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## Communist China in the 1950s: a Case Study of Non-Recognized States

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Communist China in the 1950s: a Case Study  
of Non-Recognized States at International Conferences

Senior Project submitted to  
The Division of Social Studies  
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by Aidan Barry

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## **Abstract**

This paper will attempt to examine the pitfalls of non-recognition through an examination of China in the 1940s and 50s. China in this era faced many challenges ranging from war with foreign powers, issues of economic development, and poor relations with its neighbors in addition to its lack of UN membership and formal diplomatic recognition. In the absence of high level diplomatic relations with many nations and UN membership, the main venue for Chinese diplomacy was international conferences such as the Bandung and Geneva Conferences. This paper will argue for the use of such conferences both as a status enhancer and venue for the advancement of foreign policy goals in the absence of normative diplomatic relations.

## **Acknowledgements**

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## **Introduction**

China is one of the leading rising powers in the international relations sphere of the present. Its status as the world's foremost manufacturing center and preeminent power in East Asia is unquestioned by most. However, China has not always been the force in international relations that we now recognize it to be. It is easy, given China's recognition as a superpower, to overlook the fact that during much of the Cold War China was seen by the United States and many of its allies as renegade, outside the sphere of normative international relations.

From 1949 until 1971, Communist China did not have a seat at the table—it was excluded from United Nations, a stark contrast to modern China's permanent membership on the Security Council and veto power. In addition, from 1949 until 1979, it was not formally recognized by the United States. International Relations scholarship tells us that “foreign recognition is necessary for a state's sovereign status internationally.”<sup>1</sup> But a close study of Chinese foreign policy of this era undermines this notion of recognition as a vital prerequisite for meaningful membership in the international community.

Many scholars regard foreign recognition as a given; that it is a right of statehood, an intra rather than international issue. Essentially that the recognition of a state indicates that the entity possesses the qualities of a state. If the governing body collects taxes, exercises control over its territory, then it will be recognized internationally as a state and granted membership in the international community. But this is a narrow formulation that ignores the prescriptive role of great powers in the process of recognition, and leaves no room for the use of recognition as a

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<sup>1</sup> Fabry, Mikulas, *Recognizing States: International Society and the Establishment of New States since 1776*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 17.

stick to beat would be nations with as the United States did in the case of China. If there can be said to be a “family of nations,” then recognition is not merely an intra state issue. “The creation of effective structures of power and domestic authority is not enough,” says Mikulas Fabry.<sup>2</sup>

China in this era was either not able to entice the United States into formal recognition or felt that the benefits of recognition were not so strong as to make enticing the United States palatable. Why bother? For much of this time, Communist China was regarded as a menace by the United States. This points towards nonrecognition of China as a deliberate strategy on the part of the United States to delegitimize Communist China in the international sphere, to deprive China of being a “full and equal member of the society of states.”<sup>3</sup> IR scholarship tells us that unrecognized states have historically experienced a wide range of negative consequences as a direct result of their non-recognized status. These include the inability to carry out normal diplomatic and economic relations, denial of membership in international organizations, and the inability to sign certain international treaties.<sup>4</sup> According to Fabry, the most serious consequence of non recognition is that “those who find themselves in this position are exposed to being forcibly displaced from their territory by a state which is recognized.”<sup>5</sup>

It seems relevant to also define clearly the concept of status in international relations, as it is another knock on effect of non-recognition. Status is a series of beliefs about a given state’s various attributes relating to wealth, soft power, and diplomatic clout to speak of but a few. It

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<sup>2</sup>Fabry, *Recognizing States*, 23.

<sup>3</sup>Fabry, *Recognizing States*, 23.

<sup>4</sup> Fabry, *Recognizing States*, 26.

<sup>5</sup>Fabry, *Recognizing States*, 26.

manifests itself as both “membership in a club of defined actors, and as relative standing within such a club.”<sup>6</sup> Recognition is an essential aspect of membership in this international society, and as such, a state’s status is shrunk by non-recognition. High status in international society, which the United States hoped to deprive China of, has positive benefits which include “the right to play a part in determining international norms,” as well as “issues that affect the peace and security of the international system.”<sup>7</sup> High status states are deferred to by lower status states, tangible good that benefits the interests of the high status states. “The assurance that others will acknowledge, respect, and defer to a state’s special interests, not only in crises but in everyday interactions, is highly valued by major powers.”<sup>8</sup> The more relative status a state enjoys, the more other states will adjust their policies to accommodate the interests of the high status state.

I argue that much of China’s anxieties and foreign policy were driven in part by their non recognized status. That anxieties over being deprived of institutional membership drive their actions in Bandung and the Geneva conference, and that security concerns at the outset of the Korean War were heightened on account of their non-recognized status. The primary method with which China sought to minimize the negative consequences of their non recognized status was to enhance its status in the international sphere. By becoming a high status power in the realm of East Asian politics at the Bandung conference, they hoped to render deliberate non-recognition by the United States both ineffective as a foreign policy tool and eventually untenable.

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<sup>6</sup>Fabry, *Recognizing States* 33.

<sup>7</sup>Paul, T. V., Deborah Welch Larson, and William C. Wohlforth, *Status in World Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 48.

<sup>8</sup>Paul, Larson, and Wohlforth, *Status in World Politics*, 53.

I hope to explore how exactly a state that has been denied formal recognition may act, employing Communist China in the 1940s and 50s as a case study. What lengths did China go to in order to entice states into recognizing them? And when formal recognition was not desired or the costs of attaining it were too high, what strategies did China employ in order to mitigate the effects of their non-recognized status? When and where they made efforts to do so, were their attempts to sidestep their non-recognized status successful?

These are the questions this paper will attempt to answer. There seem to be two distinct phases to Chinese foreign policy in this era, both of which drive at this question. The period stretching from 1949 to around 1955 can be broadly characterized by a desire to secure their own place in the world and establish themselves as a nation, while occasionally unwittingly being pulled closer to the Soviet Union than the Chinese were comfortable with. China at points in this time period can be seen as a tumultuous post-revolution regime, still in the metaphorical growing pains of statehood. During this time China walked a thin tightrope; the Chinese hoped for a mutually beneficial alliance with the Soviet Union, while hoping to avoid being drawn too close to the USSR. There was a danger of becoming a Soviet satellite akin to Czechoslovakia, a situation detrimental to Chinese sovereignty and harmful to its status. The Korean War, I argue, represents the intersection of a desire for informal recognition of China by the United States, as well as acute discomfort over the USSR's intentions towards China.

The second phase was informed by the lessons of the Korean War as well as the armistice negotiations at Panmunjom and can be characterized as being directed at the realization of China's desire for self reliance, to become a state which acts independent of Soviet influence, a state whose leadership and politics is secure and consolidated. Deprived of formal recognition

and normative relations with the United States and leery of Soviet ambitions, China sought to carve out a space for itself in the international sphere at the Geneva Conference of 1954 and Bandung Conference of 1955. The hoped to use these conferences not as a springboard for grand ambitions in Taiwan, but rather as an opportunity to enhance mutual relations with states such as France and Japan, and in doing so enhance their status and prestige. This passage will investigate the first phase of Chinese foreign policy and diplomacy.

### **Revolutionary Beginnings, Initial Stage of Sino-Soviet Relations**

It seems prudent to begin with the Chinese Civil War, as the formative years of the Chinese Communist Party inform its actions later on in the metaphorical life of the Chinese state. Communism in China began as a series of what can be termed land revolutions mostly in Southern China during the 1920s and 30s.<sup>9</sup> The Communist rebels were pitted first against Chiang-Kai Shek's nationalist forces in a bloody civil war, and later, beginning in 1936, the invading Japanese military. It is important to note that Chiang's Nationalist government was recognized by the League of Nations and received the tacit approval of the United States. By coming into conflict with the Nationalists, the Communist Chinese were casting themselves as hostile to the interests of the United States. This was the first inkling of the enmity which characterized US-Chinese relations for so many years after the revolution.

Following the Japanese invasion, Chiang and Mao's forces were able to put their civil war on hold to some degree, creating a anti-Japanese "united front."<sup>10</sup> War with Japan was costly both for Mao Zedong's Red Army as well as Chiang's forces, but Chiang appeared to have gained more political clout and military power during the eight year war with Japan than his Communist counterparts. By 1942 and 1943, America and Britain had recognized Chiang Kai-Shek's China as part of the "Big Four" states and counted Chiang nominally as an ally. But his input was not

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<sup>9</sup> Patrick Fuliang Shan, *Local Revolution, Grassroots Mobilization and Wartime Power Shift to the Rise of Communism* (Lexington and Rowman & Littlefield, 2013), 8.

<sup>10</sup>Jian, Chen, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, (University of North Carolina Press, 2001. [http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807898901\\_chen](http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807898901_chen)), 20.

particularly valued, and no one had any illusions that China was a power on par with Russia or the United States, his inclusion in the Big Four was symbolic at best.

After Japan's surrender and withdrawal from China in 1945, hostilities between the Nationalists and Communists almost immediately resumed.<sup>11</sup> The United States supported Chiang's government to the tune of 3 billion dollars in military financial aid.<sup>12</sup> Knowing that their Nationalist adversary would have the support of a superpower, the Communist forces sought out a great power backer of their own. The logical partner was the Soviet Union.

Cooperation between the Soviets and Chinese Communists was uneasy. In the lead up to the outbreak of Civil War Mao believed that "the Soviet Union would not allow the emergence of an American-backed fascist China in the East after the end of the war."<sup>13</sup> As such, Mao was initially confident of indirect support from the Soviet Union via financial assistance and weapon shipments. He was so convinced of Soviet aid that he joked with CCP leaders that if assistance was not forthcoming that "I will let you have my head."<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, Mao was certain that Stalin "would not sign a treaty with the GMD government that would restrict the development of the Chinese revolution."<sup>15</sup> Without informing the Chinese Communists, Stalin had made promises to President Roosevelt at the 1945 Yalta conference that the USSR would not support

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<sup>11</sup>Shan, *Local Revolution, Grassroots Mobilization and Wartime Power Shift to the Rise of Communism*, 10.

<sup>12</sup>Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, 25.

<sup>13</sup>Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, 25.

<sup>14</sup>Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, 24.

<sup>15</sup>Shen, Zhihua, and Danhui Li. *After Leaning to One Side: China and Its Allies in the Cold War*, (Stanford University Press, 2011, p. 360, [www.sup.org/books/title/?id=18681](http://www.sup.org/books/title/?id=18681)), 25.

the CCP in the Civil War.<sup>16</sup> Obviously, Stalin's promises were not worth too much; in China and outside, Stalin's promises were not taken to be binding. But to blatantly disregard his own promises would necessitate some loss of face, and so Stalin was constricted into acting less openly in China than the CCP would have liked. Stalin would not outwardly support the CCP in the civil war.

The USSR was also keenly interested in reclaiming vital strategic territory that had been lost by Czarist Russia during the Russo Japanese war before the formation of the Soviet Union in 1905. These territories were primarily the Chinese Changchun Railroad and the port of Lushun in the Dalian district of Northern China.<sup>17</sup> The Changchun Railroad and Lushun were essential to Soviet power projection in East Asia—the railroad and port formed an unbroken transportation chain stretching from Moscow to the Yellow Sea. Chiang Kai-Shek's nationalists were willing to grant Stalin these territories in exchange for a refusal to openly support the CCP's war efforts.<sup>18</sup> The Soviets now had a foot in both camps; a victory for either the Nationalists or Communists would come with benefits for the USSR.

The CCP was perturbed by the actions of the USSR, and were forced to reorient their thinking towards a Civil War fought without the assistance full assistance of the USSR. Mao sold this publicly as a “betrayal” rather than a carefully considered strategy. He told party leaders following Stalin's support of Chiang that-

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<sup>16</sup> Zhihua, and Li. *After leaning to one side: China and its allies in the Cold War.* 24.

<sup>17</sup>Zhihua and Xia. *Mao and the Sino-Soviet Partnership, 1945-1959: A New History*, 25.

<sup>18</sup>Zhihua and Xia. *Mao and the Sino-Soviet Partnership, 1945-1959: A New History*, 33.

Confined by the need to maintain international peace, the Soviet Union is not in a position to act freely to support us ... because if the Soviet Union were to assist us, the United States would certainly support Jiang, and, as a result, the cause of international peace would suffer and a world war might follow.<sup>19</sup>

The Chinese Communists would eventually go on to win the Chinese Civil War; the details of their victory are not particularly relevant to an analysis of Chinese foreign policy. The Chinese Communists had at various points in the war received some limited assistance from the USSR in defiance of the Yalta agreement and Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship. It might be more accurate to say that at times, the Soviets chose to hinder the nationalist forces in their attempts to reclaim Manchuria with the intention of indirectly aiding the Communist's cause.<sup>20</sup> However, the CCP's distrust of the Soviets stemming from their refusal to fully commit to support of Chinese Communist cause could not be ameliorated easily.

I mention the earliest days of Chinese Communism in brief to also drive home the point that Chinese Communist leaders were not accustomed to conducting international diplomacy. The CCP in its formative period was headed mostly by men of military backgrounds; victorious generals and other officials.

### **Lushun and Changchun**

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<sup>19</sup> *Minutes, Mao Zedong's speech to the CCP politburo meeting, 23 August 1945*, 30–32.

<sup>20</sup>Jian, Chen. *Mao's China and the Cold War*. 44.

This next episode in Chinese political history is essential in establishing the nature of Chinese diplomacy. Up until 1949, the Communist Chinese had been fairly passive actors in terms of international diplomacy, which makes sense as they were at the time a revolutionary movement rather than an established state. Their first encounter with their Japanese neighbors was not diplomatic, but militaristic in nature. Their dealings with the USSR were limited, and generally unsuccessful. They had made a few overtures to the Soviet Union for assistance during the Chinese Civil War, but not formally or forcefully enough to truly constitute an effort at international diplomacy. This episode is perhaps the first instance where Communist China engaged with serious diplomatic efforts internationally.

The issue of the Chinese Changchun Railroad and port of Lushun were once again at the fore in Chinese-USSR relations in 1949. Informal meetings between Soviet and Chinese officials following the end of the Chinese Civil War revealed that the USSR was intent on the 1945 railroad agreement to be honored by Mao's China. Mao obviously hoped for a different outcome; the railroad and port would eventually become important for Chinese industrialization.<sup>21</sup> Changchun and Lushun were the focus of negotiations, a formal alliance was also being discussed between the two Communist nations. An alliance was agreeable to Mao, but he was aware of the danger of being drawn too close to the Soviet Union. He did not wish China to become a Soviet satellite, and was leery of an alliance which would disadvantage the Chinese and place them on the track towards satellite-dom. Chinese leadership stressed the

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<sup>21</sup> Zhihua and Xia. *Mao and the Sino-Soviet Partnership, 1945-1959: A New History*, (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books), 7.

<sup>22</sup>Zhihua, and Li. *After leaning to one side: China and its allies in the Cold War*. 7.

importance of self reliance.<sup>22</sup> Now that may seem like a painfully obvious statement, to say that China was hoping for a beneficial partnership with the USSR on its own terms.

What makes this strategy noteworthy is the ambition and guile to ask favors and concessions of the Soviets; Mao's China was not ostensibly in a strong enough bargaining position to be negotiating on an equal playing field with the Soviet Union in 1949. They had just emerged (not unscathed) from a civil war. In fighting the Nationalists, they had alienated the United States. Their nation was in need of reconstruction and industrialization, but few prospective partners could be found. At the time negotiations over Lushun and Changchun started, joining the Soviet camp was just about the only option available to Communist China other than going it alone. The Soviet Union had somewhat legitimate claims to Lushun and Changchun; Mao's China seemed to have strong enough incentives to seek an alliance with the USSR that giving up the railroad and port might have been viable if a Soviet alliance was dependent on those two concessions. It is a testament to the shrewd analysis and skillful negotiating of Chinese leaders that they were able to leverage Soviets concerns in order to coax key concessions from the USSR.

Before negotiations began in earnest, Mao deliberately revealed to the Soviet embassy in China that the CCP was holding negotiations with Burma, India, and Great Britain over the establishment of normative diplomatic relations with the CCP.<sup>23</sup> The intent being to place stress that a treaty with Stalin might not be the only option available to the Chinese, and to pressure Stalin to negotiate a treaty with Mao before rapprochement with the United States became viable

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<sup>23</sup>Zhihua, and Li. *After leaning to one side: China and its allies in the Cold War*. 7.

to Chinese leadership. Stalin was evidently disturbed by this development, fearing Sino-American rapprochement, which necessitated a softening of the Soviet negotiating stance. With rapprochement firmly in the realm of possibilities for the Chinese, negotiating an alliance with the USSR was not so gravely necessary as before. By introducing and stressing the feasibility of an alternative to a Soviet alliance, the Chinese had strengthened their negotiating position without any change in the material balance of power. China had reshaped the complexion of the negotiations so that continued Soviet control of Changchun and Lushun would be an intolerable loss for the CCP, something the Soviet Union would have to avoid in order to secure an alliance. It would be untoward for the Soviet Union to further alienate their prospective allies. The second round of negotiations accomplished little— mostly changes in wording to the title of the agreement which the two states were to make— and did not advance any meaningful solutions to the question of the ownership of Changchun and Lushun.<sup>24</sup>

At the third round of negotiations, the Chinese delegation led by prominent Chinese leader Zhou Enlai sprung a surprise on the Soviets; rather than renegotiating ownership of the railroad and port to a shared ownership structure as the Soviets had expected, the Chinese demanded the USSR turn over full ownership of Lushun and Changchun within three years.<sup>25</sup> The Chinese also made Soviet concessions on Changchun and Lushun essential by tying those concessions to the possibility of an alliance with the USSR; Zhou made it known that no alliance would be possible without Chinese control of Changchun and Lushun. Alliance with China was a priority for the Soviets for reasons that will be discussed later. The CCP delegation made clear

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<sup>24</sup>Zhihua and Xia. *Mao and the Sino-Soviet Partnership, 1945-1959: A New History*, 55.

<sup>25</sup>Zhihua and Xia. *Mao and the Sino-Soviet Partnership, 1945-1959: A New History*, 59.

to the Soviets that Changchun and Lushun were non negotiable, and an alliance between the two nations would only be possible if the two strategic interests were given up by the USSR.

By now, the threat of Sino-American rapprochement had faded to some extent due to the prospect of war in Korea, but still there was pressure on the USSR to push through an alliance with China. In January of 1949, it was abundantly clear to both Mao and Stalin that war on the Korean peninsula was approaching fast. An alliance with China was an obvious desire for the Soviet Union. Though some small modifications to the demand of full control over the railroad and port were made by the Soviets, Stalin evidently felt pressured enough by the need for China's involvement in Korea to make concessions. The Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance was signed February 14 1950, guaranteeing Chinese control of Changchun and Lushun by 1953, as well as a military alliance between the USSR and China. This was the first concrete step towards abolishing past treaties with foreign powers that had placed China at a disadvantage. It could be said that regaining Lushun and Changchun was a one step toward the Chinese ambition of self reliance, while the alliance with the USSR was a step backwards.

### **The Road to War in Korea**

Korea in 1950 was a land divided. As it is today, Korea was split along the 38th parallel with Kim Il Sung's Soviet backed Communist forces controlling the north and Syngman Rhee's US backed regime in the south. Both sides sought to reunify the Korean peninsula through

armed force, and border skirmishes along the 38th parallel were frequent in the lead up to the outbreak of the war. Both Chinese and Soviet leadership shared the opinion that open war with the south was to be avoided, advocating instead for a policy of sustained guerrilla warfare.<sup>26</sup> Mao especially had reservations about the strength of the North's fighting force, although it is unclear if these were genuine concerns or attempts to sow doubt in the minds of USSR leadership in order to forestalling the outbreak of war. Either way, both the CCP and Soviets sought to impress upon Kim that his forces were not equipped to capture the south in the expedient manner that Kim predicted, and that attacking South Korea openly might lead to a prolonged war against both the South Koreans and United States. Stalin, however, was less concerned than his newfound Chinese allies by the prospect of US involvement.

The unity of the Chinese and Russians eroded over time; Stalin authorized North Korea to attack the South in April of 1950 without consulting China.<sup>27</sup> Stalin and other Soviet leaders neglected to divulge information about planning or the probability of war to Chinese officials, depriving CCP leadership of any chance to voice concerns about the attack on South Korea. Chinese scholar Shen Zhihua theorizes that intentionally depriving China of any information about North Korea's war planning was aimed at making "Beijing a blind accomplice in the making of a war which, once started, the CCP leadership had to commit itself."<sup>28</sup> He argues that this was not accidental or owing to oversight.

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<sup>26</sup>Zhihua and Li. *After leaning to one side: China and its allies in the Cold War*, 17.

<sup>27</sup>Zhihua and Li. *After leaning to one side: China and its allies in the Cold War*, 47.

<sup>28</sup> Zhihua and Li. *After leaning to one side: China and its allies in the Cold War*, 47.

This is not a line of thinking that I was receptive to at first. It seemed to me a revisionist attempt to paint China as unwitting accomplice in the Korean War, to shift any blame for their participation onto Stalin engineered geopolitical machinations. The fact that negotiations on the Sino-Soviet alliance took place against the backdrop of the rumblings of the Korean War delegitimize this analysis to some degree. It is hard to say that China was forced against their wishes into the Korean War when they were quite aware of what an alliance with the USSR would necessitate in Korea. Zhihua also posits that Stalin's reasoning for supporting the war in Korea was to preserved the possibility of Soviet naval power projection in East Asia, which seems a petty justification.

Having added to this analysis with the works of Richard Thornton, I find it more acceptable. Thornton agrees with Zhihua that the USSR purposefully involved China in the Korean war, but not to act as a proxy to support Soviet ambitions vis a vis power projection. Rather, that the USSR's reasoning for drawing China into the Korean War was to drive a wedge between the CCP and the United States, to make rapprochement impossible, leaving reliance on the Soviet Union as China's only option in the international sphere.<sup>29</sup> The ultimate goal being the reshaping of Communist China into a Soviet satellite state much like Poland or Czechoslovakia.<sup>30</sup> Stalin suspected that there was "an emerging tacit understanding between Beijing and Washington on the 'liberation' of Taiwan in exchange for the normalization of Sino-American relations."<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, Thornton argues that rather than deepening hostilities

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<sup>29</sup>Thornton, Richard C. *Odd Man Out: Truman, Stalin, Mao, and the Origins of the Korean War* (Washington, D.C: Brasseys, 2001) 82.

<sup>30</sup>Thornton C *Odd Man Out*, 81.

<sup>31</sup>Thornton C *Odd Man Out*, 86.

between the two nations, a “Chinese conquest of Taiwan before the outbreak of war in Korea would indeed open the door to the establishment of diplomatic relations between Beijing and Washington.”<sup>32</sup> The Soviet’s efforts to rope China into the Korean War before Taiwan could be taken by Communist China can then be understood as an effort to draw China into the Soviet camp, make them a proxy for Russian ambitions. It is possible, but it might also be the case that the Chinese were not intentionally excluded from wartime planning, but rather chose not to take part in it. They did not enter the war immediately, so it is possible that they felt no responsibility to involve themselves in North Korea’s preparations, and left that in the hands of the Soviet Union. Its hard to tell, and I don’t feel I have the authority to adjudicate here.

China paid little attention to the war at its outbreak. The United States had not yet entered the war, and China’s leadership was preoccupied: the country was in the process of shrinking its vast army and in the early stages of planning for an attack on Taiwan.<sup>33</sup> The entry of the United States into the war changed China’s outlook on Korea; as soon as MacArthur’s troops landed at Inchon, Beijing began to draft plans to assist Kim’s forces.<sup>34</sup> China’s fear of a US controlled Korea seemed a distinct possibility, and Korea’s historical role as a springboard for military actions against the Asian continent was evidently not lost on Mao. “If the US imperialists win, they will be complacent and pose a threat for us... If the American imperialists push North Korea down, it will be no good for peace.”<sup>35</sup> Mao was convinced that confrontation

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<sup>32</sup>Thornton C *Odd Man Out*, 89.

<sup>33</sup>Zhihua and Li. *After leaning to one side: China and its allies in the Cold War*, 34.

<sup>34</sup>Halberstam, David, *The Coldest Winter: America and the Korean War* (New York: Hyperion 2007), 355.

<sup>35</sup> Zhihua and Li. *After leaning to one side: China and its allies in the Cold War*, 35.

with the United States was inevitable, and decided it was best to fight the United States in Korea rather than in China's own land.<sup>36</sup>

The decision to enter the Korean War was not directly born out of ideological fervor or some fraternal desire to aid a Communist neighbor, but rather border insecurity., perhaps enhanced by the presence of a recognized "China" (Taiwan) whose cause *could* be taken up by the United States. Its an unlikely scenario, but international relations scholarship does note that un-recognized states are susceptible to having their sovereignty and territory violated by recognized ones. It must be said that China is perhaps exceptional among un-recognized states in terms of size and military capability, reducing the likelihood of an American invasion. Still, and this is speculative, it is possible that the unrecognized status of Communist China heightened their border anxieties at the outset of American involvement in Korea.

China responded accordingly on July of 1950, 260,000 Red Army troops massed at the northern border of Korea.<sup>37</sup> They would not wait long before seeing combat— China crossed the border into Korea on October 19 1950, and its 260,000 soldiers quickly entered the fray.<sup>38</sup> And thus China was forced to enter war against South Korea and the United States when given its domestic concerns and hope for conquest of Taiwan it would certainly have preferred not to.

This era of Chinese foreign policy must be considered as a failure, although not a complete one. China's aim was to regain territory lost in what it felt was an unfair bargain and regain some degree of sovereignty in doing so. However, the gains made in the 1949 and 1950

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<sup>36</sup> Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter: America and the Korean War*, 356.

<sup>37</sup>Barnouin, Barbara; Yu, Changgeng, *Zhou Enlai: A Political Life*, (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press. 2007),139.

<sup>38</sup>Barnouin and Yu, *Zhou Enlai*, 140.

negotiations came at a cost; war in Korea forced China to cancel its plans to attack Taiwan at a time when the United States seemed uncommitted to the protection of Chiang Kai-Shek's regime.<sup>39</sup> So while China set out in 1949 to become self-reliant, this goal was thwarted to some extent by Soviet geopolitical scheming, which made rapprochement with the United States and the legitimization that would come with it nearly impossible. The Korean War would slam shut the door to recognition by the United States, and cement China's position as Soviet ally.

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<sup>39</sup>Zhihua and Li. *After leaning to one side: China and its allies in the Cold War*, 50.

## Panmunjom and the Decision to End the War

After some push and pull on the Korean peninsula, the war eventually seemed to be reaching a stalemate around the spring of 1951. The goal of reunification of Korea appeared increasingly unlikely for both North and South and as with before the war's outset, the country was split down the middle very close to the original border. Fighting proved inconclusive, and so the United States, China and both Koreas were willing to begin negotiations with the goal of ending the war or at least coming to agreement on a temporary armistice. But Chinese and American leadership held differing notions on the specific purpose of the armistice. This section will examine the relative positions and attitudes of Chinese and American leadership just before and during the early phases of the armistice negotiations.

The United States viewed the negotiations through the lens of military power; the armistice was a military solution to a military problem that should not ostensibly advance political goals. The armistice, as they understood it, would put legal backing to the military situation in Korea, and essentially reinforce the stalemate. The United States often criticized the Chinese negotiators for attempting to include what the US negotiators deemed political issues on the agenda.<sup>40</sup> The Korean War was in their eyes a distraction from Soviet actions in Western Europe, and the armistice was a method of refocusing their attention on their true political goals. So while the US did have political goals to achieve, armistice was a step towards focusing on their political goals, rather than the realization of those goals. Following the decision to seek an

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<sup>40</sup> *Cable, Mao Zedong to Joseph Stalin, July 11, 1951*, (History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Archives of the Russian Ministry of Defense).

armistice, the United States became unwilling to commit troops to any sort of major offensive.<sup>41</sup> The United States seemed to believe in the possibility of an armistice and were convinced that the Chinese would have no issue with an armistice that was militarily focused. In this context, it became difficult if not impossible for US Generals and policymakers to justify the loss of life that would come with a large push towards a total victory or the reunification of Korea. So any change in the status quo which would necessitate great loss of life was out of the question. The United States was also feeling the strain of maintaining the status quo; they faced pressure both domestically and from their allies to end the war. The Korean War diverted the focus of the US military and State Department away from Europe, where they preferred to focus most of their political capital or energy. This is an almost patronizing view that does in some way recognize China as a threat but not the true threat, a distraction from the US's ultimate goals. One of China's goals at the negotiating table was centered around not on moving towards formal recognition but rather increasing its status or prestige by partaking in a peace conference with the United States. But it is clear that the American view of the Korean War and the armistice as a distraction does not indicate much respect for China as an actor.

The Chinese saw an armistice as useful only if it was politically oriented and advanced their foreign policy goals. For the CCP, an armistice was a step towards the realization of political goals, but was also a goal in itself. The Chinese as a newly formed and still contested nation would prefer not to be at war with a superpower so close to their borders while their nation was still recovering from a civil war. CCP leadership also saw the Korean war not as an isolated incident, but rather the culmination of long standing American enmity and

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<sup>41</sup> Wilhelm, Alfred D, *The Chinese at the Negotiating Table: Style and Characteristics*, 114.

condescension towards China.<sup>42</sup> The analysis of Chinese leadership was that US had behaved as an imperialist power in China since the 19th century. Recently the United States had refused to aid Communist forces in World War Two, and supported Chiang Kai-Shek. As such, the Korean War armistice presented an opportunity for China to for the first time force the United States to negotiate with it as a somewhat equal stakeholder in international politics. Forcing the United States to come to the negotiating table was in itself a victory for Chinese status. China's status would be enhanced as a result of both an increase in military prestige (facing down the United States army is a rare feat that garners respect) but also because being a principle actor negotiating with the United States is status enhancing. It was a chance to announce to the world that they were a player worthy of respect in the international sphere, one who could withstand the assault of the greatest military force in the world and force it to make concessions when negotiating for peace. For the Chinese, there was more at stake than a swift end to the war.

The Chinese also felt they were more equipped and willing than their American counterparts to face a protracted war in Korea.<sup>43</sup> Though attuned to the possibility of great loss of life, Chinese leadership felt its aims were important enough to justify the cost to its troops. This speaks to a wide gulf in objectives between the Chinese and US negotiators that proved difficult to overcome. The United States's goals at the negotiations were focused squarely on short term objectives, namely extricating themselves from the Korean War. China was less concerned with a swift end to the war than it was with enhancing its status motivated more by a desire to right historical wrongs. At this point, the Chinese were not quite aware of the benefits

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<sup>42</sup> Wilhelm, Alfred D, *The Chinese at the Negotiating Table: Style and Characteristics*, 118.

<sup>43</sup> Wilhelm, Alfred D, *The Chinese at the Negotiating Table: Style and Characteristics*, 119.

of enhancing its status, and did not see it as an end goal. It was more a good to be gained as the byproduct of righting what they saw as historical wrongs. Late, at the Geneva and Bandung Conferences, CCP leadership began to see status enhancement as inherently beneficial to the smooth operation of the state in the international sphere. But at this stage in Chinese history, there is nothing to suggest that the Chinese hoped to gain status for any specific purpose.

### **Armistice Talks Begin — Kaesong**

The first inklings of concrete negotiation came in January 1951, when Zhou Enlai was presented with a United Nations proposal for a cease-fire agreement. Zhou turned down the proposal without much hesitation: the proposal came at the height of the PLA's victories in Korea. Enlai also rejected the overtures of the UN, saying that it was an initiative whose purpose was "merely to give the United States troops a breathing space."<sup>44</sup> This was not the last time that a prominent Chinese leader or even Zhou himself would level such accusations at the United Nations. Zhou stated that China would not accept a cease-fire with the promise of negotiations later. In any case, Zhou proclaimed that any sort of agreement between the United States and China would have to be comprehensive and final. He also boldly declared that China's demands for an armistice in Korea would necessitate the withdrawal of US forces from Taiwan, and UN membership for PRC China.<sup>45</sup> It is unclear if these demands were genuinely expected to be met

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<sup>44</sup> Wilhelm, Alfred D, *The Chinese at the Negotiating Table: Style and Characteristics*, 122.

<sup>45</sup> Wilhelm, Alfred D, *The Chinese at the Negotiating Table: Style and Characteristics*, 122.

by the United States (unlikely), but to even articulate them as necessary to an armistice reinforces the notion that China's aims in ending the Korean War were tied to international recognition or legitimation. Perhaps it could be said that this was the upper limit of Chinese ambitions at the height of their success in Korea, and that as the war dragged on what they believed to be achievable was reshaped by results on the battlefield.

When negotiations at Kaesong began on June 10 1951, the Chinese firmly believed that the United States was willing to meet Chinese demands, and treat China as a equal actor.<sup>46</sup> They interpreted reports from India on UN attitudes as well as several remarks by Secretary of State Dean Acheson as being indicative of American war weariness and pressure from allies to end the war. The Chinese believed that as long as the United States was earnest and cooperative, all that would be necessary was a "limited amount of negotiations to finalize the armistice agreement."<sup>47</sup>

Preliminary talks were held at Kaesong. The attitudes of Chinese negotiators at the first meeting of representatives at Kaesong towards their American counterparts support this notion. They welcomed the American negotiating team cordially, inviting the American group to partake with the Chinese in an informal discussion about the armistice over tea and cigarettes, in line with traditional Chinese negotiating practices.<sup>48</sup> The Americans representatives refused, not wanting to appear to be fraternizing with their enemy, but also confused by the relaxed and cordial attitude of the Chinese. They were in Kaesong for business, not tea. Unperturbed, the

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<sup>46</sup> "Cable, Mao Zedong to Joseph Stalin," July 11, 1951.

<sup>47</sup> "Cable, Mao Zedong to Joseph Stalin," July 11, 1951.

<sup>48</sup> Wilhelm, Alfred D, *The Chinese at the Negotiating Table: Style and Characteristics*, 128.

Chinese offered the Americans a prepared lunch, and were again turned down.<sup>49</sup> It is at this point that the Chinese became worried by the uncompromising attitudes of the American negotiators. The Chinese offer of tea and lunch is not to suggest that they believed the negotiations to be such a mere formality that they might be concluded via an informal chat. Instead, it implies that the Chinese believed that the Americans came prepared to deal with China as an equal power, and so wanted to treat the American envoy with some dignity and cordiality, in line with Chinese procedure when negotiating.

Instead, the Americans were hostile to any offer of hospitality, and some members of the American negotiating team are even said by Alfred D. Wilhelm to have “mocked” the amenities the Chinese offered.<sup>50</sup> Clearly, Chinese assumptions about the willingness of the United States to act respectfully toward China were off the mark.

The Chinese opened formal negotiations by proposing a five point agenda that they declared must be adhered to for any meaningful negotiations to take place.

1. Adoption of agenda.
2. Fixing a military demarcation line between both sides so as to establish a demilitarized zone as a basic condition for cessation of hostilities in Korea.
3. Concrete arrangements for realization of a ceasefire and armistice in Korea, including composition, authority and functions of a supervisory organization for carrying out the terms of a truce and armistice.
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<sup>49</sup> Wilhelm, Alfred D, *The Chinese at the Negotiating Table: Style and Characteristics*, 128.

<sup>50</sup> Wilhelm, Alfred D, *The Chinese at the Negotiating Table: Style and Characteristics*, 129.

Arrangements relating to prisoners of war. 5. Recommendations to the governments of the countries concerned on both sides.<sup>51</sup>

Sources differ on the setting of the agenda. Alfred d. Wilhelm, a career military officer present at negotiations, writes that the American contingent was displeased by the manner in which the Chinese were able to establish the agenda to include only items that they felt the Americans would or should cave in to.<sup>52</sup> By setting the goalposts in a manner which benefited China, the United States was able only to negotiate towards the implantation of those items that were established by the agenda, rather than the content of the agenda itself. However, Matthew Ridgway—Commander in Chief of the UN contingent— wrote in a report to the joint chief of staffs that the UN team merely suggested minor changes in wording of agenda items, and that the items to be placed on the agenda were acceptable.<sup>53</sup> In any event, the agenda was set.

The return of Taiwan to the PRC was notably absent from the agenda. Despite Zhou Enlai's earlier bullishness, China lacked the leverage to force concessions on Taiwan or CCP UN membership. After the agenda was set, negotiations were able to proceed within the established framework.

### **Implementation of Agenda Items— Panmunjong**

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<sup>51</sup>*The Commander in Chief, United Nations Command ( Ridgway ) to the Joint Chiefs of Staff.* Korea , 18 July 1951—8:40 p. m. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1951, Korea And China, Volume VII, Part 1.

<sup>52</sup> Wilhelm, Alfred D, *The Chinese at the Negotiating Table: Style and Characteristics*, 132.

<sup>53</sup>*The Commander in Chief, United Nations Command ( Ridgway ) to the Joint Chiefs of Staff.* Korea , 18 July 1951—8:40 p. m.

Negotiations following the setting of an agenda were moved to the more neutral locations of Panmunjong. Part of the difficulty of discussing these negotiations stems from the long period that it took to work out an agreement. This portion may at times be lacking preciseness in timing. The first item to be settled was the establishment of a demilitarized zone, part of agenda item two. The Americans opened proceedings in August of 1951 with an offer that shocked and insulted the Chinese negotiators. The Americans proposed that the DMZ be established at the point of contact between the two forces and extend north a staggering 20 miles into Communist controlled territory, with US and South Korean territory being unaffected.<sup>54</sup> In essence, North Korea would lose 20 miles of territory while South Korea would remain unchanged. The Chinese felt the offer was degrading and unequal to an extreme. The Americans seemed to have little justification for this offer; it was the opinion of the Chinese that the point of contact was a reflection of the efforts and power of both sides, and so the DMZ should extend equally into North and South.<sup>55</sup> They took the fairly reasonable position that each nation should lose an equal amount of territory to the demilitarized zone, rather than just North Korea.

Negotiations dragged on, but the Chinese were eventually able to force the United States to concede to a DMZ along the point of contact extending four miles north and south, as the Chinese had hoped for.<sup>56</sup> It is unclear what exactly the Americans were trying to accomplish in proposing such an unequal opening offer. Their offer served only to inflame tensions with their

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<sup>54</sup>"Telegram from Mao Zedong to Stalin conveying 12 August 1951 telegram from Li Kenong to Mao re: Armistice Talks," August 13, 1951, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, APRE, f. 45, op. 1, d. 341, ll. 56-58. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/113006>

<sup>55</sup>*The Commander in Chief, Far East ( Ridgway ) to the Joint Chiefs of Staff.* Tokyo , 10 August 1951—3:58 p. m. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1951, Korea And China, Volume VII, Part 1.

<sup>56</sup>*The Commander in Chief, United Nations Command ( Ridgway ) to the Joint Chiefs of Staff.* Korea , 18 July 1951—8:40 p. m.

Chinese counterparts, which while not a hardship for the US, was certainly not ideal. Nevertheless, the negotiated demarcation line would hold for the next two years as negotiations on the rest of the agenda items took place.

### **Deadlock Intensifies**

The Chinese did not expect a difficult resolution to the issue of the repatriation of prisoners of war. They believed the United States would return Chinese and North Korean POWs without much of a fuss. After all, the United States had authored Article 118 of the Geneva Convention which dictates that “Prisoners of war shall be released and repatriated without delay after the cessation of hostilities.”<sup>57</sup> The Chinese were aware of the possibility that their troops, who were ostensibly classified as volunteers, might not fall under the the jurisdiction of Article 118 in the strictest sense. Or that at least the Chinese were aware that the United States might make such an argument.<sup>58</sup> Still, the prevailing opinion amongst Chinese leadership at the time was that the United States would honor the international law which it had written.

The Americans once again caught the Chinese by surprise with their stance. America refused to repatriate a large portion of the Chinese and North Korean POWs they held owing to

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<sup>57</sup>Convention (III) relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War. Geneva, 12 August 1949. <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/7c4d08d9b287a42141256739003e63bb/6fef854a3517b75ac125641e004a9e68>.

<sup>58</sup>Wilhelm, Alfred D, *The Chinese at the Negotiating Table: Style and Characteristics*, 141.

the fact that the POWs apparently did not wish to be repatriated.<sup>59</sup> This position is a bold reversal of the United States's stance given their authorship of the Geneva Convention. The Chinese negotiators were also understandably disturbed to hear that their own troops apparently did not wish to return home. To meet this demand of the Americans was unthinkable. It would necessitate a monumental loss of face and was disturbingly unequal; real progress had been made towards an agreement on other agenda items, and for the US to propose such a plainly unequal arrangement after the earlier successes had an unnerving affect on CCP leadership.<sup>60</sup>

Mao felt the possibility of an agreement within the context of this unequal position was impossible. He refused even to entertain the idea, and instructed Li Kenong, chief negotiator at Panmunjong, that “you should be prepared to maneuver with the enemy for a few more months,” as a result.<sup>61</sup> And the Americans were at that time unwilling to budge from their stance. There was not unanimous agreement amongst the leadership of the Communist nations on how to proceed; Mao was steadfast on not giving in to the Americans, while Kim was openly supportive of conceding to American demands. Kim was unwilling to continue the war on account of the losses his army had suffered as well as the toll that an indiscriminate US bombing campaign had taken on his civilian population.<sup>62</sup> Kim, in Zhou Enlai's words, “believes that the continuation of

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<sup>59</sup> “Minutes of Conversation between I.V. Stalin and Zhou Enlai,” August 20, 1952, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, APRE, f. 45, op. 1, d. 329, ll. 54-72. Translated by Danny Rozas. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/111244>

<sup>60</sup> “Minutes of Conversation between I.V. Stalin and Zhou Enlai.”

<sup>61</sup> Zhihua and Li. *After leaning to one side: China and its allies in the Cold War*, 91.

<sup>62</sup> “Minutes of Conversation between I.V. Stalin and Zhou Enlai.”

the war is not advantageous because the daily losses are greater than the number of POWs whose return is being discussed.”<sup>63</sup>

Fearing that the Americans might make use of the POW issue in order to drive a wedge between Korean and Chinese leaders, Mao reached out to Stalin for backing. Zhou Enlai headed to Moscow to meet with the Soviet leader, and returned successful. Stalin said to Zhou of the POW issue that “Mao Zedong is right. This war is getting on America’s nerves... Endurance and patience is needed here.”<sup>64</sup> This willingness to prolong war is once again based on the assumption that China and North Korea were more equipped and willing to handle a protracted war, and that the United States would in time concede the POW issue owing to pressures both domestic and foreign. Stalin and Zhou both felt that the United States’s unwillingness to commit too many ground forces, instead opting for bombing campaigns, was a sign of fatigue.<sup>65</sup> But the Americans showed no willingness to do so, and on October 8 1952 suspended the talks at Panmunjong.<sup>66</sup>

The death of Stalin in March of 1953 changed the complexion of the negotiations. Stalin’s successors were far less willing to continue support for the War, instead choosing to focus on domestic concerns.<sup>67</sup> Molotov articulated the Soviet stance that “events have evolved to such

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<sup>63</sup> “Minutes of Conversation between I.V. Stalin and Zhou Enlai.”

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<sup>66</sup> Zhihua and Li. *After leaning to one side: China and its allies in the Cold War* 98.

<sup>67</sup> Zhihua and Li. *After leaning to one side: China and its allies in the Cold War* 98.

a point that we no longer need this war forced upon us by the Koreans.”<sup>68</sup> It is interesting to note that he did not assign blame for the continuation of the war on the Chinese. Without the support of the Soviet Union, Mao was outnumbered in the Communist camp. China was forced to return to the negotiating table in June of 1953. Eventually, both sides met one another in the middle. China and the United States agreed that only those troops who refused repatriation would not be returned to their respective nations. All other POWs would be repatriated.

The negotiations were not a complete success for China. Around 22,000 Chinese and North Korean troops refused repatriation. Still, this is a large departure from the original American position, and so can be considered a small victory. Both sides walked away from Panmunjong with reason to be pleased. The Chinese had proved to the international community that they were a powerful actor that could not be ignored or pushed around by even the United States. This could be called a victory as far as China’s status is concerned; they were able to face down the most powerful military in the world and negotiate skillfully and advantageously for peace. This was a victory that the CCP was keenly aware of and was noted throughout the world and by General Mark W. Clark of the United States. “I gained the unenviable distinction of being the first United States commander in history to sign an armistice without victory.”<sup>69</sup> Meanwhile, the US was able to retain control of Taiwan and did not have to commit to any actions which might grant China *formal* recognition. China was also not granted UN membership, one of their original stipulations.

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<sup>68</sup> Zhihua and Li. *After leaning to one side: China and its allies in the Cold War*, 98.

<sup>69</sup> Clark, Mark Wayne, *From the Danube to the Yalu*. (Blue Ridge Summit, Pa: TAB Books, 1988),147.

Initially China's aims at Panmunjong to have been ordered around righting historical wrongs continuing along a theme of correcting disadvantageous treaties which began at the negotiations over Lushun and Changchun. But the status and prestige gained by negotiating with the United States at Panmunjong alerted Chinese leadership to the possible uses of international conferences as a vehicle for status enhancement, which Zhou Enlai would later employ as a deliberate strategy. Panmunjong paved the way for increasing Chinese involvement in foreign affairs such as the Geneva Convention of 1954 and Bandung. seem They were now a player in Asian politics, a nation to be respected.

### Geneva Conference of 1954

The shape of this passage will mirror closely the preceding passage on the negotiations at Panmunjong. I will however be examining the attitudes and positions of a larger group of actors than those who were involved at Panmunjong, before moving on to the negotiations themselves. Unlike Panmunjong, the buildup to the Conference is in many ways more relevant to this paper than the Conference itself. As such this “introductory” passage which might in other circumstances be viewed as an appetizer to the entree takes on great significance.

The Geneva Conference of 1954 included a much wider range of issues and actors than Panmunjong, and as such a discussion of France, the United Kingdom, and Vietnam seems necessary. Although unresolved issues related to the Korean War were on the agenda, they were regarded as a peripheral issue (unlikely to be resolved besides that) and the chief focus of the conference was elsewhere. It is against the backdrop of the First Indochinese War that the Geneva Conference took place. Chinese backed Communist Vietminh rebels pitted themselves against the apparently hapless French colonial armies in Vietnam in an attempt to free Vietnam from French colonial rule. China sought to prop up the Vietminh in the hopes of gaining a Communist neighbor; the United States had to at least appear to be helpful towards an ally, but more likely was concerned about Communization of the developing decolonization movement.

It seems prudent to begin with the United States, whose decision it was to organize the Geneva Conference. The decision to host the Geneva Conference came hot on the heels of the Berlin Conference. It decided little and for our purposes mostly served to make clear that a

conference to settle issues related to Indochina was necessary. At Berlin, the USSR fought hard to have China involved in this proposed conference, as they and others felt China's participation was vital both in resolving Indochinese questions and enhancing China's status.

Elected officials in the United States were apprehensive about China's involvement. Senate Majority leader William Knowland who headed what was known as the China Lobby—US elected officials sympathetic towards Taiwan and openly hostile towards PRC China—questioned Secretary of State John Foster Dulles decision to invite China to participate in the first place.<sup>70</sup> The influential China Lobby felt that by giving China a seat at the negotiating table, that China's aims were being legitimized and its status enhanced. Furthermore, Congress in general made it known quite publicly to Dulles that any action which would move towards diplomatic recognition of China should be off the table.<sup>71</sup> Dulles agreed, but that topic was something of a nonstarter. Due to conditions upon agreed by Vyacheslav Molotov, Foreign Minister of the Soviet Union at Berlin, issues of China's recognition, Taiwan, and UN membership were officially not meant to be discussed at the conference.<sup>72</sup> Dulles stated that “neither the invitation to, nor the holding of, the above-mentioned conference shall be deemed to imply diplomatic recognition in any case where it has not already been accorded.”<sup>73</sup> Or at least they were officially not to be part of the agenda for the conference.

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<sup>70</sup> Randle, Robert. *Geneva 1954. The Settlement of the Indochinese War.* (Princeton University Press, 1969. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt183pn58>.) 39.

<sup>71</sup> *Communiqué Issued at the Conclusion of the Quadripartite Meeting of the Four Foreign Ministers at Berlin, February 18, 1954.* Department of State Press Release. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952–1954, The Geneva Conference, Volume XVI

<sup>72</sup> *Communiqué Issued at the Conclusion of the Quadripartite Meeting of the Four Foreign Ministers at Berlin, February 18, 1954.*

<sup>73</sup> *Communiqué Issued at the Conclusion of the Quadripartite Meeting of the Four Foreign Ministers at Berlin, February 18, 1954.*

Dulles was also attuned to the idea that by securing a seat for themselves at a “great power” conference, China’s status and prestige would be enhanced. This would not be ideal for the United States. He publicly voiced strong condemnation of this line of thinking, futilely arguing against the notion that China was a great power or that Geneva would elevate its status. Status is after all relative, so Dulles made a valiant attempt to forcefully shape other nations’ perceptions of China’s involvement, seemingly to no avail. He issued a communiqué to all state department principle posts urging US representatives to discourage other nations from employing the term “Five Power Conference” when discussing the Geneva Conference.<sup>74</sup> This language tacitly acknowledges China as existing in a similar status stratum as the other conference attendees. Dulles urged his colleagues to “take whatever action deemed advisable to prevent or correct labeling conference ‘Big Five’ or ‘Five Power’ and to encourage use of ‘Geneva Conference.’”<sup>75</sup> It seems that Dulles was keenly aware of the conference’s potential as status enhancer.

The French were losing ground in the fight against the Vietminh, and were hopeful of American intervention. Unfortunately for them Congress, President Eisenhower, and Dulles refused to join the conflict outright, not wanting to be drawn into a second Korea, but also wishing not to appear an imperialist aggressor. The United States was willing to become involved in Indochina only if a coalition between France, the US and the UK could be created, in

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<sup>74</sup>*The Secretary of State to All Principal Posts.* Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952–1954, The Geneva Conference, Volume XVI.

<sup>75</sup>*The Secretary of State to All Principal Posts.*

effect an East Asian NATO.<sup>76</sup> This proposed collective security agreement would essentially act as a bulwark against decolonization, and specifically decolonization aimed at Communization. For the British and French their interests were in retaining control of their colonies; the United States was mostly concerned that states emerging from colonial rule might become communized. By April of 1954, some sort of East Asian collective security agreement seemed possible with the backing of both France and the United States, and although opinions were divided with the State Department it seemed the Eisenhower administration was willing to commit if Britain joined the pact.<sup>77</sup> Britain declared herself open to such an arrangement but not before the Geneva Conference could be held, opting to wait and see if the conference bore fruit before making concrete commitments.<sup>78</sup> Their ownership of Hong Kong added a layer of complexity to their decision making process in regard to their relationship with China, who they wished not to antagonize unduly. The United Kingdom and France both acknowledged that China, supplier of arms and training to the Vietminh, was a necessity at the Geneva Conference. They believed it vital that the United States and China reach a *modus vivendi* in the region, but their expectations about the likelihood of that occurring were pragmatically low.

Singman Rhee, whose South Korean regime was to figure prominently in the Korean aspect of negotiations, was not optimistic. He felt the conference would be a farce which might serve to enhance China's status, and is on the record stating that the Geneva Conference would

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<sup>76</sup>*Memorandum of Conversation, by the Secretary of State. Geneva, April 30, 1954—12:15 p.m.* Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952–1954, The Geneva Conference, Volume XVI.

<sup>77</sup>*Memorandum of Conversation, by the Secretary of State. Geneva, April 30, 1954—12:15 p.m.*

<sup>78</sup>*Memorandum of Conversation, by the Secretary of State. Geneva, April 30, 1954—12:15 p.m.*

be “further useless talk.”<sup>79</sup> Dulles agreed. To assuage Rhee’s concerns, Dulles publicly promised that the United States would end the conference within three months if it became clear that the conference bore no fruit, and was being employed by China to serve as a “propaganda device.”<sup>80</sup> This is not to imply that Rhee was a wise statesman; he was a dictator intent on keeping firm grip on power. Elections in Korea were not in his interests.

So the attitudes of the United States and its allies at the time could be summed up as such; China must be present at a discussion of the issue of Indochina, which was the topic of greatest concern for the Western powers. The Korean aspect of negotiations was expected to be mostly useless: what could not be resolved at Panmunjong was not likely to be resolved just one year later. The United States was strongly opposed to any action which would grant China formal legal recognition, and made provisions with the Soviet Union to ensure that issues of recognition were off the table. Finally, the United States was wary of the strong likelihood that China might use the conference as a platform to enhance its status, to claim that by being at the Geneva Conference, they had been tacitly admitted into to the “Great Power” echelon of states. Keenly aware that status is determined not by material forces but by the perception of states, the United States sought to shape discourse to minimize China’s role in the conference from Great Power participant to rogue state under cross examination for untoward actions in Vietnam.

### **Soviet Union and China**

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<sup>79</sup> Randle, *Geneva 1954. The Settlement of the Indochinese War*, 45.

<sup>80</sup> Randle, *Geneva 1954. The Settlement of the Indochinese War*, 48.

The USSR was wary of the development of an East Asian NATO, and were justifiably concerned that Indochina was being prepared as a new Korea.<sup>81</sup> They were relieved to find that Britain's qualms had scattered French hopes of building a coalition before the conference took place, but still could not discount the possibility of American intervention. Through *Pravda*, the Soviets made known that they, like France and the UK, felt strongly the impossibility of deciding “a single disputed question” without China’s involvement.<sup>82</sup> The Soviets also saw the conference as an opportunity to display the unanimity of socialist governments, with the Vietminh, China, and North Korea all being involved in some capacity. This runs counter to China’s desire for Geneva to be a step towards great power status. Being considered as another nation under the wing of the USSR does not enrich a state’s standing in the hierarchy of international relations.

Zhou Enlai worried that the United States was preparing to make Vietnam into another Korea.<sup>83</sup> China was publicly opposed to any Western intervention in Vietnam and were prepared to put India, their newfound ally, to work towards discouraging the United States and Britain from forming such an organization.<sup>84</sup> A very reasonable position indeed: having just negotiated themselves out of a war with the United States, China had no desire to become involved in yet another conflict with the West. In practical terms in regards to Vietnam, China hoped to use the Geneva Conference as a platform to negotiate a favorable peace deal, which would eliminate the

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<sup>81</sup>Randle, *Geneva 1954. The Settlement of the Indochinese War*, 136.

<sup>82</sup>Randle, *Geneva 1954. The Settlement of the Indochinese War*, 136.

<sup>83</sup> “Preliminary Opinions on the Assessment of and Preparation for the Geneva Conference,” Prepared by the PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs (drafted by PRC Premier and Foreign Minister Zhou Enlai) and Approved in Principle at a Meeting of the CCP Central Secretariat, 2 March 1954.

<sup>84</sup>Randle, *Geneva 1954. The Settlement of the Indochinese War*, 150.

need for the United States to organize an East Asian collective defense organization.<sup>85</sup> They refused to make any commitment to the Vietminh beyond the arms, munition, and training they already supplied in the event of failure at Geneva and Western intervention. This suggests that the Chinese assumed talks at Geneva would be productive, perhaps in spite of the United States.

Mao Zedong will not figure prominently in this chapter. By this time, he had decided to focus his attention on domestic policy, leaving foreign policy in the capable hands of Zhou Enlai, long serving Chinese Foreign Policy Minister. Zhou would run the show at Geneva. Zhou, in a series of documents recently released by the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, outlines his thoughts on the United States and other actors in the lead up to Geneva. These documents range from somewhat informal telegrams to communiqués distributed throughout CPR leadership.

Despite public bullishness about the prospects of a productive conference, Zhou seems not to think much of the conference as a platform for achieving concrete goals in Vietnam or Korea. In one document he points to public statements made by Secretary Dulles which are aimed at “intentionally underestimating the significance of the Geneva Conference” with the goal of making it into a pointless exercise, grounds for the United States to claim that diplomatic solutions were unrealistic and that intervention in Vietnam was necessary.<sup>86</sup> Part of the problem may have been that their stances on Korea and Vietnam were unlikely to be met favorably by the United States, France, or South Korea. Zhou supported “peaceful unification” and “free elections” with the goal of reunifying the Korean peninsula.<sup>87</sup> The Chinese delegation’s initial

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<sup>85</sup>“Preliminary Opinions on the Assessment of and Preparation for the Geneva Conference.”

<sup>86</sup>“Preliminary Opinions on the Assessment of and Preparation for the Geneva Conference.”

<sup>87</sup>“Preliminary Opinions on the Assessment of and Preparation for the Geneva Conference.”

proposal for peace in Vietnam was quite brazen. The Chinese committed to the cessation of arms to the Vietminh if the United States did the same with its French allies, which seemed unlikely.<sup>88</sup> The Chinese also demanded the withdrawal of French forces from Vietnam within 6 months of ratification of an armistice agreement.<sup>89</sup> They included in their demands provisions for free elections to be held in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, which implies that they expected all those countries to be unified. This laundry list of demands was unlikely to be met.

He speaks of China's involvement and prominent place at the Geneva Convention as a "great achievement" which had been met with "widespread support by peace loving peoples" throughout the world.<sup>90</sup> While he was not optimistic about the prospects of concrete action in Korea or Vietnam, Zhou was hopeful that in spite of American foot dragging real ground could be made in the struggle for status. He lays out a broad course of action for the Chinese delegation; if the United States and other nations are not able to be made receptive to Chinese demands, China must actively engage even on small issues rather than become disheartened. He says that negotiating on these small issues will for China "open the path to resolving international disputes through discussion and negotiation by the Great Powers."<sup>91</sup> This indicates that Zhou had more than just status on his mind; the conference presented an opportunity to enhance mutual relations with other states present in a general sense. Chinese foreign ministers would have the chance to meet with and hopefully develop a rapport with other foreign officials. But

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<sup>88</sup>Draft Memorandum, "A Comprehensive Solution for Restoring Peace in Indochina," Prepared by the Vietnam Group of the Chinese Delegation Attending the Geneva Conference, 4 April 1954

<sup>89</sup>"A Comprehensive Solution for Restoring Peace in Indochina."

<sup>90</sup>"Preliminary Opinions on the Assessment of and Preparation for the Geneva Conference."

<sup>91</sup> "Preliminary Opinions on the Assessment of and Preparation for the Geneva Conference."

more importantly, the simple act of negotiating in Zhou Enlai's thinking is an act which carries great symbolic significance and advances China's status. By being invited to and serving as an important part of a convention of Great Powers, Enlai saw Chinese involvement at Geneva as a groundbreaking moment in Chinese history. An admission, despite adamant protests on the Part of the United States, that China sat at the table of the Great Powers.

In addition to advancing China's status, Zhou was hopeful for a change in Chinese American relations. His writings as well as the analysis of others gives no clues as to why he thought this might be realistic. The presence of phrases which express hope for "relaxing the tense international situation and embargo by the US imperialists" implies that Zhou hoped the conference would be an opportunity to develop rapport with American diplomats and work towards detente.<sup>92</sup> These writings were not distributed publicly, so they cannot be considered as posturing for the Chinese public. As far as I can tell from the assortment of documents I have read, legal recognition does not seem to have been on Zhou's mind.

### **China at the Geneva Conference**

Zhou Enlai served as chief representative of the Chinese delegation to the Geneva Conference—he was the natural choice for such a role. His arrival at the Geneva airport on April 14 1954 caused something of a media sensation, as he was one of the first high ranking Chinese leaders to appear on European soil (Soviet bloc nations excluded) since the revolution.

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<sup>92</sup> "Preliminary Opinions on the Assessment of and Preparation for the Geneva Conference."

Oddly enough, much of the “action” at Geneva occurred not in Geneva, but during breaks in the conference throughout Europe and Asia. China did not play such a prominent role in the specifics of the Indochina negotiations, leaving that to the Vietminh. Their role in the conference was mostly relegated to acting as an intermediary between the Vietminh and France when negotiations stalled. But Chinese diplomats were present at the conference throughout, and without much negotiating to eat up their time, the Chinese delegation busied themselves by holding informal talks with British and French officials with the goal of enhancing mutual relations with an eye towards establishing trade. The United States was openly contemptuous of the Chinese delegation for the entirety of the conference, so the Chinese were not able to make nice with the Americans. This was expected.

The Korean aspect of the conference amounted to nothing. Both sides agreed that elections should take place on the peninsula with an eye towards democratic reunification. But they could not come to an agreement on the implementation of such an election; each wished for a different governing body to act as intermediary. The South Korean’s, backed by the United States, proposed that the UN supervise post war elections.<sup>93</sup> This was a proposal that North Korea and China refused to entertain; Chinese diplomats argued that the United Nations was not an impartial body, having been utilized by the United States to denounce China and form a military coalition to attack North Korea.<sup>94</sup> China further argued that UN presence in Korea was a violation of Korean sovereignty; an intrusion of American imperialism into Asia, and further deemed that only other Asian nations such as India should be allowed supervise a hypothetical

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<sup>93</sup>Qiang, *China and the Geneva Conference*, 109.

<sup>94</sup>Qiang, *China and the Geneva Conference*, 110.

election.<sup>95</sup> Neither side showed any willingness to budge from their initial positions, and both decided to move onto the Indochinese portion.

During various interludes in negotiations that Chinese delegates found time to meet with British delegates both informally and formally. Assistants to Zhou Enlai met frequently with the assistants of British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden during the conference. Both nations were playing marginal roles at the conference, and thus Zhou instructed his underlings to engage in relaxed and informal meetings with British officials.<sup>96</sup> Despite the informal character of these meetings, they were productive and produced demonstrable positive change in Sino-British relations. These discussions bore fruit; China and Britain agreed to conduct diplomacy at the charge d'affaires level, while previously each nation had not recognized each others foreign representatives as such.<sup>97</sup> This allowed for more productive diplomacy between the nations. In addition, China and Britain agreed to exchange trade missions with the goal of establishing trade networks between the two nations.

France and the Vietminh took the lead in the Indochinese portion of the conference. The specifics of this negotiation will be discussed only insofar as they are relevant to China, which was an infrequent occurrence. The French and Vietminh both agreed that at the very least, an armistice marked by a demarkation line was mutually beneficial. The terms of the armistice were to be worked out after an agreement over the location demarkation line could be completed. The United States was insistent on the withdrawal of NVA forces from Cambodia and Laos,

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<sup>95</sup>Qiang, *China and the Geneva Conference*, 111.

<sup>96</sup> Qiang, *China and the Geneva Conference*, 116.

<sup>97</sup>Qiang, *China and the Geneva Conference*,, 116.

which the Vietminh would have liked to avoid but did not feel was a key issue.<sup>98</sup> It is around this early point in negotiations on June 13th that negotiations reached a deadlock. The United States would not back an armistice if NVA forces were to remain in Cambodia and Laos; perhaps more importantly, the NVA were determined to set the demarkation line in their favor. They hoped to set the demarkation line at the 16th parallel, while the French and South Vietnamese held out for the 17th parallel a bit farther north. Both sides refused to compromise for ten or so days, when China entered the fray.

Pierre Mendes-France was elected as French Prime Minister on June 18, 1954. He had made strong promises on the campaign trail: he told the French people he would resign by July 20th if no resolution was reached at Geneva.<sup>99</sup> This certainly won him the election, but presented the Chinese with an opportunity. Throughout the conference, they had been establishing cordial relations with French diplomats, and although these informal meetings bore no fruit, mutual relations between France and China had improved somewhat. Zhou decided this was the time make himself useful. He scheduled a meeting with Mendes-France and hoped to exploit the newly minted Prime Minister's desperation to leave Geneva with a resolution to the Indochinese War.

Zhou was met cordially by the French in Berne on June 23, and at more meetings in mid July. Minutes of the meetings indicate the Zhou spoke more often than Mendes-France throughout. But from what little Mendes-France divulged, Zhou gathered that the French Prime

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<sup>98</sup>Qiang, *China and the Geneva Conference*, 111.

<sup>99</sup> China and the Geneva Conference Zhei Qiang 111

Minister wanted to pull out of Vietnam entirely.<sup>100</sup> Anti-war sentiment had reached a fever pitch. But Mendes-France wished for France to leave in his own words “gracefully in appearance.”<sup>101</sup> An opening had made itself clear to Zhou. The deadlock in negotiations was unacceptable for Mendes-France, who needed a swift exit from Vietnam. If Zhou could entice the Vietminh into accepting the 17th parallel as the demarkation line which would allow France to save face and bow out with their dignity intact, the French would agree to leave Vietnam and the conference could be concluded in China and the Vietminh’s favor.

Zhou traveled to Zhiuzhou on July 3rd to speak with NVA leaders. He was able to sell the Vietminh on conceding to the 17th parallel by convincing them that the demarkation line was only a temporary conceit. He told the NVA that “after French withdrawal, all of Vietnam will be yours.”<sup>102</sup> Whether or not he genuinely believe this to be true is impossible to say, but the NVA was sold, and agreed both the 17th parallel demarkation line and a withdrawal of its forces from Cambodia and Laos.<sup>103</sup> In addition, neither North nor South Vietnam was to enter into formal military partnerships (exchange of arms, military advisors) with any nation, and elections were to be held in July of 1956.<sup>104</sup> These elections were to be supervised by Canadian, Indian, and Polish election monitors.

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<sup>100</sup>“Minutes, Zhou Enlai’s Meeting with Mendès-France (Excerpt),” July 13, 1954, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, PRC FMA 206-Y0007. Translated by Chen Jian. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/121163>

<sup>101</sup>“Minutes, Zhou Enlai’s Conversation with Mendes-France (Exerpt),” July 17, 1954, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, PRC FMA 206-Y0007. Translated by Li Xiaobing <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/111068>

<sup>102</sup>Qiang, *China and the Geneva Conference*, 115.

<sup>103</sup> “Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Viet-Nam, July 20 1954.” Geneva Agreements.

<sup>104</sup> “Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Viet-Nam, July 20 1954.” Geneva Agreements.

China had every reason to be pleased initially with the resolution of the Geneva Conference; it had successfully negotiated a French withdrawal from Vietnam, which was both a tactical and propagandistic victory. The French retreat was beneficial tactically in that it increased the chances of future Vietminh control of Southern Vietnam. Propaganda wise, China could sell itself as an ally of Asian sovereignty, opponent of imperialism, not an aggressor but a negotiator. It had also made headway with Great Britain, with which China had established normative diplomatic and economic relations during an interlude in the conference.

But the agreement to hold an election and the prohibition against forming military pacts with other nations was very quickly violated by Southern Vietnam in 1956.<sup>105</sup> The Southern Vietnamese quickly moved to accept military aid from the United States (thus discouraging attack from the NVA) and rejected the resolution to hold a unified election, citing the impossibility of a fair outcome. So the actual tactical gains made at Geneva ended up not counting for much in the long run. However, it could be argued that this offered another propaganda opportunity. The Chinese could cement claims to being the opponent of American imperialism in Asia, a move which could become status enhancing if played correctly.

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<sup>105</sup> Qiang, *China and the Geneva Conference*, 115

### **Bandung Conference: Chinese Benevolence in the Emergent Third World**

The Bandung Conference was one of the first official meetings of newly formed post colonial Asian and African states and took place from April 18-24 in Bandung, Indonesia. It was sponsored and organized by Indonesia, Burma, Pakistan, Ceylon, and India. The aims of the conference as articulated by the 29 attendees are as follows.

- A. To promote good will and co-operation among the nations of Asia and Africa, to explore and advance their material as well as common interests and to establish and further friendliness and neighborly relations;
- B. To consider social, economic and cultural problems and relations of the countries represented;
- C. To consider problems of special interest to Asian and African peoples, for example, problems affecting national sovereignty and of racialism and colonialism;
- D. To view the position of Asian and Africa and their people in the world of today and the contribution they can make to the promotion of world peace and co-operation.<sup>106</sup>

Essentially, the freshly decolonized nations of Asian and Africa were anxious about their place in the world, and wished to form a consensus on how they might proceed in the international sphere. This is an unscientific statement, but it was a conference of good feelings; many of the nations present had just thrown off the yoke of colonial rule, and were hopeful for a future to call their own. In general, as Richard Wright describes in his book *The Color Curtain* describes how nearly all conference attendees were in good spirits and generally kept any grievances against other states to themselves. This was a conference of goodwill— Bandung

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<sup>106</sup>Wright, Richard, *The Color Curtain: A Report on the Bandung Conference*, (Jackson, MS: Banner Books, 1995),158.

was not a conference narrow focused discussion of set issues like at Geneva; the agenda was purposefully vague and open ended. Although certain topics such as human rights and state sovereignty were discussed, they were broached in a manner that was directed at building consensus between nations, rather than forming a prescriptive set of guidelines to abide by. The Bandung Conference was not meant to produce concrete agreements between states, but rather build a consensus on those issues on the agenda mentioned above, and facilitate goodwill.

The ultimate goal of this goodwill, trust, and consensus building was to enhance the standing of non-western nations and to carve out space in the international sphere for non-aligned nations. Nearly all the 29 attendees of the conference had been colonial states and all of them had felt the affects of western interference in the affairs. By enhancing relations amongst one another, the organizers of the conference hoped to create a situation where themselves and the attending nations might be able to become as independent from western interference as possible. To truly become non-aligned.

The west was not pleased with this prospective goodwill between post-colonial nations. France was displeased, generally viewed the conference with open contempt, and saw it as damaging to some notion of the western cause.<sup>107</sup> At this point the French still held colonies in North Africa such as Algeria, so they had a vested interest in curbing the influence of post-colonial states in the international sphere. Where the Asian and African states saw the possibility of a non-aligned third world, Britain saw the emergence of a vindictive Afro-Asian bloc which might seek to revenge itself against past colonial oppressors. In general British leaders were

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<sup>107</sup>Acharya, Amitav, "Who Are the Norm Makers? The Asian-African Conference in Bandung and the Evolution of Norms." *Global Governance: A Review of Multilateralism and International Organizations*: July-September 2014, Vol. 20, No. 3, 408

having conniptions. One self aware Foreign Ministry official said of the conference that Bandung would present an opportunity to discuss “problems affecting international sovereignty, racism and colonialism, on all of which the conclusions are likely to be embarrassing to us.”<sup>108</sup> A joint declaration between Britain and Australia (which wanted no part of the conference despite being a pacific nation and thus could have been invited) called the conference “mischievous.”<sup>109</sup> What exactly they sought to imply by that statement is tough to parse out, but it speaks to the ill-will that western nations regarded Bandung with.

While Britain and France were anxious and incensed at the possibility of a post-colonial Afro-Asian bloc, the United States had other concerns stemming from the conference. Secretary Dulles was attuned to the anxieties of Britain and France, but viewed the post-colonial nations with “benevolent indifference.”<sup>110</sup> It should have been clear at this point that the end of colonialism was inevitable, and so the United States was not too concerned about that aspect of the conference. However, that is not to say that the United States was supportive of the conference. As it always did in this era, the United States had communism on the mind.

The State department rightly viewed the conference as a formative event for the new nations of Africa and Asia. Like the 29 attendees, they saw it as a space to foster co-operation and good intentions, and realized that China’s attendance posed problems in this regard. Dulles was worried that China would utilize the conference as an opportunity to “enhance the communist prestige in the area and weaken the west.”<sup>111</sup> He further elaborated that the

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<sup>108</sup>Acharya, “Who Are the Norm Makers?” 408

<sup>109</sup> Acharya, “Who Are the Norm Makers?” 408

<sup>110</sup>Acharya, “Who Are the Norm Makers?” 408

<sup>111</sup>Acharya, “Who Are the Norm Makers?” 408

conference would certainly act as an “excellent propaganda opportunity.”<sup>112</sup> So the United States was more concerned with the enhancement of Chinese status and the possibility of a Afro-Asian bloc was only worthy of concern if China was at its head.

The United States and Britain actively sought to undermine the smooth operation of the conference. They hoped to derail it by providing pro-western attendees such as Turkey, Pakistan, and the Philippines with specific instruction on how to address certain issues which might be brought up at the conference. These included positions on what was referred to as communist colonialism, clearly placed on the agenda by the United States and meant to agitate fears that western colonial oppression might be replaced by Chinese communist colonialism, and religious freedom, which the UK and US hoped might drive wedges between the disparate nations.<sup>113</sup> The goal from the United States perspective was to embarrass China, to make them a peripheral figure at the conference, and negate their ability to influence proceedings in doing so.

China’s very inclusion at the conference was a topic of debate amongst some attendees. Probably acting on suggestions from the United States, Turkey protested China’s invitation to Bandung.<sup>114</sup> But India’s Jawaharlal Nehru, who took on a leadership role in the organization of the conference, fought for Chinese inclusion. He recognized that no third world could exist without Chinese backing.<sup>115</sup> Bandung was a watershed moment in Chinese foreign policy in a subtle yet important manner: it was the first international conference in which China acted alone,

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<sup>112</sup> Acharya, “Who Are the Norm Makers?” 408

<sup>113</sup> Acharya, “Who Are the Norm Makers?” 409

<sup>114</sup> Acharya, Amitav, “Studying the Bandung conference from a Global IR perspective,” *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 2016 70:4, 345.

<sup>115</sup> Acharya, “Studying the Bandung conference from a Global IR perspective,” 346

without the input and support of the Soviet Union.<sup>116</sup> It represents the first true instance of the realization of the long held goal of Chinese self sufficiency in foreign policy, and one scholar argues that it “saw the emergence of China as a great Asian power and not merely as an isolated partner of Russia.”<sup>117</sup>

The Chinese delegation at Bandung was once again headed by Zhou Enlai, who proved himself an exceedingly capable figure at Geneva. From the outset, he was a man in the wars. His role at Bandung was under question from nations such as Turkey, and Turkey as well as others had been instructed to undermine his position at every opportunity, in public declarations and at closed meetings. Other nations such as Indonesia had faced small communist uprisings in the recent past, and so were apprehensive towards Zhou. The world had been lead to believe that Zhou was at the conference to garner support for Chinese communist claims to Taiwan, and expected that Zhou would use the meeting as a springboard for Chinese ambitions.<sup>118</sup>

Zhou defied expectations. Richard Wright, present at the conference in a journalistic capacity, writes that “Communism at Bandung was conspicuous for its shyness, its coyness, its bland smile and glad hand for everyone.”<sup>119</sup> Wright elaborates that Zhou “moved among the delegates with the utmost friendliness and reserve, listening to all arguments with patience, and turning the other cheek when receiving ideological slaps.”<sup>120</sup> Rather than the combative, agenda driven promoter of Communism that was expected to make waves at Bandung, Zhou played at

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<sup>116</sup> Acharya, “Studying the Bandung conference from a Global IR perspective,” 345

<sup>117</sup> Acharya, “Studying the Bandung conference from a Global IR perspective,” 345

<sup>118</sup> Wright, *The Color Curtain: A Report on the Bandung Conference*, 158.

<sup>119</sup> Wright, *The Color Curtain: A Report on the Bandung Conference*, 157.

<sup>120</sup> Wright, *The Color Curtain: A Report on the Bandung Conference*, 157.

benevolence. When Turkey attempted to paint China satellite extension of Soviet ambitions, Zhou turned these concerns aside by articulating a commitment to state sovereignty and the non-interference of western powers in Asian and African affairs.<sup>121</sup> When questioned about Chinese ambitions vis-a-vis Taiwan, Zhou was diplomatic. He stated that “The will of the Chinese people to liberate their own territory Taiwan and the coastal islands is a just one.”<sup>122</sup> However, China would not problematize Taiwan at the Bandung Conference because in doing so “our conference would be dragged into disputes... without any solution.”<sup>123</sup>

It was a masterful maneuver: Zhou backed up his benevolent stance with action. He would not use Bandung as an opportunity to gather allies in the fight to reclaim Taiwan because he prioritized the smooth operation of the conference. Zhou’s benevolent attitude and willingness to table Chinese foreign policy concerns with an eye towards the conference’s smooth running gained him admirers. One pro-western delegate, speaking to Richard Wright on the condition of anonymity said of Zhou that “I’m as violently opposed to communism as ever. But I trust this man.”<sup>124</sup>

That is not to say that Zhou’s tremendously effective benevolence was not without reasoning. He seemed to have recognized that the pump was not primed for the Bandung Conference to act as a space within which China might further concrete goals. Zhou recognized that the too much separated the disparate nations of Africa and Asia for such bold actions as

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<sup>121</sup>Wright, *The Color Curtain: A Report on the Bandung Conference*, 158.

<sup>122</sup> “Supplementary Speech of Premier Zhou Enlai at the Plenary Session of the Asian African Conference,” April 19, 1955, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, PRC FMA 207-00006-02, 1-13. Translation from China and the Asian-African Conference (Documents) (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1955), 21-27. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114673>

<sup>123</sup> “Supplementary Speech of Premier Zhou Enlai at the Plenary Session of the Asian African Conference.”

<sup>124</sup> Wright, *The Color Curtain: A Report on the Bandung Conference*, 149.

building support for an invasion of Taiwan or sponsorship of Communist uprisings. So he used the conference as a means to build goodwill towards China, and attempted to identify the struggles of his nation with those of the nations at the conference. Building on the Geneva Conference, Zhou sought to create a reputation for China as a willing opponent of Western influence in Asia and Africa, an ant-imperialist ally of new nations. “We Asian and African countries, China included, are all backward economically and culturally. Inasmuch as our Asian-African conference does not exclude anybody, why couldn’t we ourselves understand each other and enter into friendly co-operation?”<sup>125</sup> It is a brilliant move that cost Zhou nothing, and gained him the respect and admiration of the conference attendees. He had successfully engendered amongst the attendees not just passive acceptance of China, but a begrudging respect and admiration for his goodwill. He had proved western fears about the conference as springboard for Chinese ambitions both true and false; Zhou would not make concrete proposals, he offered no mutual defense pacts, no programs of industrialization. Rather, he preached tolerance, assured one and all that China stood behind them, and offered an open hand rather than a closed fist. The pump was not primed for the promotion of Chinese foreign policy goals throughout Asian and Africa before the conference. But Zhou’s benevolence and refusal to prioritize Chinese goals at the conference had won him respect and support with which he could build. He had established a bridgehead into Asian and African politics, and positioned China not as aggressive communist state, but open handed friend and ally of post colonial regimes. It is a brilliant move that surely enhanced China’s prestige and status to a new height.

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<sup>125</sup> “Supplementary Speech of Premier Zhou Enlai at the Plenary Session of the Asian African Conference.”

### **Practical Effects of Goodwill and Status Earned at Bandung**

For a nation to be on good terms with its neighbors does provide some inherent benefits. It can be said to expedite interstate negotiation and problem solving. But what of concrete benefits to China that can be related directly to the Bandung Conference? The most obvious are to examine would be an increase in Chinese international trade, which could be linked to international standing. International trade was one aspect of the Bandung Conference that Zhou Enlai made sure to stress, although sparingly. Zhou had briefly alluded to the “urgent need of a peaceful international environment for the development of our independent and sovereign economy” and his hope for an increase in trade between the nations present at Bandung.<sup>126</sup> Bandung could be said to have created the international environment for trade between Asian and African states, but was this opportunity capitalized on by the Chinese?

Quantitative information on Chinese trade from 1949 to 1979 is sparse: from the years between 1966 and 1978 there is almost no data at all, so it is at times difficult to determine the long term economic effects of the Bandung Conference, if any. But a cursory examination of surface level economic indicators such as annual GDP growth and net imports and exports and tend to paint a picture of a Chinese economy unchanged by Bandung . Average annual growth

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<sup>126</sup> “Main Speech by Premier Zhou Enlai, Head of the Delegation of the People's Republic of China, Distributed at the Plenary Session of the Asian-African Conference,” April 19, 1955, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Translation from China and the Asian-African Conference (Documents) (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1955), 9-20.

rate for the value of imports entering the country between 1952 and 1964 remained steady at 4% per annum.<sup>127</sup> Exports grew at 6% annually in that same time period.<sup>128</sup> So the value of both imports and exports grew at a steady but unremarkable rate, and showed no statistically relevant signs of change following the Bandung Conference. Certainly, these numbers do not compare favorably with China's staggering growth in the 1970s or 1990s. GDP growth remained relatively flat. So it cannot be said that the international ties that were forged at the Bandung Conference stimulated Chinese international trade to any large degree.

Or maybe not. A quick glance paints an imperfect picture; closer examination of what data is available reveals a Chinese economy changed in subtle but distinct and relevant ways. Although the monetary value of Chinese imports and exports remained steady from 1952-1964, the actual goods being traded changed dramatically in this time period, and reflect a shift in focus of the Chinese economy.

The Chinese economy post 1949 was modeled after the Soviet Union; it was an industrial economy that practiced import substitution and sought to be self sufficient industrially.<sup>129</sup> In other words, China sought to produce inside the country what might otherwise have been bought outside it. This is not an unusual course of action for a relatively poor nation in the mid 20th century, but it shrinks a nation's role in the global economy. It has less goods to sell abroad and

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<sup>127</sup>Wolfgang Keller & Ben Li & Carol H. Shiue, 2011, "China's Foreign Trade: Perspectives From the Past 150 Years," (The World Economy, Wiley Blackwell, vol. 34(6)), 41.

<sup>128</sup>Keller and Li, "China's Foreign Trade: Perspectives From the Past 150 Years", 41.

<sup>129</sup>Keller and Li, "China's Foreign Trade: Perspectives From the Past 150 Years", 50.

opts to import as few goods as possible. As a result, China's share of global trade shrunk marginally from 1936 to 1949.<sup>130</sup> These policies were walked back from 1952 to 1964.

In 1952, China's primary imports were industrial machinery and metals imported from the Soviet Union, of which machinery consisted of 20% of their total imports, while industrial metals account for 15%.<sup>131</sup> The goal was the rapid industrialization of the Chinese economy. China did not import many raw goods such as cereals and rice for public consumption, or textile fibers for commercial use.<sup>132</sup> China's primary exports were fruits, vegetables, and nuts, which combined accounted for 30% of Chinese exports.<sup>133</sup>

So in 1952 Chinese imports were aimed at industrial processes and its exports were raw goods. In 1964 the opposite was true. Cereal imports comprised 30% of Chinese imports by 1964, just nine years after Bandung.<sup>134</sup> Industrial machines and metals fell from 35% to 15%. Textile fibers rose from 5% to 15%.

At the same time, the exports of the nation experienced a similar shift. Fruits, nuts, and made up just 8% of exports in 1964. The most stark change in the economy came in the form of a rise in manufactured clothing and processed textiles; just 4% of Chinese exports in 1952, they rose to 28% of exports in 1964.<sup>135</sup> These trends indicate that China, from the years between 1952 and 1964 experienced a significant change in character of its economy. The goods it

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<sup>130</sup>Keller and Li, "China's Foreign Trade: Perspectives From the Past 150 Years", 50.

<sup>131</sup>Keller and Li, "China's Foreign Trade: Perspectives From the Past 150 Years", 50.

<sup>132</sup>Keller and Li, "China's Foreign Trade: Perspectives From the Past 150 Years", 50.

<sup>133</sup>Keller and Li, "China's Foreign Trade: Perspectives From the Past 150 Years", 43.

<sup>134</sup>Keller and Li, "China's Foreign Trade: Perspectives From the Past 150 Years", 44.

<sup>135</sup>Keller and Li, "China's Foreign Trade: Perspectives From the Past 150 Years", 44.

imported and exported changed significantly. It shifted from an unindustrialized economy which focused on import substitution and the production of goods meant for consumption within the country to a more modern, interconnected economy. An economy that imports raw goods such as foodstuffs or cotton and exports finished goods such as clothing and machinery is productive and lucrative. So why don't we see an overall rise in Chinese GDP?

### **A Change in Trading Partners— Geneva and Bandung**

Following the Bandung and Geneva conferences, China experienced a rapid shift from an import substitution economy whose chief imports were industrial machinery, to a producer and exporter of manufactured goods and importer of foodstuffs and raw materials. It is also around this time, 1962 to be exact, that China's gross exports began to outweigh its gross imports, setting China on its present course as net exporter of goods. The Bandung and Geneva conferences were instrumental in this change because they allowed China to trade more easily with nations other than the Soviet Union. Their initial model of import substitution was forced on them, but circumstances dictated it. Their only significant trading partners were the Soviet Union and its satellites in Europe, and so Chinese trade was bound to the needs of the Soviet Union. The USSR lacked produce but possessed an abundance of industrial machinery— and so went trade between the two nations. The Bandung and Geneva conferences, at least in theory, should have provided China with more options for international trade. Not just in terms of the goods to be traded, but also who those goods can be traded with.

One fact finding report commissioned by the CIA Intelligence Advisory Committee declassified in 2001 found that in 1955, 46% of all Chinese exports (measured by the monetary value of the exports) were sent to the USSR.<sup>136</sup> A further 31% of Chinese exports reached North Korea, Mongolia, or USSR satellites in Europe.<sup>137</sup> All told, 77% of all Chinese goods exported in the year of the Bandung Conference reached a Communist nation. Trade with America was almost nonexistent, trade with Western European nations such as France and West Germany accounted for just 6% of exports, and trade with Southeast Asian nations such as Indonesia and India made up just 5% of total exports.<sup>138</sup> Imports followed the same broad trend: China mostly traded with fellow Communist nations. Part of this phenomena can be explained by China's desire to rapidly industrialize—the Soviet Union was an ideal partner to provide complex machinery, which made up nearly 35% of total Chinese imports from the USSR. But it is also true that the opportunity to trade with other nations was simply not there. Many nations in Western Europe had never seen China as a viable trading partner before Geneva, and saw no business to be done with China. A great deal of post colonial regimes in Asia had never been in control of their international trade and had no positive relationship with the Chinese state, which dictated Chinese the destinations of exports and imports.

The post Bandung and Geneva era of Chinese foreign trade show a marked increase in trade with non Communist nations. Trade with Western European nations such as France, Italy, and the United Kingdom rose dramatically. Imports from France to China rose between 1955

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<sup>136</sup>Maddison, Angus, *Chinese Economic Performance in the Long Run*, (Development Center of the Organization for economic Co-Operation and Development, 1998) 69.

<sup>137</sup>Maddison, *Chinese Economic Performance in the Long Run*, 69.

<sup>138</sup>*Chinese Economic Performance in the Long Run*, 69.

and 1962 from 28 million dollars worth of goods to 41 million.<sup>139</sup> Trade with England doubled in that same time period, from 21 million dollars worth of goods to 52 million.<sup>140</sup>

Trade with Southeast Asian nations rose dramatically, mostly in the sector of exports. Chinese exports to Southeast Asian nations in many cases doubled or tripled between 1952 and 1964. Exports to Japan nearly doubled from 80 million dollars worth of goods to 150 in 1964.<sup>141</sup> Exports to Malaysia, India and Singapore doubled as well. So we see a marked and statistically significant rise in trade with both Southeast Asian nations as well as Western European nations, in terms of both exports and imports.

Despite building relations with new trading partners and a general increase in exports, Chinese GDP did not rise as it might be expected to under these conditions. This is because trade with the Soviet Union in this era either remained stagnant or dropped markedly depending on the year. Imports from the Soviet Union fell from close to one billion dollars worth of goods in 1955 to just 200 million in 1962.<sup>142</sup> The value of exports to the USSR dropped more modestly, from 645 million to 515 million.<sup>143</sup> This explains to some extent why Chinese GDP remained flat. Despite an increase in trade with alternative partners which might lead one to expect a large jump both in total GDP and GDP growth per year, the loss of trade with the Soviet Union balanced out the growth in other sectors. It must be mentioned that around this time relations

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<sup>139</sup>United States. Congress. Joint Economic Committee, "China, a Reassessment of the Economy: a Compendium of Papers Submitted to the Joint Economic Committee, Congress of the United States," July 10, 1975. Washington: U.S. Govt., 650.

<sup>140</sup> "China, a Reassessment of the Economy," 651.

<sup>141</sup>"China, a Reassessment of the Economy," 651.

<sup>142</sup>"China, a Reassessment of the Economy," 651.

<sup>143</sup>Maddison, *Chinese Economic Performance in the Long Run*, 69.

between the Soviet Union and China began to deteriorate, eventually culminating in the Sino-Soviet split. Had such a split occurred before trade with non Soviet bloc nations was made possible by the work done by Chinese dignitaries at the Geneva and Bandung conferences, the Chinese economy might have tanked during this period rather than stagnated. The increase in exports and imports with European and Southeast Asian nations essentially took the place of trade with the USSR; this can be attributed in some small part to the Geneva and Bandung conferences, which both had a positive effect on Chinese diplomatic and trade relations with states such as Indonesia, the UK, and Japan.

## **Conclusion**

What lessons about the behavior of states denied legal recognition can be gleaned from a close examination of Communist China? Firstly, that a nation in such a scenario must seek out allies, but be wary of becoming drawn into a situation resembling satellite status. Although the USSR probably did not play as active a role in forcing China's entry into the Korean War as certain scholars would claim, the Korean War still serves as a cautionary tale for unrecognized nations seeking alliances with great power states. Had China been formally recognized in this era by the United States and others, perhaps its border insecurities might not have been so pressing as to merit war. After all, non-recognized states do not have the same legal status as recognized ones and violations of their sovereignty are common. The Korean War also led China into a mutually antagonistic relationship with the United States, harming its chances of recognition both by the United States and its allies (Britain notwithstanding ).

At the armistice talks at Panmunjong, the Chinese were chiefly concerned with righting historical wrongs enacted against the Chinese people by Western Imperialist powers, while the United States hoped simply to leave Korea in an expedient manner. But it is at the armistice talks that Chinese leadership recognized the potential for international conferences to act as a vehicle for the enhancement of Chinese status, which it hoped to enlarge at the Geneva Conference. China argued that the very fact of its presence at the negotiating table with the United States and other great powers such as the UK and France was a tacit acknowledgment of China's status being close to great power level. Zhou Enlai was able to argue that China's actions at Panmunjon and admittedly small role in the actual negotiations at Geneva were

representative of China as the leader of the emergent third world. He positioned China as enemy of imperialism and American imperialism in general. The status earned at Geneva and the goodwill that Zhou garnered at Bandung were put to good use; following Geneva and Bandung, China saw a marked increase in trade with nations present at both those conferences. This increase in trade and mutual relations must be considered as a success of Chinese foreign policy, and in this time period China additionally became formally recognized by some European states such as Great Britain and Finland, and many Asian states such as India and Indonesia.

It can be deduced from China's case that in the absence of UN membership or formal diplomatic recognition, international conferences play an important role in the diplomacy of un-recognized states. Without UN membership or diplomatic relations at the charge d'affaires level, both of which China lacked, international conferences are just about the only venue for status enhancement and trade agreements. As such, it must be noted that participation international conferences should be a priority for un-recognized states. Even in such cases as the Geneva Conference when few practical gains are made at the negotiating table, a state must capitalize on the opportunity to enhance its status that negotiating with Great Powers or even neighboring states of equal or lesser status represents. The enlargement of China's status can be linked to its gains in foreign trade, and so it must be said that the enhancement of a non-recognized state's status through international conferences and other venues of negotiation such as armistice deals has concrete and desirable benefits, and may be utilized as a strategy to gain beneficial membership in the society of states without first procuring formal recognition.

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