



ROUTLEDGE

CHINA AND THE WORLD SINCE 1945

AN INTERNATIONAL HISTORY

CHI-KWAN MARK

MAKING OF THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

China and the World since 1945

The emergence of China as a dominant regional power with global influence is a significant phenomenon in the twenty-first century. Its origin can be traced back to 1949 when the Chinese Communist Party under Mao Zedong came to power and vowed to transform China and the world. After the 'century of humiliation', China was in constant search of a new identity on the world stage. From alliance with the Soviet Union in the 1950s, China normalized relations with America in the 1970s and embraced the global economy and the international community from the 1980s. In *China and the World since 1945: An International History*, Chi-kwan Mark examines China's changing relations with the two superpowers, Asian neighbours, developing countries, and European powers.

The book offers an overview of China's involvement in the Korean War, the Sino-Soviet split, Sino-American rapprochement, the end of the Cold War, and globalization. It also assesses the roles of security, ideology, and domestic politics in Chinese foreign policy and provides a synthesis of the latest archival-based research on China's diplomatic history and Cold War international history. Examining the rise of China from a long-term historical perspective, it will be a valuable resource to students of Chinese history and contemporary international relations.

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Preface

The emergence of the People's Republic of China (PRC) as a dominant regional power with global influence is a significant phenomenon in the twenty-first century. Its origin can be traced back to 1949 when the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) under Mao Zedong came to power and vowed to transform China and the world. This book is about the rise of China from the perspective of international history since 1945. It examines the aims, features, and ramifications of China's foreign policy and relations with the wider world. Viewing China's Cold War experiences as part of the long process of its full integration into the international community in the twenty-first century, the book links the past with the present and provides insight into the making of the contemporary world.

Looking at the 60 years from 1949 to 2009, one may be puzzled by the many twists and turns in China's foreign policy and international relations – from a revolutionary Communist state to America's 'tacit ally' to a responsible great power. Some scholars identify ideology as the main driving force behind Chinese foreign policy particularly during the Maoist period. Committed to the ideology of Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong and his comrades were determined to restore China's rightful position in the world. Others hold that *realpolitik* rather than ideology dictated China's foreign policy during the Cold War and especially in the age of reform since 1978. Like other sovereign states in the international system, China aimed to maximize its security, power, and wealth.

Ideology and security should not be seen in dichotomous terms, however. Thus, some scholars look beyond these two factors to explore the roles of perception, images, and identity in shaping Chinese foreign policy. Seeing international history as intercultural relations, they focus on how China viewed itself, defined its identity, and interacted with other powers in the world. At the heart of China's search for a new

national identity after 1949 was the history and memory of the ‘century of humiliation’, a period when China became a victim of foreign imperialism.

This book, then, examines how China searched for power and security, class struggle and world revolution, and above all a new national identity on the world stage during the Cold War and beyond. Unlike most existing accounts of China’s contemporary foreign policy and international relations, it takes a deliberately historical approach by devoting more space to the Maoist period (Chapters 1–7) than to the post-Mao reform decades (Chapters 8–10). Drawing upon the latest archival-based literature on China’s diplomatic history and Cold War history, the book offers an updated overview of China’s international history from 1949 to 1976. The chapters on the post-1976 period bring the story up to the twenty-first century, highlighting the continuity and change in China’s foreign policy and international orientation.

This book is more a synthesis of the latest research findings of other scholars than an original, archival-based study. I, nonetheless, offer my own interpretation of major events within the framework of China’s search for national identity after the ‘century of humiliation’. Arranged chronologically and thematically, each chapter will look at China’s interactions with the superpowers, Asian neighbours, Third World countries, and European powers, while engaging with the historiographical debate on the topic under study. In this volume, the pinyin system is used for the romanization of Chinese places and names (except Chiang Kai-shek, with which Western readers are more familiar). Due to space constraints, endnotes are kept to a minimum.

I wish to express my gratitude to Dr Alfred Lin, formerly of The University of Hong Kong, and Professor Rosemary Foot of Oxford University, both of whom inspired and guided my study of Chinese diplomatic/international history. I also thank Dr Eve Setch of Routledge, the anonymous reviewers of the original proposal and the manuscript, as well as the authors of the many books and articles on which my analysis was based. Any errors in this book are mine.

Chronology

1946–9		Chinese Civil War
1949	Oct. Dec.	PRC founded Mao arrives in USSR
1950	Feb. Oct.	Sino-Soviet Treaty China intervenes in Korean War
1951	May	‘Peaceful liberation’ of Tibet
1953	Mar. July	Stalin dies Korean War Armistice
1954	May–July Sept.	Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence formulated Geneva Conference on Indochina First Taiwan Strait Crisis starts
1955	April	Bandung Conference
1956	Feb. Oct.	Khrushchev’s ‘de-Stalinization’ speech Polish and Hungarian uprisings
1957	Oct.	USSR launches Sputnik
1958	Aug.–Oct.	Great Leap Forward launched Second Taiwan Strait Crisis
1959	June	Three-year famine starts USSR cancels nuclear agreement with China

	July	Mao criticizes Peng Dehuai at Lushan
	Aug.	Sino-Indian border clashes
1960		USSR withdraws experts from China
1962	Oct.	Sino-Indian Border War Cuban Missile Crisis
1963	Aug.	Partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty
1963–4		Sino-Soviet open polemics Mao proclaims ‘two intermediate zones’
1964	Jan.	France recognizes China
	Oct.	China explodes atomic bomb
1964–5		US escalates war in Vietnam
1965	April	China–North Vietnam agreement on aid
1966		Cultural Revolution starts
1967		‘Power seizure’ in MFA
	Aug.	British Embassy in Beijing sacked
1968	Aug.	USSR invades Czechoslovakia
1969	Mar.–Aug.	Sino-Soviet Border War
1971	Mar.–April	US table-tennis team in China
	July	Kissinger’s secret visit to China
	Sept.	Lin Biao killed in plane crash
	Oct.	PRC admitted into UN
1972	Feb.	Nixon visits China; Shanghai Communiqué
	Sept.	China and Japan establish diplomatic relations
1973	Jan.	Paris Agreement on Vietnam
1974	Feb.	Mao unveils Theory of Three Worlds

1976	Jan. April Sept.	Zhou Enlai dies Tiananmen demonstration Mao dies; Hua Guofeng becomes Party Chairman
1978	Dec.	Deng Xiaoping becomes paramount leader; Economic reform and opening-up policy adopted
1979	Jan. Jan.–Feb. Feb.–Mar.	China and America establish diplomatic relations Deng visits US China–Vietnam Border War
1982	Aug. Sept.	US–China Communiqué on US Arms Sales to Taiwan 'Independent Foreign Policy' proclaimed
1984	Dec.	Sino-British Joint Declaration on Hong Kong handover
1989	April–June May June End of 1989	Tiananmen student protests end in military crackdown Gorbachev visits China Jiang Zemin becomes General Secretary Collapse of communism in Eastern Europe
1991	Dec.	Demise of USSR
1992	Jan.–Feb.	Deng Xiaoping tours southern China
1995–6		Crisis in the Taiwan Strait
1997	Feb. July Oct.	Deng Xiaoping dies Hong Kong returns to China Jiang Zemin visits US
1997–8		Asian financial crisis
1998	June	President Clinton visits China

1999	May	US accidental bombing of Chinese Embassy in Belgrade
2001	April	US spy plane collision
	July	Sino-Russian Treaty of Good-Neighbourliness; Shanghai Cooperation Organization founded
	Sept.	Terrorist attacks on US
	Dec.	China joins WTO
2002	Nov.	Hu Jintao becomes General Secretary
2003	Aug.	Six Party Talks on Korea
	Oct.	China–ASEAN Strategic Partnership
2004		Hu Jintao speaks of China’s ‘peaceful rise/development’
2005	April	Anti-Japanese protests in China
2006		China–US strategic dialogues established
2008	Aug.	Beijing Olympics
2009	Oct.	Sixtieth anniversary of PRC

Abbreviations

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ARF	ASEAN Regional Forum
CCRG	Central Cultural Revolution Group
<i>CQ</i>	<i>China Quarterly</i>
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
CWH	Cold War History
CWIHPB	Cold War International History Project Bulletin
CWIHPWP	Cold War International History Project Working Paper
DH	Diplomatic History
GMD	Guomindang
EU	European Union
FRUS	Foreign Relations of the United States
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
<i>IHR</i>	<i>International History Review</i>
IS	International Security
<i>JCWS</i>	<i>Journal of Cold War Studies</i>
MFN	Most-Favoured-Nation
NPC	National People's Congress
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PRC	People's Republic of China
SARS	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
UN	United Nations
WTO	World Trade Organization

Map



Introduction

History, ideology, and identity

As the founding leaders of the CCP, Mao Zedong (1893–1976), Zhou Enlai (1898–1976), and Deng Xiaoping (1904–97) were all born and brought up during the ‘century of humiliation’. History and experience left a deep impact on them, shaping their characters, ideologies, and worldviews.

‘Century of humiliation’

Until the late eighteenth century, China under the Qing dynasty had been a dominant force in East Asia. One of the world’s oldest continuing civilizations, China or the ‘Middle Kingdom’ viewed itself as the centre of the universe. While not a completely isolated empire, Qing China was willing to engage with other civilizations or ‘barbarians’ only within the restrictive framework of the ‘tribute system’ and the Canton system. Foreign countries seeking diplomatic intercourse had to conform to the norms of Chinese ritual practice such as paying tribute and performing kowtow to the Chinese emperor, although the Qing court did demonstrate flexibility in treating China’s closest neighbours and more distant states differently. Foreign traders eager to acquire Chinese goods such as silk and tea were confined to the city of Canton (Guangzhou) under strict business regulations.

The heyday of the Qing empire coincided with the rapid economic and military growth of Great Britain resulting from the Industrial Revolution. But while there was a huge demand for Chinese tea in Britain, a supposedly self-sufficient China was reluctant to purchase British industrial products in large quantities. In order to compensate for the unfavourable balance of trade, the British sold opium, produced in British East India Company-controlled India, to China. When, in 1839, the Qing court, worrying about the negative impact of opium-smoking, took forcible steps to stop the opium trade, the stage was set

for the clash of the two empires – the First Anglo-Chinese War or, as the Chinese called it, the Opium War.

The First Opium War, which lasted until 1842, marked the onset of the ‘century of humiliation’ for China. Militarily defeated, China was forced to conclude ‘unequal treaties’ with Britain as well as other Western imperialist powers. According to the Treaty of Nanjing (Nanking), five Chinese cities were opened to foreign trade as treaty ports; Hong Kong was ceded in perpetuity to Great Britain; China was forced to pay indemnities; the rate of import tariffs was fixed; and foreigners were granted the right of extra-territoriality that exempted them from Chinese legal jurisdiction.

Owing to its desire to monopolize the opium market in China and to seek diplomatic residence in Beijing, Britain (joined by France) launched a second war against China between 1856 and 1860. Defeated and humiliated (notably by the looting and burning of the Old Summer Palace by the Anglo-French forces), China concluded a second round of ‘unequal treaties’ with the imperialist powers, opening more treaty ports and granting more diplomatic and economic privileges. In 1894–5, Japan joined the imperialist club by defeating and then imposing its ‘unequal treaty’ on China. This triggered a new phase of European imperialism in 1897–8 during which China was divided into spheres of economic and political influence by the Western powers. The year 1900 marked the climax of foreign humiliation of China: in response to the anti-foreign Boxer Rebellion, eight Western powers including Japan launched a joint expedition to Beijing, killing the Boxers, looting Chinese national treasures, and extracting heavy indemnities from a state that was on the brink of economic bankruptcy.

Foreign aggression together with serious domestic problems contributed to the collapse of the Qing dynasty in 1911. But the establishment of a Chinese Republic did not immediately end the suffering of China at the hands of foreign imperialism. In 1915, taking advantage of the European powers’ preoccupation with the First World War, Japan put forward to Yuan Shikai’s government the Twenty-one Demands, which, if accepted, would turn China into Japan’s semi-colony. At the Versailles Peace Conference in 1919, Japan formally took over the former German rights in Shandong, thanks to the acquiescence of the Europeans.

During the Washington Conference of 1921–2, the United States, Japan, Britain, and other European powers endeavoured to create a stable ‘post-imperial order’ in the Asia-Pacific by restricting naval expansion, abrogating the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, and reconsidering their treaty rights in China such as customs control and extra-territoriality. Although, in the late 1920s, some minor concessions were made (for example,

Britain's return of Weihaiwei to China), the European powers were reluctant to give up their main privileges and interests in China. But the main threat to China's territorial integrity increasingly did not come from Europe. In 1931, Japan seized Manchuria in the Northeast; in 1937, it launched a full-scale attack on China, beginning what would be an eight-year-long war.

Yan'an leaders and quasi-diplomats

Against the background of domestic crises and foreign aggression, Mao, Zhou, and Deng began their revolutionary career that would bring them to power in 1949. For Mao, his early life was a long struggle for survival. Since its founding in 1921, the CCP was under the influence of the Moscow-led Communist International (Comintern) and the 'internationalists': Mao was a peripheral figure in the Chinese Communist movement. In unifying China in the 1920s, the Guomindang (GMD) or the Nationalist Party under Chiang Kai-shek (Jiang Jieshi) turned on the Communists, who on several occasions were on the brink of total destruction. To find a breathing space, Mao and his supporters undertook, from their southern base in Jiangxi Province, the Long March in 1934-5. Less than a tenth of them made it to remote Yan'an in Shaanxi in Northwest China. As a result of the epic Long March, together with Moscow's support, by 1936 Mao established himself as the paramount leader of the CCP. But his next struggle started as soon as his intra-party struggle ended.

On 7 July 1937, Japan exploited an incident at the Marco Polo railway bridge to launch a full-scale war against China. After the Xi'an Incident of December 1936, in which he was kidnapped by his generals so as to force him to fight the Japanese aggressors, Chiang agreed to form a second united front with the CCP against the common enemy. During the War of Resistance against Japan, Mao and his comrades conducted a strategy of guerrilla warfare behind the enemy lines and simultaneously developed their power base and forces in Yan'an and a number of border regions across the country.

During the war years, Mao formulated a quasi-official diplomacy of the CCP and developed a rudimentary foreign policy apparatus. Despite the united front with the GMD, Mao realized that the CCP needed allies from the outside world if the Communist revolution were to succeed. Ideology and survival instinct led him turn to the Soviet Union for material and moral support. During the Second World War, however, the Soviet Union put its global interests and the 'grand alliance' with the United States, Britain, and Nationalist China above the

CCP's cause. Nevertheless, Mao still maintained frequent and direct contact with Stalin (by radio and correspondence) and followed the Soviet leader's instructions. Although the relations between the CCP and the Soviets prior to 1945 were not always harmonious and smooth, they were still close and substantial.¹

Besides, the CCP cultivated relations with the Americans within the framework of an international united front. Mao hoped to obtain US military aid against Japan and use Washington to restrain Chiang's power. The visit of American journalist Edgar Snow to the Communist-controlled bases in Shaanxi in mid-1936 was a breakthrough, representing Yan'an's 'first step toward joining the world'.² After spending four months in China and holding long interviews with Mao, Snow published what would be a widely circulated book titled *Red Star over China*, portraying the picture of a dynamic Chinese Communist movement. Thereafter, a dozen Western reporters visited the Communist bases, and helped disseminate a favourable image of the CCP.

In July 1944, the US Army sent an observers' mission, the so-called Dixie Mission, to Yan'an to establish quasi-official contact with the Chinese Communists and explore the possibility of intelligence and military cooperation in the war against Japan. In November, Patrick Hurley, President Franklin Roosevelt's personal envoy to Chiang, visited Yan'an to meet Mao and others in order to mediate in the growing conflict between the GMD and the CCP. Although the Dixie Mission did not result in a military alliance between Washington and Yan'an and the Hurley mediation, if anything, might have increased Mao's suspicion of America's motives, they represented the CCP's first official contacts with the United States.

To implement the CCP's foreign policy, a group of Long March veterans worked as a quasi-diplomatic mission. As early as November 1931, Wang Jiexiang had been assigned as the 'People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs' in the CCP-established 'Soviet Republic' in Jiangxi. By 1937, a 'Foreign Office' came into being in Yan'an, with Bo Gu as the 'Foreign Minister' and Wu Xiuquan as the Secretary-General. In 1939, under the instructions of the CCP Southern Bureau in Chongqing, a foreign affairs group was officially set up under the leadership of Zhou Enlai. A pragmatist and skilful negotiator, Zhou had long been involved in the external aspects of the Party's work, dealing with the Comintern, the GMD, and foreigners in China.³

After the founding of the PRC in 1949, the rudimentary foreign affairs institutions became part of the new Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) headed by Zhou, who served as Premier and Foreign Minister (until early 1958). With their experiences in dealing with the Russians

and the Americans and close working relations with Zhou, the Yan'an quasi-diplomats such as Wang and Wu formed the backbone of the MFA in its formative years.⁴

Zhou was more a policy implementer, however. Mao was the ultimate decision-maker on foreign policy. In the hostile Cold War environment, the policy-making process was highly centralized and personalized. As the paramount leader, Mao created an informal nuclear circle, consisting (at different times) of top CCP leaders such as Zhou, Liu Shaoqi (until 1966), Lin Biao (1966–71), and Deng Xiaoping (in 1975). Although the Politburo and its Standing Committee and the CCP Secretariat deliberated on important foreign affairs issues, Mao saw the meetings as venues to build consensus among his colleagues and to confer legitimacy on the decision that he favoured.⁵

Ideology and security

As a firm believer in Marxism-Leninism, Mao aspired to create a classless, egalitarian Chinese society free of feudalism, capitalism, and imperialism. Mao defined friends and enemies in terms of 'contradictions' – principal/antagonistic and secondary/non-antagonist – and applied the doctrine of 'united front' – tactical alignment with the 'middle-roaders' against the main enemy – to carry out class struggles. As a Communist theoretician, Mao 'sinicized' Marxism-Leninism by taking into account China's historical and geographical background. Realizing the weakness of the working class in a largely agrarian China, Mao emphasized the role of peasants in the revolutionary struggle against the GMD and the Japanese. And he applied it to foreign policy after 1949. Thus, he looked on the developing countries in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East as global 'peasants' – the 'countryside' – which would encircle and defeat the imperialistic capitalist world – the 'cities' – in the Cold War struggle.

For Mao, the Chinese revolution did not end in 1949 but needed to continue until all the imperialist influences and institutions on the mainland were destroyed, and China restored to its central position in the international system. Here lay his ideology of 'continuous revolution'.⁶ To maintain the inner dynamics of revolution, Mao needed to constantly mobilize the Chinese people through domestic political campaigns and external crises. In this regard, there was a close connection between domestic politics and foreign policy in Mao's thinking. Furthermore, Mao was firmly committed to proletarian internationalism. Seeing the Chinese Communist revolution as part of the world proletarian revolution, he felt strongly that China had an obligation to promote revolutionary

transformation abroad. To continue revolution at home and abroad after 1949 was essential to China's identity as a socialist state.

Mao and Zhou were also practitioners of *realpolitik*. Their main concern was to uphold China's national sovereignty and territorial integrity. Similar to other states in the international system, China's foreign policy was shaped by threat perceptions and security considerations. China needed to defend its long border, deter aggression, and fight wars if necessary.

Nevertheless, ideology and security (both state and regime) seemed to be two sides of the same coin. To promote continuous revolution at home and abroad was meant to ensure the survival of the PRC as a socialist state and to enhance the legitimacy of the CCP as the ruling party. In essence, Mao was a man of great complexities and contradictions: he was simultaneously idealistic and pragmatic, internationalist and nationalist.⁷

Search for national identity

China's foreign policy and international relations can be examined from the perspective of the search for national identity. A national identity 'enacts itself by assuming various national roles' and 'through interactions with other players in the same arena'.⁸ It 'influences attitudes and policies alike, being the psychological foundation for the roles and behaviour patterns of a country in the international arena'.⁹

After 1949, how China defined itself, perceived its role in the world, and interacted with other powers were significantly shaped by the history and memory of the 'century of humiliation'. To eradicate the legacies of foreign imperialism was at the heart of China's search for a new national identity after liberation. But as Lowell Dittmer argues: 'Almost from the beginning, the PRC has been afflicted with a national identity dilemma.'¹⁰ On the one hand, for the sake of ideological legitimacy and solidarity, China saw itself as part of the socialist bloc headed by the Soviet Union. On the other hand, as a newly independent and undeveloped nation, China identified with the oppressed peoples and nations in the 'Third World'. At times, the two identities coexisted easily. But at other times, nationalist aspirations came into conflict with proletarian internationalism, making it necessary for China to privilege one identity over the other. Nevertheless, there has been a consistent thread running through China's quest for national identity (or identities) on the world stage since 1949 – a strong desire to achieve national independence and equality after a century of foreign invasion and exploitation.

It is important to mention two ironies in China's search for a new national identity following the 'century of humiliation'. One was the salience of continuity across the divide of 1949. Essentially, the borders of the PRC corresponded to those of the Qing empire, which the Republic of China inherited. With the exception of Outer Mongolia, Communist China was in control of Manchuria (despite Soviet influence until the mid-1950s), Mongolia, and Tibet (which was 'peacefully liberated' in 1951). Besides, the Chinese Communists built on the success of the Nationalists in dismantling the treaty-port system in China. In the course of the 1930s, the Nationalist government regained control over tariffs, maritime customs, salt monopoly revenues, and nearly two-thirds of the foreign concessions in the treaty ports; in 1943 it concluded a treaty with Britain and the United States that formally abolished extra-territoriality and all foreign concessions. After 1949 Mao and his comrades continued the policy goals that the Republican leaders had set but failed to achieve – defending China against foreign aggression and seeking international recognition.¹¹

Another irony was that, while repudiating the legacies of the 'century of humiliation', the CCP was keen to use the past to serve the present. During the Maoist era, the memory of 'national humiliation' was promoted to indoctrinate and mobilize the Chinese people against foreign enemies, notably the United States, which refused to recognize and respect New China. Despite proclaiming that the Chinese people had 'stood up', Mao could not rid himself of a 'victim mentality' after liberation. The post-Mao leaderships too invoked the 'victimization' discourse, especially after the Tiananmen crackdown in 1989 and the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. The aim was not only to unite the Chinese nation in the light of the Western embargoes and the uncertain post-Cold War international environment, but also to shore up the declining legitimacy of Communist rule in the age of unprecedented economic reform.¹²

Notes

- 1 For studies emphasizing close CCP–Soviet relations prior to 1945, see Michael M. Sheng, *Battling Western Imperialism: Mao, Stalin, and the United States* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); Alexander V. Pantsov, 'How Stalin Helped Mao Zedong Become the Leader: New Archival Documents on Moscow's Role in the Rise of Mao', *Issues & Studies* 41: 3 (September 2005): 181–207.
- 2 Nui Jun, *From Yan'an to the World: The Origin and Development of Chinese Communist Foreign Policy* (1992), edited and translated by Steven I. Levine (Norwalk, Conn.: EastBridge, 2005), 21.

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