 refugees living in Vietnam during the height of the conflict, but very few of them elected to return to Cambodia.^⑤ When confronted by China, Pol Pot defended these persecutions by claiming they were targeted against wealthy upper class citizens who happened to also be Chinese.^⑥ I believe that some scholars are too quick to accept Pol Pot's defense of these persecutions. Even if we buy that the orders coming from the top were in the "sanctimonious pursuit of dismantling the bourgeoisie", it is also important to consider the racial biases of those in lower positions enforcing the orders and their impact on the execution of said orders.

① Ben Kiernan, "The Survival of Cambodia's Ethnic Minorities," *Cultural Survival*, last modified September 1990, <https://www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/survival-cambodias-ethnic-minorities>.

② Rudolph J. Rummel, "Freedom Virtually Ends Genocide and Mass Murder," in *Saving Lives Enriching Life* (Hawaii: Hawaii University Press, 2001).

③ Werner Wiskari, "Vietnam Copes With Cambodian Refugees, Who Sound Thankful Despite Their Privations," *The New York Times*, April 30, 1978, <https://www.nytimes.com/1978/04/30/archives/vietnam-cope-with-cambodian-refugees-who-sound-thankful-despite.html>.

④ Henry Kamm, "Refugee Says Cambodians Deport Ethnic Chinese; Family Home Vandalized," *The New York Times*, December 9, 1979, <https://www.nytimes.com/1979/12/09/archives/refugee-says-cambodians-deport-ethnic-chinese-family-home.html>.

⑤ Leo Dobbs, "Khmer Refugees in VN Wary About Repatriation," *The Phnom Penh Post*, September 12, 1992, <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/khmer-refugees-vn-wary-about-repatriation>.

⑥ Hinton, "A Head for an Eye: Disproportionate Revenge," 45-95.

Treatment of Chinese Vietnamese (Hoa)

Firstly, I want to present the numerical data that I was able to gather about the Hoa people. According to French sources from their time in control of Indochina the population of the Hoa are as follows:

Year	Total number of Chinese
1908	138,284
1910	142,000
1913	189,000
1921	195,000
1922	214,760
1928	325,248
1931	267,000
1936	216,850
1937	217,000
1943	466,000
1949	668.301
1951	732,459
1952	613,576
1953	607,045

①

① Ramses Amer, "French Policies towards the Chinese in Vietnam A Study of Migration and Colonial Responses," original title [Les politiques françaises envers les Chinois du Viêt Nam : études des migrations et des réponses du colonisateur], *Moussons* 16 (2010): 57-80, <https://journals.openedition.org/moussons/192>.

Vietnamese Censuses placed the Hoa population in 1979 and 1989 at 935,074 and 961,702 respectively.^① This puts the average annual growth rate of Hoa people from 1953 to 1979 at 1.4%. This is nearly half the average annual growth rate for all of Vietnam during the same time period.^② This number gets even lower after the Sino-Vietnamese War and falls to .3% from 1979 to 1989. Ethnic Chinese had a smaller growth rate than the rest of the country even when the Sino-Vietnamese alliance was strong. There are three explanations for this. The first is that either the French or the Vietnamese specifically inflated or deflated the ethnic Chinese population. The second is that the mass exodus of ethnic Chinese from Vietnam at the end of the 1970's artificially deflated the growth rate over the 26-year period between the French census in 1953 and the Vietnamese census in 1979. The final explanation is that racial tensions were boiling under the surface and anti-Chinese policies were being created by the Vietnamese even during their alliance with China. There is some evidence to support this. North Vietnam had established its own socialist policies –which tended to impact ethnic Chinese disproportionately—long before it applied them to South Vietnam.^③ More research would need to be conducted to study these policies and their impacts on Chinese living in North Vietnam. It is also important to note that the growth rate was at its smallest after the Sino-Vietnamese War which suggests that their relationship did have an impact on Vietnam's treatment of ethnic Chinese.

① Judith Banister, "Vietnam Population Dynamics and Prospects," Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 1993, https://digitalassets.lib.berkeley.edu/ieas/IRM_06.pdf.

② "Population Growth (Annual %) - Vietnam," World Bank, 2019, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.GROW?locations=VN>.

③ Ramses Amer, "Vietnam's Policies and the Ethnic Chinese since 1975," *Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia* 11, no. 1 (1996): 76-104, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41056928>.

Conclusion

The goal of this paper was to show Khmer and Vietnamese fears of hegemonic rule by other races vis-à-vis their treatment of their own ethnic Chinese minorities. My research shows that their differing relationships with China did not completely alter their treatment of these minorities, though it certainly affected it. Naturally, Chinese living under the Khmer Rouge regime suffered greatly despite the country's close relationship with China. Multiple survivors of the massacres explained how Chinese were targeted by the Khmer Rouge regardless of their class. As I had hypothesized, Chinese in Vietnam also faced low growth rates even when the Sino-Vietnamese alliance was strong. Yet the Cold-War tensions also played a role in the case of Vietnam as the Chinese growth rates dropped rapidly after its conflict with China in 1979. Because of this, I can not rule out the possibility that Cold War politics had an impact on race relations in Indochina. Although I was unable to procure enough evidence to support my claim that racial tensions were the main reason for the conflict between Cambodia and Vietnam, I believe that I have shown how their weariness of foreign influence affected their treatment of their minorities. Additional research should be conducted to determine the extent to which minorities in Cambodia and Vietnam provided their country of origin with strategic benefits. This would better explain these countries' desires to reduce or guard against the influence of these minorities.

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NAGORNO-KARABAKH CONFLICT: RUSSIA'S ROLE IN SHAPING THE GEOPOLITICS OF SOUTH CAUCASUS

DARINE RAZMADZE

Abstract

The Caucasus remains one of the most diverse regions in the geopolitical world that can be characterized by ongoing ethnic conflicts. Tensions related to identity formation and defining ethnic boundaries are relevant when discussing conflicts in this region, particularly, in the South Caucasus. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, several countries (Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia) have been involved in intrastate and interstate wars, the results of which still hinder the economic progress of the whole region. This article examines the importance and relevance of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict since the dissolution of the USSR and explores geopolitical factors that determined South Caucasian regional and geopolitical issues. Not only Armenia, but also other South Caucasian nations, including Georgia, have been involved in frozen conflicts that usually are described through a geopolitical lens. Therefore, it is significant for this article to emphasize the role of national identity, irredentism, and state-to-society relations in regard to resolving secessionist conflicts. Thus, the present research focuses on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, its timeline, the relevance of mediation efforts, and the importance of Russia's role in achieving the settlement in 2020.

Background

The case of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict demonstrates the devastating results of ethnic hatred between Armenians and Azerbaijanis that has persisted for decades. This conflict still remains as one of the persistent territorial disputes in the post-Soviet space. Regional and international mediation efforts have led to various peace proposals with the goal of halting fighting and ensuring peaceful resolution of the conflict between the two South Caucasian countries.^①

With an area of 8,322 square kilometers, the mountainous province of Nagorno-Karabakh is slightly larger than inhabited Israel without the Negev Desert, or almost twice the size of South Ossetia. It has a predominantly Armenian population of about 140,000 people, most of which are Apostolic Christians.^② This enclave became territory of the Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan in 1923 as an autonomous region or “oblast.” At various points during the Soviet period, the Armenians asked Moscow to transfer the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast (NKAO) to Armenia, without success. On one such occasion in the 1960s, social and economic tensions in Karabakh escalated into riots.^③

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, South Caucasian nations started forming independent states. However, their actions resulted in brutal fighting among local ethnic groups in several border areas. Nagorno-Karabakh became one of these hotspots. This conflict broke out due to the struggle of self-determination. The 1991 referendum held in Nagorno-Karabakh resulted in claims that secession from Azerbaijan was not only politically current, but also lawful. The subsequent claim is that the collapse of the Soviet Union allowed the creation of two equal state formations in the territory of Soviet

① Ceyhun Mahmudlu and Shamkhal Abilov, “The peace-making process in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict: why did Iran fail in its mediation effort?” *Journal of Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe* 26, no. 1 (2018): 33.

② Françoise J. Companjen, “Nagorno-Karabakh,” *Atlantisch Perspectief* 34, no. 4 (2010): 9.

③ Andrei A. Kazantsev, Peter Rutland, Svetlana M. Medvedeva, & Ivan A. Safranchuk, “Russia’s policy in the ‘frozen conflicts’ of the post-Soviet space: from ethno-politics to geopolitics,” *Caucasus Survey* 8, no. 2 (2020): 154.

Azerbaijan—the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic.^①

In 1988, the situation significantly deteriorated as Armenia succeeded in occupying the cities around Nagorno-Karabakh. Military tensions continued until 1994 when Armenia and Azerbaijan secured a cease-fire agreement. Nevertheless, it must be mentioned that neither the peace initiatives nor the signed agreements provided enough incentives for the involved nations to find a peaceful resolution to the conflict. Due to its unresolved status, the conflict of Nagorno-Karabakh remained a daunting security challenge for South Caucasian, Russian, and Turkish decision-makers for several decades.

Although frozen conflicts generally remain inactive and seem to have a minor impact on altering the geopolitical discourse of a region, it is still controversial whether the volatile region deserves full attention from the neighboring countries involved, either in the mediation process or the regional processes. As the region of the Caucasus itself has always been diverse and distinct due to its geographical location and the large number of ethnic minorities, various issues are at play when assessing the significance and relevance of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Its multidimensional character is related to the internal and external factors that influence the political outcome of the involved countries.

The complex nature of this particular conflict has consistently directed the domestic political discourse of Armenia and Azerbaijan and affected their foreign policy strategies. According to official statements, Azerbaijani leaders have always regarded Armenian actions in Nagorno-Karabakh and its adjacent areas as violations of their country's sovereignty and territorial integrity. As a result, the Azerbaijani government declared several times that Nagorno-

^① Arsen Gasparyan, "Understanding the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict: domestic politics and twenty-five years of fruitless negotiations 1994–2018," *Caucasus Survey* 7, no. 3 (2019): 244.

Karabakh is allowed to have cultural and economic autonomy, but it cannot be an independent nation. In addition, the position of Azerbaijani side can be analyzed through a political lens; it is more focused on the foreign policy issues of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict than on solving domestic problems, such as corruption and injustice.

As a land-locked country, Armenia mostly depended on Georgian and Russian support to oppose its foes on both sides—Turkey to the west and Azerbaijan to the east. Fighting in 2016 and the continued risk of a new war with Azerbaijan has reduced contemporary political life to the ongoing struggle for the independence of Nagorno-Karabakh as well as the attainment of political and economic independence for Armenia, which still heavily depends on Russian support.^① As for Azerbaijan, its supporter has been Turkey for many years, as they share common values and heritage.

This case study will investigate how political, economic, and foreign policy issues related to Nagorno-Karabakh have influenced its status as a de facto state and how geopolitical processes have affected the peace process. First, it will describe the historical timeline of the conflict. It will then emphasize the importance of the 2020 partial peace agreement, assessing third-party involvement as a relevant conflict resolution strategy.

Conflict Chronology

1988 – The conflict begins in the USSR with the demand for the transfer of the Nagorno-Karabakh

Autonomous Oblast from Azerbaijan to Armenia.^②

1992 – A full-scale war breaks out between Armenia and Azerbaijan following the collapse of the USSR.

^① John O'Loughlin & Vladimir Kolosov, "Building identities in post-Soviet 'de facto states': cultural and political icons in Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia, Transdniestria, and Abkhazia," *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 58, no. 6 (2017): 703.

^② Gasparyan, 236.

- 1994 – Armenia and Azerbaijan reach a ceasefire agreement and begin the peace negotiation process.
- 1997 – Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan reject OSCE Minsk Group peace plans.
- 1998 – Ter Petrossian is forced to resign in February 1998 after advocating for a settlement to the conflict that was opposed by then-Prime Minister Robert Kocharyan and key ministers.^①
- 1999-2001/2003-2004 – Armenian president Robert Kocharyan and Azerbaijani president Heydar Aliyev engage in direct dialogue without the participation of Nagorno-Karabakh authorities.
- 2005 – The EU considers the deployment of peacekeeping forces in anticipation of Armenia and Azerbaijan reaching an agreement over the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.^②
- 2006 – Negotiations and subsequent elections in Armenia and Azerbaijan result in maintaining the status quo.
- 2006-2016 – Minor skirmishes occur near the Armenia-Azerbaijan border, escalating in 2016. Russia again plays a major role in achieving a ceasefire after four days of fighting.^③
- 2016 – The Kremlin and OSCE reach an agreement: Attempting to maintain parity between Armenia and Azerbaijan, Russia provides weaponry (for free or at

① Ibid., 237-238.

② "Russia and Eurasia," *Strategic Survey* 106, no. 1 (2006): 191.

③ Gasparyan, 238.

discounted rates) to the former and sells it to the latter.^①

2020 – The Nagorno-Karabakh peace deal is signed by three states: the two adversaries, Azerbaijan and Armenia, and the mediator, Russia.

Current Situation

On September 27, 2020, Azerbaijan, with the support of Turkey, launched a major attack on Nagorno-Karabakh. Azerbaijan had avoided a full-scale conflict there for 20 years. Its reasons for launching the attack at that time are obscure. Turkey's desire for a successful resolution to the conflict likely derives from economic problems, coupled with reversals in its Mediterranean policy and its inability to impose its will in Syria. It needed a victory somewhere, so aiding its ally in taking Nagorno-Karabakh made sense.^②

In 2020, another war broke out between Armenia and Azerbaijan. According to war analysts, Azerbaijan's decision to attack Armenia derived from its priority of strengthening its reputation on an international level. Even if Armenia did not agree to signing a peace deal and conceding territories to Azerbaijan, it would still have been an achievement for the latter as it demonstrated high military readiness for war.

It must be noted that despite Azerbaijani foreign policy strategy, the possibility of a devastating result for the whole region was likely to happen. Even though Russia does not possess any part of the territory in the South Caucasus, it still has a military agreement with Armenia and provides weaponry to Azerbaijan. Due to such relations, escalation to a regional war would have been possible if another party—Turkey in

① Alena Vieira and Syuzanna Vasilyan, "Armenia and Belarus: caught between the EU's and Russia's conditionalities?" *European Politics and Society* 19, no. 4 (2018): 479.

② George Friedman, "Russia's Search for Strategic Depth," *Geopolitical Futures*, November 17, 2020, <https://geopoliticalfutures.com/russias-search-for-strategic-depth/>.

particular—had joined the Azerbaijani army near the border of Armenia and Azerbaijan. The Russian General Staff still updates plans for such worst-case scenarios, as a new escalation of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict might bring Russian forces in Armenia into a direct confrontation with Turkish troops, but the probability of such scenarios is estimated as very low.^①

Armenia is one of the weakest participants of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict due to its multidimensional foreign policy strategy. On the one hand, it has to agree on terms with Russia as they have created a military alliance and signed a bilateral agreement in 2015 on a Joint Air Defense System in the Caucasus. Additionally, Yerevan is a member of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). On the other hand, after the 2018 elections, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's government tried to maintain good political and economic relations with the EU. As for Azerbaijan, it tried to develop relations with both Russia and the West (especially by participating in various projects related to the transport of oil and gas to Europe as an alternative to Russia).

Some analysts suggest that the recent hostilities in Nagorno-Karabakh are both born of and further fueling Russia-Turkey competition. Turkey sees the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict as a low-cost opportunity to solidify its foothold in the Caucasus and challenge growing bilateral ties between Baku and Moscow while profiting from arms sales to Azerbaijan. The Kremlin seeks rapid de-escalation in Nagorno-Karabakh with minimum Russian investment. The Kremlin may attempt to reach a resolution by force in response to Turkey's growing military role and the United States' growing diplomatic role in the conflict, reasserting Russia's role as the sole power broker in the Caucasus.^②

① Pavel K. Baev, "Russia's policies in the Southern Caucasus and the Caspian area," *European Security* 10, no. 2 (2001): 104.

② Isabel Ivanescu and Ezgi Yazici, "Russia-Turkey Competition Escalates across Theaters," *Institute for the Study of War*, October 27, 2020, <http://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounders/russia-turkey-competition-escalates-across-theaters>.

Debates Analysis

When discussing the possible solutions to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, it is of utmost importance to analyze the existing academic discourse and theoretical suggestions toward a peaceful settlement.

Through thorough analysis of current academic debates, it has become obvious that peacemakers' major concerns are strongly connected to the domestic politics of Armenia and Azerbaijan. One of the possible explanations includes the hypothesis that the parties are rationally holding out for a solution very close to their maximal aspirations.^① On the one hand, the conflict relates to the status of the province in the context of self determination. On the other hand, without first defining the status of Nagorno-Karabakh, it is extremely unlikely that the provincial representatives will come to the negotiation table in an effort to achieve long-lasting peace.

Scholarly literature also suggests that due to the nature and the actors of the border clashes (i.e. former Soviet republics), the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is horizontal in nature. At the same time, it needs to be emphasized that any temporary resolution could strengthen Azerbaijan while making Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh more vulnerable to external threats.

In the case of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the situation was quite harsh from the very beginning due to difficult economic conditions, increasing corruption, ongoing migration, unemployment, poverty, and blockades. Despite the suffering and costs imposed on the populations of all involved parties for more than two decades, political leaders of the parties did not pay the costs.^②

As political scientist Jack Snyder emphasizes, for those elites, nationalism is a convenient doctrine that justifies a partial form of

① Gasparyan, 235.

② Gasparyan, 240.

democracy: the elites rule in the name of the nation but are not fully accountable to its people.^① This idea thoroughly explains the political situation in Armenia before 2018. In addition to this, after assessing Snyder's analysis, it can be added that the possibility of continuing the status quo of the conflict promised more peaceful processes than reaching a solution.

According to political scientist Robert Powell, uneven rates of economic growth and development eventually manifest in changes to the distribution of power, and these shifts may lead to disparities between the distribution of power and benefits. It is possible that Azerbaijan could use force to alter the status quo in its favour. Not only Azerbaijani government supported this discourse, but also Azerbaijan's military readiness.

Russian Influence

The dissolution of the Soviet Union fundamentally altered the political map of Eurasia. At the same time, the USSR legacy did not disappear, as the Russian Federation became a new superpower, retaining its historical image while promoting Eurasian integration. However, Russia's political strategy for implementing its regional policy is viewed as a method of reconstructing its former empire in the post-Soviet space. It remains controversial whether Russian influence and its role as a region builder is a part of a neo-imperialist plan.

Even though Moscow and the West could not possibly agree on terms regarding the future of former Soviet republics, the international community was able to find common ground in the area of conflict resolution. For instance, in the 1990's case of the Organization for Security and Cooperation (OSCE) Minsk Group's attempt to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, friction developed between Russia and

^① Gasparyan, 240.

Sweden over venue choice and differing initiatives. ① The conflict resulted in mediation efforts by Iran, Turkey, Russia, and other European nations (such as France and Sweden) through the channel of the OSCE Minsk Group. However, it remained devastating for both parties as it could easily transform into a full-scale war and result in hundreds of casualties.

Russia's role as a major mediator was nevertheless reinstated in the aftermath of the April 2016 war launched by Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh. It remains a controversial issue whether Russia is prone to unfreezing South Caucasian conflicts as it usually supports the self-declared and unrecognized states (Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Nagorno-Karabakh). Russia has not taken a single significant step in finding solutions for the 'frozen' conflicts in Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Nagorno-Karabakh, maintaining its status quo military and peacekeeping presence but refraining from any political initiatives that could be interpreted as support for secessionism. ②

In spite of Russia's role as a mediator, it is extremely interesting that Russia did not intervene in the conflict militarily, which was both due to the lack of Russian military assets and of a significant Russian-speaking population in the immediate area. ③ It only proposed solutions and participated in peaceful negotiations in Moscow. However, Russian policy in Karabakh retains elements of ambiguity. Russia supplies arms to both Armenia and Azerbaijan within the framework of the CSTO, and Azerbaijan is unhappy that Russia delivers weapons to Armenia at lower prices, or free of charge altogether. Russia also has a strong energy relationship with Azerbaijan, which exports oil through a pipeline to the Russian port of Novorossiysk.

① Vieira and Vasilyan, 474.

② Baev, 95-110 and 103.

③ Sergey V. Kostelyanets, "Russia's Peace Initiatives in the MENA Region: Evaluation and Prospects," *Asian Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies* 13, no. 4 (2019): 534-555 and 542.

An incendiary situation of "neither war nor peace" still exists in the conflict zones. Russia firmly supports direct dialogue between the presidents of Azerbaijan and Armenia, and is taking active measures to assist the search for a solution to the Karabakh problem that would satisfy all involved parties.^① Russia has declined to defend Armenia outright and wants to see an end to the fighting, but Turkey is the driving force. Ankara's support has encouraged Azerbaijan to continue pushing until it reclaims the Nagorno-Karabakh region by force.^② Finally, Russia managed to remain a nonparticipant in the recent full-scale war, but recognized the weakening of Armenia and therefore signed the peace deal with both parties.

Conclusion

Soviet legacy hinders the integration of foreign policy in post-Soviet countries. The case of Nagorno-Karabakh is the most prominent in the recent history of the South Caucasus. The ideological dogma of "fraternal republics" is no longer popular with pro-Western countries in Russia's neighborhood, but integration trajectories are a central theme in the geopolitics of Eurasia. Armenia's decision to maintain good relations with both the EU and Russia resulted in an Azerbaijani victory.

When assessing the significance of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, one must consider not only the historical background, but also the future implications of recent developments. The recent clashes emphasized that the 21st century is an era of globalization and that modern weaponry can totally alter the outcome of a conflict. In this regard, another important factor related to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is the relevance of drone warfare. Since the Cold War, most European armies have phased out self-propelled air defense systems.

① Stanislav Cherniavskii, "Russian Diplomacy in Transcaucasia," *Russian Politics & Law* 39, no. 3 (2001) 7-8.

② "Trouble in Putin's Neighborhood," *Wall Street Journal*, October 19, 2020, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/trouble-in-putins-neighborhood-11603149025>.

Most of the EU's armies— especially those of small and medium-sized member states—would fare just as miserably as the Armenian army in a modern kinetic war.^① In sum, Azerbaijan and Armenia have long fought, at varying levels of intensity, over Nagorno-Karabakh. However, this case study has shown that identifying the real winners and losers of this particular conflict remains a controversial issue.

^① Gustav Gressel, "Military lessons from Nagorno-Karabakh: Reason for Europe to worry," *European Council on Foreign Relations*, November 24, 2020, <https://ecfr.eu/article/military-lessons-from-nagorno-karabakh-reason-for-europe-to-worry/>.

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RETHINKING THE “LOSS OF CHINA”: US INVOLVEMENT IN THE CHINESE CIVIL WAR, 1945-1949

NATHANIEL SHER

Abstract

This research paper analyzes the US’ policy of “partial aid” during the Chinese Civil War. It asks why the US provided economic aid to the GMD, but not large-scale military support. US involvement in the Chinese Civil War is confounding because, on the one hand, the US demonstrated a preference for the Guomindang (GMD); the US maintained direct channels of communication with the GMD, furnished them with arms and aid, and recognized the Nationalist government as the sole legitimate government of China. On the other hand, the US refrained from providing direct ground support to the GMD, and the aid that the US did provide was insufficient to tilt the outcome of the war. Restraint is puzzling in light of not only US capabilities at the time, but also US commitments in Asia later on, from the war in Korea to Vietnam. This research paper makes use of historical records—State Department telegrams, Congressional transcripts, and Presidential memoirs—to analyze the US involvement in the Chinese Civil War. It argues that US policymakers misperceived the degree of alignment between the Chinese Communists and the Soviet Union and, as a result, allocated limited military aid to parts of the world deemed more strategic, namely in Southern Europe and Japan.

Introduction

The study of the Cold War would be incomplete without an understanding of the causes and consequences of the Chinese Civil War. The latter conflict influenced not only the development of China, but also that of the United States, the Soviet Union, and many of the non-aligned

powers on China's periphery and around the world. As Chen Jian writes, the "CCP-GMD confrontation intensified the conflict between the two superpowers, contributing to the escalation and, eventually, crystallization of the Cold War in East Asia."^① From Korea to Vietnam, the Chinese revolution impacted every major conflict in East Asia after 1949, and its influence can still be felt in ripples across the Taiwan Strait.

This paper seeks to examine one aspect of the Chinese Civil War, namely, the role of the United States in the conflict. Throughout the entire war period, between 1945 and 1949, the US maintained direct channels of communication with the GMD, furnished them with arms and aid, and recognized the Nationalist government as the sole legitimate government of China. By 1949, the US had provided the GMD with an estimated \$2 billion worth of economic aid—equivalent to one-eighth the amount granted to countries in Europe under the Marshall Plan.^②

On the other hand, the US provided little in the way of substantive military support. In the fall of 1945, the US army airlifted GMD soldiers to Manchuria to preempt the Communist Party of China (CCP) from receiving the Japanese surrender after World War II.^③ Throughout the Chinese Civil War, the US provided the GMD with \$800 million worth of funds for military procurement and sent direct transfers of 97 naval vessels.^④ However, as infighting broke out between the Nationalists and the Communists after World War II, the US curtailed its military involvement on the mainland. The number of US troops in China declined from an estimated 120,000 before V-J day to less than 6,000 by the end of the Marshall Mission in January 1947.^⑤ As Marshall attempted to mediate

① Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 17.

② Dean Acheson, *Economic Assistance to China and Korea 1949-50* (Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office 1974), 23.

③ John Pomfret, *The Beautiful Country and the Middle Kingdom: America and China, 1776 to Present* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2016), 350.

④ Acheson, *Economic Assistance*, 23; George Marshall, *Foreign Assistance Act Of 1948: Aid to China* (Digital Archives: Marshall Foundation, 1948). <https://www.marshallfoundation.org/library/digital-archive/foreign-assistance-act-1948-aid-china/> (accessed December 8, 2020); *Public Law 512* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1946). <https://www.loc.gov/law/help/statutes-at-large/79th-congress/session-2/c79s2ch580.pdf> (accessed December 8, 2020).

⑤ Tang Tsou, *America's Failure in China: 1941-1950*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 366.

peace between the Nationalists and the Communists, the US maintained an arms embargo on the GMD. In the fall of 1947, General Wedemeyer called for the dispatch of 10,000 military advisers to China, but his proposal was rejected in Congress.^① The *China White Paper*, released by the State Department in August 1949, alleged that the US “scrupulously excluded the use of American personnel in combat operations between the Nationalist Government forces and the Communists.”^②

The American role in the Chinese Civil War is confounding because, on the one hand, US actions reveal a demonstrable preference for the GMD. It is clear that the US provided exclusive economic and military assistance to the Nationalist government. On the other hand, the US refrained from providing direct ground support to the GMD, at least not enough to tilt the outcome of the war. Restraint is puzzling in light of not only US capabilities at the time, but also US commitments in Asia thereafter, from the war in Korea to Vietnam. Immediately after World War II, the US military maintained more than 100,000 soldiers in Japan and, less than one year after the Chinese Civil War, the US sent over 300,000 American troops to the Korean Peninsula.^③ The question is: why did the US pursue a policy of “partial aid” during the Chinese Civil War? Why did the US provide the Chinese Nationalists with economic aid, but not large-scale military support?

At all levels of government—the executive branch, the legislature, the State Department, and the War Department—the abiding American interest in China was the same: to establish a stable and independent China. Continued war in China was the last thing sought by the US, especially if war would prompt Soviet intervention. In December of 1945, Secretary of State Byrnes wrote to the War Department: “Our longer-range goal,” he explained, “is the development of a strong, united, and democratic

① *United States Relations with China*, 764.

② *United States Relations with China*, 311.

③ Tim Kane, “Global U.S. Troop Deployment: 1950-2003,” *The Heritage Foundation* (2004). (accessed December 8, 2020) <https://www.heritage.org/defense/report/global-us-troop-deployment-1950-2003>.

government in China.”^① From the Marshall Mission to the 1948 China Aid Act, this objective remained consistent. The China Aid Act explained that the US sought “to maintain the genuine independence and administrative integrity of China and to sustain and strengthen the principles of individual liberty and free institutions.”^② Above all else, US policymakers wanted to preempt China from becoming a backwater of Soviet-style communism.

As the Cold War picked up after World War II, the US began to perceive the USSR as a revisionist power, expanding its global influence at the expense of US national security interests. The center of gravity in the Cold War hardened in Europe as the Soviets increased their naval presence in the Turkish Straits, backed a communist coup in Czechoslovakia, funneled arms to the DSE in the Greek Civil War, and blockaded all ground transportation into Berlin. Rather than worry about the prospect of the Soviets gaining inroads in China, American policymakers worried that large-scale intervention on the side of the GMD would, in turn, provoke a Soviet counterattack.^③

To combat Soviet influence, the US targeted its limited resources to the strategic centers deemed most at risk of Soviet encroachment. In the mind of the famous diplomat, George Kennan, China did not even top the list of regions necessary to preempt from “fall[ing] into hands hostile.”^④ Japan and the Philippines were the only countries in the Far East seen as strategic priorities and even they were seen as secondary to the industrial centers of Western Europe. While the Truman Doctrine prescribed military support for the governments in Greece and Turkey, it allocated only economic aid to the government in China.^⑤ In this way, US intervention in the Chinese Civil War should be considered in the context of American

① *United States Relations with China*, 609.

② *Foreign Assistance Act of 1948* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1948).
<https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/1948-04-03b.pdf> (accessed December 8, 2020).

③ Tsou, *America's Failure*, 369-371.

④ John L. Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy during the Cold War*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 29.

⑤ Chen Jian, *Mao's China*, 33.

grand strategy in the early days of the Cold War. This paper argues that the US tempered its involvement in China to prevent the USSR from gaining inroads on the mainland and to allocate resources where they were needed most to counterbalance the Soviets: in Southern Europe and Japan.

Literature Review

Following the Chinese Communist Party's victory in the Chinese Civil War and the establishment of the People's Republic of China on October 1st, 1949, debates arose in the US over the "loss of China." By the late 1940s, the Second Red Scare had taken hold in the mind of the American public and the question emerged over the US' role in China. One American Senator by the name of Joseph McCarthy stood up on the Senate floor in 1951 and lambasted George Marshall for his failed attempt to mediate peace between the GMD and CCP—a fruitless effort that was thought to have given the Communists critical breathing room to recoup after World War II.^① Had American policymakers enabled the Communist victory in China? Did the US do enough to prevent the CCP from winning the war?

To clarify the actions of the US government, the State Department released a 1000-page record of the Chinese Civil War, also known as the *China White Paper*.^② The *White Paper* placed the culpability for the outcome of the Chinese Civil War squarely on the shoulders of the GMD and its maladapt leader, Jiang Jieshi. In the preface to the document, Secretary of State Dean Acheson wrote:

"The reasons for the failure of the Chinese National government... do not stem from any inadequacy of American aid... [GMD] leaders had proved incapable of meeting the crisis confronting them, its troops had lost the will to fight, and its government had lost popular support."^③

① Joseph McCarthy, *America's Retreat from Victory: The Story of George Catlett Marshall* (New York: Devin-Adair, 1951).

② *United States Relations with China*.

③ *United States Relations with China*, 14.

This interpretation is shared by President Truman. In his autobiography, Truman writes, "Chiang was defeated by the loss of support among his own people and by American arms, as many of his own generals took their armies, equipped through our aid, into enemy camps."^① Critics on the right of the American political spectrum took the opposite view; they argued that Truman's arms embargo on the GMD critically undermined the Nationalists' capacity to wage war.^② On the other side of the Pacific, the release of the *White Paper* was met with a different kind of incredulity. Mao argued that the document "openly demonstrates U.S. imperialist intervention in China."^③

Regardless of one's interpretation of the *White Paper*, it must be agreed that the US government's self-published history is insufficient to explain all the factors related to its China policy. The *White Paper* was released for public consumption and did not make use of the full cache of classified records. John Service, a Foreign Service Officer tasked with compiling the *White Paper*, remarked later that the administration was trying to "defend themselves, prove that they had done everything they could to support Chiang, that it was not our fault that the Communists were winning. It was Chiang's own failings."^④ To take the US government's record at face value, therefore, is to overlook the areas where the policymaking community made strategic miscalculations. Most palpable, the US government did not anticipate Mao's monumental decision to "lean to one side," announced on June 30th, 1949.^⑤ As Marshall stated publicly in 1947, he knew of "no evidence that the Chinese communists were being

① Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs: Volume 2, Years of Trial and Hope* (Michigan: Doubleday, 1955), 91.

② Joseph McCarthy, *America's Retreat*.

③ Mao Zedong, "Why it is Necessary to Discuss the White Paper," *Selected Works*, August 28, 1949 https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-4/mswv4_68.htm (accessed November 3, 2020).

④ Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, *China Confidential: American Diplomats and Sino-American Relations, 1945-1996*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 63.

⑤ Mao Zedong, "On the People's Democratic Dictatorship," *Selected Works*, June 30, 1949 https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-4/mswv4_65.htm (accessed December 8, 2020).

supported by the USSR.”^① If the US had known that the CCP would take a firm stand on the side of the USSR after the Chinese Civil War, its calculations during the war might have been different.

The problems of relying on the *White Paper* notwithstanding, the secondary literature on US involvement in the Chinese Civil War largely reiterates the view that the US tempered its aid due to negative perceptions of the GMD.^② As William Blum puts it, the Nationalists lost the Civil War because of “the hostility of the Chinese people at large to his [Jiang Jieshi] tyranny, his wanton cruelty, and the extraordinary corruption and decadence of his entire bureaucratic and social system.”^③ Odd Arne Westad comes to a similar conclusion in his book, *Decisive Encounters*. He argues, “the aggressive GMD policies—administrative and fiscal—to exploit all classes of citizens for its own purposes... led to the breakdown of trust between Jiang's regime and those it had been seen to represent.”^④ If this interpretation of the GMD is correct, then American aid could not have fulfilled its original purpose. Without popular support, the Nationalists would have been no more capable of leading a stable and democratic country than the Communists. At one point, in 1947, the US' reluctance to support Jiang Jieshi reached a climax when officials in the administration debated whether to send aid directly to Jiang's opponents in the GMD—to oust him from power from within.^⑤

① “Marshall Expects to go to Moscow,” (New York Times, 12 January 1947), 44. <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1947/01/12/87500171.html> (accessed December 8, 2020).

② Michael Schaller, *The United States and China in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 115. Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, “Nationalist China's Decline and Its Impact on Sino-American Relations, 1949-1950,” in *Uncertain Years: Chinese-American Relations, 1947-1950*, eds. Dorothy Borg and Waldo Heinrichs (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 137. Sun Tung-hsun, “Some Recent American Interpretations of Sino-American Relations of the Late 1940s: An Assessment,” *American Studies* [ROC] 12, no. 4 (1982). Odd Arne Westad, *Decisive Encounters: The Chinese Civil War: 1946-1950*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 12.

③ William Blum, *Killing Hope U.S. Military and CIA Interventions Since World War II – Part I* (London: Zed Books, 2004), 22. https://www.cia.gov/library/abbottabad-compound/13/130AEF1531746AAD6AC03EF59F91E1A1_Killing_Hope_Blum_William.pdf (accessed December 8, 2020).

④ Westad, *Decisive Encounters*, 12.

⑤ Tsou, *America's Failure*, 454.

Beyond the US' negative perceptions of the GDM, some historians suggest that US policy was influenced by the lack of threat perception toward the Chinese Communists.^① The reasons for this analysis on the part of US policymakers included the signing of the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Alliance in 1945, which established official relations between the USSR and the GMD; the perception that Mao espoused an ideology distinct from Stalin based on "agrarian reform"; and the view that an independent government in China was possible under a joint coalition between the GMD and CCP. These views were solidified when the US recognized the Soviet Union's reticence with respect to CCP military activities; in 1949, for example, the USSR discouraged Mao from crossing the Yangtze River out of fear that a China unified under the CCP could pose a threat to the USSR's own position of international communist leadership.^②

Far from opposing the CCP, therefore, the US government sought to include the Party within a democratic coalition in China. Just days before the launch of the Marshall Mission, in December 1945, President Truman described the diplomatic assignment as an effort to promote a "united and democratic China."^③ US policymakers on the ground in China had perceptions of the CCP that ranged from neutral to positive. John Service wrote that the Communists were "progressive" and "democratic."^④ John Paton Davies, an attaché in China during World War II, believed that the CCP favored "democracy, they advocate multi-party participation in politics."^⑤ In Secretary Byrnes' *Memorandum to the War Department*, he

① Michael H. Hunt, "Mao Tse-tung and the Issue of Accommodation with the United States, 1948-1950," in *Uncertain Years*. Anthony Kubek, *How the Far East Was Lost: American Policy and the Creation of Communist China: 1941-1949*, (Eschenburg Press, 2017), 1095-1096. Donald S. Zagoria, "Choice in the Postwar World (2): Containment and China," in *Caging the Bear*, ed. Charles Gatti (Indiana: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1974).

② Donggil Kim, "Stalin and the Chinese Civil War," *Cold War History*, 10, no. 2 (2010).

③ Harry Truman, "President Truman's Statement on United States' China Policy" (New York Times: December 18, 1946) <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1946/12/19/88398779.html?pageNumber=24> (accessed December 8, 2020).

④ Kubek, *How the Far East Was Lost*, note 852.

⑤ Paton Davies, "Communist Policy Toward the Kuomintang." Stilwell Documents, File 155. (Stanford: Hoover Institution, August 3, 1944).

described the CCP as “so-called communists.”^① These perceptions were reinforced by the fact that Mao, early on, encouraged the CCP to adopt a policy of “peace, democracy, and unity.”^②

Even after the Marshall Mission failed, some officials remained recalcitrant that the CCP was altogether distinct from the USSR. In January 1949, the Consul General in Beijing sent a memo to Secretary of State Marshall explaining: “The Chinese Communists are all strongly behind Mao Tse-tung. They are different from other Communists, they do not owe their position to Moscow; they are Chinese first and Communists second. There is a real chance of Mao becoming another Tito.”^③ Later that year, in June, after the CCP had crossed the Yangtze River and captured Nanjing, the US Consul General in Beijing continued to echo similar sentiments. He wrote to the Secretary of State: “Chou and his group may be seriously at odds with the so-called radical wing and may be straining toward Titoism.”^④ In retrospect, it is clear that the US government failed to make an accurate determination of the CCP’s long-term interests. China’s subsequent stand on the side of Soviets represented a major loss for the US’ strategic position in East Asia. As Kubek argues, “The implication that the Chinese Reds were not really Communists, but something of a different nature, was a tragic mistake. The fact that Russia had an overwhelming influence in Communist China had been long known.”^⑤

The historical record regarding US policymakers’ perceptions and misperceptions about the CCP and the GMD is compelling. These perceptions, however, do not explain why the US took a clear, albeit restrained, stand on the side of the GMD. If the GMD was seen as corrupt

① Byrnes, *Memorandum*.

② Chen Jian, *Mao’s China*, 28.

③ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1949, Volume VIII, Far East: China*, eds. Velma Hastings Cassidy et al. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2010), Document 3 <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1949v08/d3> (accessed November 3, 2020).

④ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1949, Volume VIII, Far East: China*, eds. Velma Hastings Cassidy et al. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2010), Document 429 <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1949v08/d429> (accessed November 3, 2020).

⑤ Kubek, *How the Far East Was Lost*, note 1096.

and the CCP seen as unthreatening, why did the US provide assistance to the GMD at all?

Scholars have approached this question by probing not the internal politics of China, but the domestic politics of the United States. First, the American public had a clear affinity with the Nationalist government. Odd Arne Westad suggests, "In Congress, these sentiments—that China must be saved for the West—won increasing support as the Cold War took hold, although the number of congressmen and senators who saw themselves as members of an activist pro-Jiang 'China Lobby' was relatively small."^① Beyond the halls of Congress, many in the American public approved of sending aid to the Nationalists on the grounds that it was they that helped the allies fight against Imperial Japan in World War II.

At the same time, the domestic political climate also constrained US policy in China. After three and a half years of fighting in World War II, the American public had grown weary of war. When Nazi Germany surrendered in May 1945, members of the armed forces began to call for military demobilization and Congress drafted proposals to draw down American forces in Europe and Asia.^② This political backdrop is thought to have influenced President Truman's dubious decision to drop the bomb on Nagasaki and Hiroshima, which brought World War II to an unconditional conclusion at the cost of untold Japanese civilians.^③ In 1945, General Marshall argued before Congress that there was "no relationship whatsoever between the rate of demobilization and any future plans of the army," particularly in Asia.^④ The last thing the American public had an appetite for was to embark on another costly war, let alone in a country as ostensibly insignificant as China was thought to be at the time.

^① Westad, *Decisive Encounters*, 186-187.

^② R. Lee, "The Army 'Mutiny' of 1946." *The Journal of American History*, 53 no. 3 (1966). 555-571.

^③ Michael Pearlman, *Unconditional Surrender, Demobilization, and the Atomic Bomb* (Washington D.C.: Library of Congress, 1997). <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA473544.pdf> (accessed December 8, 2020).

^④ George Marshall, "War Department: Press Branch." (Washington D.C.: Library of Congress, September 20, 1945). http://www.virginiamemory.com/reading_room/this_day_in_virginia_history/september/20 (accessed December 8, 2020).

Nevertheless, there was pushback in Congress for a more assertive policy in China. In 1948, Republican legislators threatened to withhold US aid to Western Europe if the Truman administration did not commit more resources to China.^① During the 1947 debate in Congress to send aid to Europe, one of the foremost representatives of the “China bloc,” Walter H. Judd argued, “[W]e have got to win in Asia, too, or we will ultimately lose in Europe. I cannot myself vote to put some \$20,000,000,000 into holding the line on one front and then ignore another front equally vital to our future.”^② In other branches of government, there was an equal interest in sending aid to the GMD. In his *Memorandum to the War Department*, Secretary Byrnes advocated for sending 10,000 officers to China to provide logistical support to the GMD, conditioning such aid on internal reform within the Nationalist government.^③ Around the same time, in 1948, President Truman’s Republican challenger, Thomas Dewey, criticized Truman’s weak stance on China. On the campaign trail, Dewey argued, “I do not know whether it [aid] would be 50 percent or 80 percent effective, and I doubt if anyone knows. Of one thing I am sure, it would be immensely more effective than nothing.”^④

In this way, the domestic political environment both constrained and enabled US aid to China. On the one hand, the US sought to draw down its forces after World War II. On the other hand, Republican factions at home criticized Truman’s weak stance on China. These disagreements notwithstanding, there remained a consensus that the US should not engage in direct hostilities with the CCP. As Tsang Tsou argues, “none of Marshall’s critics advocated the use of American ground forces in China.”^⑤ Internal debates about the US’ China policy help explain why the US did

① Westad, *Decisive Encounters*, 186.

② Walter H. Judd, *Hearings on Emergency Foreign Aid*, 80th Cong., 1st sess. (Washington D.C.: Governing Printing Office, 1947), 239.

③ *United States Relations with China*, 802-809.

④ Leo Egan, “Dewey Asks Aid to China at Once to Halt Communists” (New York Times, November 25, 1947), 18. <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1947/11/25/104380050.html?pageNumber=1> (accessed December 8, 2020).

⑤ Tsou, *America’s Failure*, 476.

not provide the GMD with substantive military support. They do not explain, however, why the US provided partial aid to the GMD, that is, why the US provided economic aid without military support. To address this question, it is necessary to assess the US' broader strategic calculations in the early days of the Cold War.

The "Loss of China" Reconsidered

The nature of US involvement in the Chinese Civil War was defined by the US' unambiguous preference for the GMD. At the outset of the Marshall Mission, Truman told Marshall that the United States should support GMD troop movements into Manchuria regardless of whether or not the Nationalists blocked a political settlement with the CCP.^① Later, in 1947, General Wedemeyer wrote to Marshall, "a China dominated by Chinese Communists would be inimical to the interests of the United States in view of their openly expressed hostility."^② Many historians have misinterpreted the benign intentions of the Marshall Mission as an example of the US' inaccurate threat perception of the CCP. The reality was that the US sought to use a negotiated settlement in China to strengthen the GMD's position. John Carter Vincent, a Foreign Service Officer who played an outsized role in the formulation of the Marshall Mission, made an argument much to this effect in 1952. Vincent explained, in testimony before the Institute of Pacific Relations, that the Marshall Mission was intended to "support the Nationalist Government of China by bringing about a cessation of civil war and bringing into the Government all of the dissident elements... by taking them in on a minority basis." Much in the same way that "the Communists came into the Government of France at the end of

① *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1945, Volume VII, Far East: China*, eds. Ralph R. Goodwin et al. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1969), 761. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1945v07/d761> (accessed December 8, 2020)

② Wedemeyer, *Report in United States Relations with China*, 773.

the war," American policymakers believed that the CCP would "eventually [get] kicked out" of a coalition government in China.^①

After the Marshall Mission had failed, the US government tempered its military support for the GMD—not because of their aversion to the Nationalist government—but because the administration worried that direct intervention would provoke the Soviets. In August 1946, Marshall informed Jiang that the eruption of a Civil War in China would be "an ideal opportunity for the Communists to expand and for the USSR to support the Chinese Communists."^② Moreover, in the wake of World War II, the US was forced to allocate limited strategic resources to where they were needed most. As Marshall argued in a testimony before the Committee on Foreign Affairs in 1948:

"We cannot afford, economically or militarily, to take over the continued failures of the present Chinese government to the dissipation of our strength in more vital regions where we now have a reasonable opportunity of successfully meeting or thwarting the Communist threat."^③

It was not only the fact of GMD "failures" that precluded military aid, but also that there existed more "vital regions" in terms of US security interests. In the same hearing before Congress in February 1948, Marshall elaborated, "In Greece you have a force which is being supported, according to the report by the United Nations Commission, by bordering states. Now in China we have no concrete evidence that it is supported by Communists from the outside."^④ Were the USSR to take a firm stand on the side of the CCP, US policymakers still did not believe that China would become a strategic liability. Marshall argued, "China does not itself possess the raw material and industrial resources which would enable it to become a first-class military power within the foreseeable future."^⑤

① John S. Service, *Hearings on the Institute of Pacific Relations*, 82d Cong., 1st and 2d sess. (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1951-52), 1714.

② *United States Relations with China*, 176.

③ Marshall, *Foreign Assistance Act Of 1948*.

④ Marshall, *Foreign Assistance Act Of 1948*.

⑤ Marshall, *Foreign Assistance Act Of 1948*.

Ultimately, Congress agreed to grant \$570 million in economic aid to the GMD under the China Aid Act without authorizing the use of American armed forces in China. Later, after the CCP had taken control of the mainland, George Kennan continued to stress that Communist China posed no threat to the US. He argued, "It has been my own thought that the Russians are perhaps the people least able to combine with the Chinese in developing the resources of China and producing anything which in a physical sense would be dangerous to us."^①

In retrospect, the failings of the US government during the Chinese Civil War do not stem from the misperceptions of the interests and intentions of the GMD or the CCP, as has often been argued. Nor can US restraint be attributed solely to domestic calls for demobilization after World War II. Instead, the US government's failure lies in the fact that officials did not foresee the liability that an emboldened Communist China would become to American national security interests. It was not only China's decision to "lean to one side" in 1949 that took the administration by surprise, but also China's decision to intervene in the Korean War in 1950 and, later, develop rapidly during the First Five-Year Plan. Even though China would part ways with the USSR in the late 1950s, as some American officials had predicted, the damage had already been done. The People's Republic of China became a powerful force to be reckoned with and, as a result, the Cold War's center of gravity shifted from Europe to East Asia.

^① George Kennan, *Hearings on the Institute of Pacific Relations*, 82d Cong., 1st and 2d sess. (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1951-52), 1558.

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