

## Chapter 7

# Road to Bandung: China's Evolving Approach to De-Colonization

Qiang ZHAI

When the Chinese Communists took power in October 1949, they faced a world in rapid transformation. During World War II, the Japanese invasion had greatly weakened the European colonies in Asia, facilitating the process of decolonization in the region. After the war, it was in Asia where the Cold War and decolonization interacted most intensely. As the anti-colonial movement gathered momentum, both the United States and the Soviet Union attempted to steer it into the Cold War orbit. Thus, what began as a revolt of the South against the oppression of the North was hijacked by the competition between the East and the West, creating a complex historical phenomenon. As the Cold War moved beyond Europe to Asia and other parts of the world, it transformed itself from its European origins as a geopolitical contest between Washington and Moscow to become a rivalry of competing social and political systems and orders, a struggle to define the model and meaning of progress as people strove to win independence from the shackle of colonization, to cope with political upheavals, social revolutions, economic transformations, and racial and ethnic conflicts. The Cold War not only coincided temporally with the struggles for national independence and freedom that took place in the colonial territories after WWII, but also influenced the temper, pace, and results of those struggles.

How did Mao and his comrades view the connection of their revolution to the dual processes of the Cold War and decolonization? How did Moscow's approach shape their attitude toward non-communist nation-

alist leaders in Asia? How did their policy toward the emerging Afro-Asian states evolve in the first half of the 1950s, culminating in their breakthrough diplomacy at the Bandung Conference in 1955? Answers to these questions will shed light on Beijing's relations with the Soviet Union and the United States, on its interactions with non-Western nationalist states, and most importantly, on how the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leaders apprehended threats and identified interests and opportunities in Asia, and how they understood and defined China's place in the postwar world.

## Changes in Postwar Politics in Asia

The Second World War shook the foundation of the Western colonial empire in Asia. South and Southeast Asia were among the most unstable colonial territories in the world. Britain, the strongest of the European powers, was quick to recognize the high financial and military cost of maintaining its colonial possessions, embarking on a path of imperial retreat. In August 1947, it completed its transfer of power in South Asia by granting independence to India and Pakistan. A year later, it built on the precedent set in the South Asian subcontinent by allowing Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and Burma to become independent. In Malaya, which was of greater economic value due to its role as one of the British Empire's top dollar earners through its export of rubber and tin, London tried to make its control more efficient by introducing constitutional reform. In 1948, it unveiled a new federal governmental system that envisioned strong central government control over security and finance while providing for a degree of local autonomy for the Malay-dominated sultanates.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> John Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation: The Retreat from Empire in the Post-war World* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988); Nicholas Tarling, *Britain, Southeast Asia, and the Onset of the Cold War, 1945–1950* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Hans Antlöv and Stein Tønnesson, eds., *Imperial Policy and Southeast Asian Nationalism* (Richmond: Curzon, 1995); Jost Dulffer, "The Impact of World War II on Decolonization," in Marc Frey, Ronald W. Pruessen, and Tan Tai Yong, eds., *The Transformation of Southeast Asia: International Perspectives on Decolonization* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2003), pp. 23–34.

In contrast to Britain, the Netherlands and France were less accommodating to the demands and pressure of nationalist movements in Asia. Both powers had suffered a loss of prestige during WWII, and therefore viewed the restoration of their colonies in Southeast Asia as crucial to their national rehabilitation and revival. Both, however, encountered strong resistance when they attempted to reestablish their domination. In the Dutch East Indies, Japan had promoted Indonesian nationalism by freeing leaders such as Sukarno and Hatta from Dutch prisons and permitting the organization of an indigenous militia. When WWII ended in August 1945, the nationalists were therefore prepared to exploit the power vacuum to create a Republic of Indonesia and were resolved to prevent the Dutch from returning.<sup>2</sup>

What happened in Vietnam was a most telling case of the intersection between decolonization and the Cold War in Asia. Taking advantage of the Japanese destruction of the French colonial authority during WWII, Ho Chi Minh declared Vietnamese independence by establishing the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) in September 1945. Ho's new government, however, immediately encountered a test of survival as France launched a military campaign to reclaim its colonial possession in Indochina. Motivated by Cold War calculations, the United States abandoned its wartime position of supporting Vietnamese independence and endorsed France's efforts to recover its colonial empire in Southeast Asia.<sup>3</sup>

In 1948, left-wing insurgency broke out in Southeast Asia. In March communist forces plunged newly-independent Burma into civil war,

---

2 Robert J. McMahon, "Anglo-American Diplomacy and the Reoccupation of the Netherlands East Indies," *Diplomatic History* 2 (1978), pp. 1–23; idem, *Colonialism and the Cold War: The United States and the Indonesian Struggle for Independence, 1945–1949* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981); Richard Mason, "Containment and the Challenge of Non-Alignment: The Cold War and U.S. Policy toward Indonesia, 1950–1952," in Christopher E. Goscha and Christian F. Ostermann, eds., *Connecting Histories: Decolonization and the Cold War in Southeast Asia, 1945–1962* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press; Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), pp. 39–67.

3 Mark Atwood Lawrence, *Assuming the Burden: Europe and the American Commitment to War in Vietnam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

in June the Malayan Communist Party waged an armed revolt against British rule, and in September the Indonesian Communist Party took up arms against Sukarno's government. All of a sudden, the region looked to be on the brink of political meltdown. American and British officials at the time tended to regard these seemingly spontaneous left-winged uprisings as directed and coordinated by the Soviet Union, but most scholars tend to argue that they had developed from local circumstances rather than as responses to any instructions from the Kremlin.<sup>4</sup> Although there is no evidence to prove that Stalin orchestrated the outbreak of communist insurgency in Southeast Asia in 1948, it is plausible to argue that the declaration of the "two-camp" theory by Andrei Zhdanov at the inaugural meeting of the Cominform in September 1947 inspired and emboldened communist groups in Southeast Asia to follow a course of armed struggle. In this sense, the historical trajectories of the Cold War and decolonization intersected and collided, creating national divisions, rivalries, and civil wars—most often between communist and anti-communist forces—within the process of anti-colonialism.

## The CCP Confronts Postwar Asia

When the Chinese Communists came to power in 1949, they chose to lean to the side of the Soviet Union in the Cold War. They perceived dual meanings and identities of their revolution in the context of world history. They believed that the Chinese revolution had world significance in two respects: first, it represented a continuation of the Russian revolution, and like the Russian revolution, it belonged to the worldwide effort to destroy the capitalist system and to establish the proletarian dictatorship; second, because of China's unique historical background and experiences in modern times, the Chinese revolution offered an example to colonial countries in the non-Western world. Unlike the Russian revolution, which emerged from a former imperialist state, the Chinese

---

4 For recent reassessments of this issue, see the following two special issues: "1948 Insurgencies and the Cold War in Southeast Asia Revisited," *Kajian Malaysia: Journal of Malaysian Studies* 27:1&2 (2009); "Asian Cold War Symposium," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 40 (October 2009).

revolution took place in a rural country, which had suffered at the hands of Western and Japanese imperialism and colonialism.<sup>5</sup>

In analyzing the issues of war and peace in world politics, Mao and his colleagues followed closely Zhdanov's "two-camp" theory. Speaking at a party politburo meeting on September 13, 1948, Mao asserted that his assessment of the global trend was the same as that made by Zhdanov at the Cominform opening conference, namely, the revolutionary forces were superior to the anti-revolutionary forces in the world and that the war plan of the reactionary forces could be broken. Eager to contribute to the strength of the socialist camp led by the Soviet Union, Mao declared that "the international situation is in our favor."<sup>6</sup>

The CCP leaders displayed enthusiasm in supporting communist rebellions in Southeast Asia and showed distrust and hostility toward the newly independent countries in Asia that were not led by communist parties, claiming that they were still under the control of their former masters and that armed revolution by local communists represented the only hope to liberation. They rejected the notion that there could be "neutrals" and insisted that everyone had to "lean to one side or the other." They believed that the Chinese model of relying on armed struggle to seize power in a rural society was relevant and applicable to revolutionary movements in Asia. Addressing a group of delegates from Asian and Australian trade unions in November 1949, Liu Shaoqi, the number-two man in the CCP leadership, proudly declared that "Mao Zedong's road" to victory could be followed by people in colonial and semi-colonial countries, who were striving to achieve liberation.<sup>7</sup>

---

5 Lu Dingyi, "The World Significance of the Chinese Revolution," June 30, 1951, in *Lu Dingyi wenji* [Collected Works of Lu Dingyi] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1992), pp. 432–439. Lu Dingyi was a major theoretician within the CCP.

6 Mao's speech at the CCP politburo meeting, September 13, 1948, in *Mao Zedong wenji* [Collection of Mao Zedong's Works], vol. 5 (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1996), pp. 141–146.

7 Liu Shaoqi's address at the Conference of Asian and Australian Trade Unions, November 16, 1949, in *Jianguo yilai Liu Shaoqi wengao* [Liu Shaoqi's Manuscripts since the Founding of the PRC], vol. 1 (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 2005), pp. 160–169.

As the Chinese Communist forces reached the borders with Vietnam and Burma in late 1949 and early 1950, the CCP elites expected that the communist parties in Southeast Asia would send representatives to the southern provinces of Yunnan and Guangxi to seek contact with the CCP. In an instruction to Chen Geng, chairman of the Yunnan People's Government, on March 3, 1950, Liu Shaoqi asked him to provide "a warm welcome and assistance" if the communist parties in Southeast Asia, especially from Vietnam and Burma, dispatched envoys to Yunnan.<sup>8</sup>

In a speech to a gathering of party intelligence officials in April 1950, Zhou Enlai dwelled on the importance of assisting revolutionary movements in Southeast Asia. Urging his listeners not to be content with the victory that China had achieved, he declared: "We should be prepared to shoulder the burden of helping to liberate the entire world . . . From now on, we should help the oppressed nations and brothers in the East such as Korea, Indonesia, and Vietnam to liberate themselves. If all these nations have risen up and won liberation, would it not be true that the power of the people all over the world will be greater and that imperialism will be more vulnerable to collapse?" After examining internal and external difficulties facing the United States, Zhou pointed out that "our tasks include consolidating of world peace and preventing the rearming of Japan and Germany and that our current focus is to liberate Taiwan, completely defeat Chiang Kai-shek, and assist the revolutionary movements of weak nations in Southeast Asia."<sup>9</sup>

In January 1951, the CCP created the Department of International Liaison to handle relations with fraternal parties, and Wang Jiaxiang was appointed the director. In a letter to Wang on January 16, Liu Shaoqi explained that his "most important task" would be to establish contact

---

<sup>8</sup> Liu Shaoqi to Chen Geng, March 3, 1950, in *Jianguo yilai Liu Shaoqi wengao*, vol. 1, pp. 572–573.

<sup>9</sup> Zhou Enlai's speech at the Work Conference of the Second and Fifth Bureaus of the Intelligence Department of the People's Revolutionary Committee of the Central People's Government, April 1, 1950, in *Jianguo yilai Zhou Enlai wengao* [Zhou Enlai's Manuscripts since the Founding of the PRC], vol. 2 (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 2008), pp. 240–255.

with fraternal parties in the East and to provide assistance to them. “At the moment,” Liu informed Wang, “the parties of Japan, Indonesia, Burma, Thailand, Vietnam, and Malaya all have representative in Beijing.”<sup>10</sup> But the nature and scope of China’s aid to those parties, except Ho Chi Minh’s movement, remain unclear because of the unavailability of primary sources from Beijing.<sup>11</sup>

In contrast to its eagerness to support the communist movements in Southeast Asia, the CCP’s attitude toward non-communist political leaders in Asia was suspicious and hostile. For instance, following Moscow’s line,<sup>12</sup> the CCP denounced Jawaharlal Nehru as a “stooge of imperialism” and lambasted his suppression of the Indian Communist Party.<sup>13</sup> *Shiejie zhishi* [World Knowledge], the CCP propaganda organ, labeled Nehru as an “Asian Quisling”<sup>14</sup> and

---

10 Liu Shaoqi to Wang Jiaxiang, January 16, 1951, in *Jianguo yilai Liu Shaoqi wengao*, vol. 3, p. 25.

11 On China’s aid to Ho Chi Minh’s anti-French struggle during the First Indochina War, see Qiang Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950–1975* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), chaps. 1–2.

12 Stalin regarded post-colonial governments as tools of Western imperialism. Vojtech Mastny, “The Soviet Union’s Partnership with India,” *Journal of Cold War Studies* 12:3 (Summer 2010), p. 52. The Soviet press branded Nehru’s government as “an Indian variant of bourgeois pseudo-democracy,” and Nehru himself as a “running dog of imperialism.” Golam Wahed Choudhury, *India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Major Powers: Politics of a Divided Subcontinent* (New York: The Free Press, 1975), p. 8.

13 Wang Chen, “China’s Policy toward India and the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet, 1949–1951,” *Dangdai Zhongguo shi yanjiu* [Journal of Contemporary Chinese History Studies] 2 (2002), pp. 63–74; Dai Chaowu, “Indian Foreign Policy, Great Power Relations, and the 1962 Sino-Indian Border Conflict,” in Niu Dayong and Shen Zhihua, eds., *Lengzhan yu Zhongguo de zhoubian guanxi* [The Cold War and China’s Relations with Neighboring Countries] (Beijing: Shijie zhishi chubanshe, 2004), pp. 487–556. In contrast to Mao’s hostility, Nehru saw China as a friend and a partner in leading post-colonial Asia. Thant Myint-U, *Where China Meets India: Burma and the New Crossroads of Asia* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011), p. 225.

14 Hu Jin, “Liberate Tibet and Smash Imperialist Plots,” *Shijie zhishi* [World Knowledge], supplement no. 2 (December 9, 1949).

condemned the United States for using Nehru as its “agent in the East” to replace Chiang Kai-shek.<sup>15</sup> In a November 1949 telegram to B. T. Ranadive, general secretary of the Indian Communist Party, Mao expressed his hope that the combined struggle waged by the Indian Communist Party and other Indian patriots would liberate India from “the yoke of imperialism and its collaborators.”<sup>16</sup>

Even though neutralist Burma was the first noncommunist state to recognize the People’s Republic of China (PRC) and endorsed its claim to represent China in the United Nations, Beijing remained antagonistic toward the government in Rangoon and sought cooperation with the Burmese Communist Party.<sup>17</sup> Recalling Burma’s ties with China in the early 1950s, Burmese premier U Nu wrote in 1958: “Our relations with the new Chinese regime remained uncertain for a number of years . . . The new Chinese government seemed inclined to give our Communists their moral support, apparently regarding us as stooges of the west.”<sup>18</sup>

It is important to note that Stalin was ambivalent about the relevance of the Chinese revolutionary model to countries like Indonesia and India. In the fall of 1950, Stalin received separately letters from the communist parties of Indonesia and India regarding their intention and preparations to seize power in their countries. Referring to China as their role model, both letters stressed the importance of waging armed struggle to topple world imperialism and its local puppets. In his reply, however, Stalin advised caution, emphasizing that conditions were not ready

---

15 *Shijie zhishi* 9 (March 10, 1950).

16 Mao’s telegram to B. T. Ranadive, November 19, 1949, in *Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong wengao* [Mao Zedong’s Manuscripts since the Founding of the PRC], vol. 1 (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1987), p. 146.

17 Lucian Pye, “The China Factor in Southeast Asia,” in Richard H. Solomon, ed., *The China Factor: Sino-American Relations and the Global Scene* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1981), pp. 216–256; Josef Silverstein, *Burma: Military Rule and the Politics of Stagnation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), p. 171.

18 U Nu, *Premier Report to the People* (Rangoon: GUB, 1958), pp. 35–36. See also Maung Aung Myoe, *In the Name of Pauk-Phaw: Myanmar’s China Policy since 1948* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2011), p. 22.

for conducting armed revolution in their countries. The Soviet leader insisted that the primary task for the Indonesian and Indian communists at the moment was to implement agrarian reform, liquidating feudal landed property and transferring it to peasants. Fearing that the Chinese example might inspire Asian communists to take drastic and premature actions, Stalin tried to downplay the CCP's success and to demonstrate that Mao's victory was an exception, rather than a norm, that the CCP could win only because of assistance from the Soviet Union, which shared a border with China, and that similar assistance was not possible for countries far away from the Soviet Union.<sup>19</sup>

Stalin's disapproval had an effect on the CCP because after 1951 CCP officials refrained in their public speeches and publications from boasting the importance and relevance of "Mao's way" to other Asian countries. To maintain unity within the communist bloc and to avoid Stalin's suspicion of Chinese competition, Mao took pains to show deference to the Soviet leadership. He instructed his officials not to employ the term "Mao Zedong Thought" in their addresses and writings. Before the opening of the Second National Congress of the Communist Youth League in June 1953, Mao sent his secretary Chen Boda to advise League officials on how to prepare reports to be delivered at the Congress. As a result, neither the "Working Report" by Hu Yaobang nor the "Report on the Revision of the League Charter" by Li Chang contained reference to "Mao Zedong Thought."<sup>20</sup> Reliance on Soviet assistance in the early 1950s forced Mao to swallow his pride.

## Reaching out to Neutral Countries

The CCP modified its policy toward neutralist governments in Asia in the mid-1950s, no longer treating them as reactionary forces or as merely

---

19 Ilya V. Gaiduk, "Soviet Cold War Strategy and Prospects of Revolution in South and Southeast Asia," in Goscha and Ostermann, *Connecting Histories*, pp. 123–136.

20 Li Chang, "My Good Teacher and Helpful Friend Hu Yaobang," in *Bainian-chao* [Hundred Year Tide] 2 (1999), p. 25. This monthly journal frequently publishes recollections and memoirs by former Chinese communist officials.

“running dogs” of imperialist powers. During the 1954 Geneva Conference, Zhou Enlai visited India and Burma and held talks with Nehru and U Nu. Zhou agreed to base China’s relations with India and Burma on the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence: mutual respect for each other’s territorial integrity and sovereignty, non-aggression, non-interference in each other’s internal affairs, equal and mutual respect, and peaceful coexistence.<sup>21</sup> From Beijing’s perspective, these principles represented a code of international conduct totally different from imperialism and hegemonism.

The result of the Geneva Conference, announced on July 21, 1954, brought the First Indochina War to a close. According to the Geneva Accords, a ceasefire would take place between the Communist forces and the French; Vietnam would be divided at the Seventeenth parallel with French troops withdrawing from north of that line; North and South Vietnam would neither enter military alliances nor permit foreign military bases on their territories; national elections, supervised by an international commission of Canada, India, and Poland, would be conducted within two years to unify the country; the Communist forces (Pathet Lao) would be allowed to regroup in two provinces in Laos; independent states would be established in Laos and Cambodia and general elections would be held there.<sup>22</sup>

On several occasions in the second half of 1954, Mao reiterated his approval of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. Meeting with a British Labor delegation on August 24, Mao asserted that socialism could coexist with capitalism. Imperialism and feudal kingdoms so long as each side showed willingness to do so and that peaceful coexistence

---

21 Pei Jianzhang, chief ed., *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo waijiaoshi, 1949–1956* [Diplomatic History of the People’s Republic of China, 1949–1956] (Beijing: Shijie zhishi chubanshe, 1994), pp. 100, 121–122; John W. Garver, *Protracted Contest: Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Twentieth Century* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001); Bertil Lintner, “Burma and Its Neighbors,” *China Report* 28:3 (July-September 1992), pp. 225–259.

22 William J. Duiker, *Sacred War: Nationalism and Revolution in a Divided Vietnam* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1995), pp. 89–94.

could happen between different social and political systems.<sup>23</sup> In a conversation with Nehru two months later, Mao indicated his intention to apply the Principles of Peaceful Coexistence to China's relations with all countries.<sup>24</sup>

The endorsement by Mao and his associates of Indian and Burmese neutrality constituted an important adjustment of their earlier position of supporting revolutionary forces and rejecting neutralism in the Cold War. When they first assumed power in China in 1949, they believed that promoting revolutionary movements was not only desirable international politics because it weakened the reactionary forces, but also an unshakable international duty. One of the objectives of the Chinese revolution was to lead other colonial and semi-colonial peoples to the same path. By the mid-1950s, however, the CCP elites had come to recognize the increasing insufficiency and rigidity of their 1949 adoption of the leaning-to-one-side policy and its corollary of allowing no third approach.<sup>25</sup>

In the months after the Geneva Conference, Mao focused his attention on Taiwan. To prevent what he perceived as an American plan to separate Taiwan from China and to “break the political and military collaboration between the United States and Chiang Kai-shek,” he decided to increase pressure in the Taiwan Strait.<sup>26</sup> While U.S. secretary of state John Foster Dulles was negotiating the Southeast Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO) agreement in Manila in September 1954, Mao ordered his troops to shell Quemoy (Jinmen) and Mastu (Mazu), Nationalist-held

---

23 The PRC Foreign Ministry and the CCP Central Documentary Research Department, comp., *Mao Zedong waijiao wenxuan* [Diplomatic Writings of Mao Zedong] (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe and Shijie zhishi chubanshe, 1994), p. 160.

24 *Ibid.*, p. 165.

25 On the evolution of China's Third World policy, see Samuel S. Kim, “China and the Third World: In Search of a Peace and Development Line,” in Samuel S. Kim, ed., *China and the World: New Directions in Chinese Foreign Relations*, 2nd ed. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1989), pp. 148–178.

26 Wang Bingnan, *Zhongmei huitan junian huigu* [Recollections of the Nine-Year Sino-American Ambassadorial Talks] (Beijing: Shijie zhishi chubanshe, 1985), pp. 41–42.

islands off the Chinese coast.<sup>27</sup> During the crisis, the Soviet Union defended the Chinese position, claiming that the U.S. interference with China's internal affairs was the real reason for the tensions in the Taiwan region. In October 1954, Khrushchev pleased Mao by visiting China and agreeing to return the naval base at Lushun (Port Arthur) taken by Stalin in exchanged for the Russian declaration of war against Japan in 1945.<sup>28</sup>

While it is true that in the post-Stalin period, Soviet and American leaders wanted to stabilize their relations and to prevent the danger of the Cold War becoming hot given the fact that both sides now possessed thermonuclear weapons, it is also true that they never abandoned their competition for influence in the world. They maintained their belief that their system represented the best political, economic, and social model for the mankind. Their efforts to win the hearts and minds of people in under-developed and colonial countries intensified.<sup>29</sup>

Stalin was more preoccupied with events in Europe during the early Cold War. In general, he exhibited little interest in areas of the world not adjacent to his country and had not invested economic or military resources in those regions to compete with the West. In Southeast Asia, Stalin refrained from providing economic or military aid to Ho Chi Minh

---

27 Michael Schaller, *The United States and China: Into the Twenty-First Century*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 148. For the Eisenhower administration's response to the Taiwan Strait crisis, see Robert Accinelli, *Crisis and Commitment: United States Policy Toward Taiwan, 1950–1955* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), chaps. 8–9. Nehru opposed the creation of the SEATO, warning that the organization, by renewing old fears and feelings of insecurity, would stimulate actions in contradiction to the Geneva Accords. Roger M. Smith, *Cambodia's Foreign Policy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1965), p. 76.

28 Pei, *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo waijiaoshi*, pp. 29, 39; Aleksandr Fursenko and Timothy Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War: The Inside Story of an American Adversary* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2006), p. 18.

29 Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Melvyn Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind: The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Cold War* (New York: Hill & Wang, 2007).

in his struggle against French colonialism.<sup>30</sup> Toward the Middle East, Stalin failed to produce any coherent policy.<sup>31</sup> The new leadership in the Kremlin, however, was less stricken with the siege mentality of Stalin and more eager to undermine the interest of the West on the global scale.

By the mid-1950s, the Cold War had moved beyond its focus on Europe and East Asia to a broader area in the world. The Third World was aggressively asserting itself onto the American-Soviet agenda. The dissolution of the European empires had produced a generation of ambitious nationalist leaders anxious for endorsement, assistance, and legitimacy. They faced, however, the choice of either throwing their lot with one or the other of the two Cold War camps or remaining neutral. None of them except North Vietnam declared their allegiance to the Soviet bloc while a number of them were induced by the United States and its European allies to join Western-dominated regional security systems. The alternative of nonalignment in the Cold War was represented by India.

Nikita Khrushchev personified a new Soviet approach to the Cold War when he declared on an official visit to India in 1955: "Let us verify in practice whose system is better. We say to the leaders of the capitalist states: Let us compete without war."<sup>32</sup> Eager to reverse recent Soviet setbacks in Europe by opening a "second front" of the Cold War in Asia, Khrushchev hoped that he could use India to move the "correlation of forces" in the struggle with the United States decisively in Soviet favor.<sup>33</sup> Khrushchev's sojourn in India was very successful. According to an observer, Khrushchev and Nikolai Bulganin "looked like pilgrims from another planet with floppy felt hats and trousers so wide they could have

---

30 Ilya V. Gaiduk, *Confronting Vietnam: Soviet Policy toward the Indochina Conflict, 1954–1963* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press; Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), chap. 1.

31 Vladislav Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), p. 109.

32 Fursenko and Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War*, p. 57.

33 Mastny, "The Soviet Union's Partnership," pp. 50–90.

been used as sails. Huge crowds turned out to see them, and Nehru greatly enjoyed their visit, and sensed it was a personal triumph for himself as a diplomat as well as a prime minister.”<sup>34</sup>

Not everyone in the Soviet leadership, however, shared Khrushchev’s view. Molotov, for instance, called Khrushchev’s new offensive “adventurism.” Khrushchev replied: “Offensive is the best form of defense. I said we needed a new, active diplomacy because the impossibility of nuclear war meant that the struggle between us and the capitalists was taking on new forms . . . I’m not an adventurer, but we must aid national liberation movements.”<sup>35</sup> Under Khrushchev’s guidance, the Kremlin began to dispatch officials to the developing world in search of diplomatic ties and trade and cultural relationships. As the historian Jonathan Haslam aptly puts it, “In Asia willingness to accept nonalignment as an asset also indicated a sober assessment of realities on the ground rather than the will-o’-the-wisp of revolution.”<sup>36</sup>

Leaders in Beijing praised Khrushchev’s new diplomacy in the Third World. Yang Shangkun, a member of the CCP Politburo, wrote in his diary on January 3, 1956: “The flexible policy adopted by the Soviet Union has isolated the United States in many areas. The visit to India and Burma by Bulganin and Khrushchev represented the first contact between the Soviet Union and these Eastern countries over the last several decades and improved the Soviet position in Asia.”<sup>37</sup>

## Zhou Enlai at the Bandung Conference

Beijing contributed the proper ideological accompaniment to Khrushchev’s drive to court the newly emergent nations in the Third World by

---

34 Quoted in Judith M. Brown, *Nehru: A Political Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 250.

35 William Taubman, *Khrushchev: The Man and His Era* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2003), p. 354.

36 Jonathan Haslam, *Russia’s Cold War: From the October Revolution to the Fall of the Wall* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), p. 151.

37 Yang Shangkun, *Yang Shangkun riji* [Yang Shangkun’s Diaries], vol. 1 (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 2001), p. 219.

participating in the Bandung Conference of Asian and African states in April 1955.<sup>38</sup> Attaching great importance to the meeting, the Chinese leadership wanted to seize the opportunity to woo neutral countries. In a speech at a party meeting on March 22, 1955, Liu Shaoqi dwelled upon the importance of winning the cooperation of neutral delegates at the forthcoming Bandung gathering. He pointed out that China should accord sufficient attention to the role of neutral countries because they played an important role in “opposing and hampering the war activities of the United States and resisting the American plot to organize aggressive military blocs.” “As an independent international gathering by Asian-African states without the participation of imperialist countries,” Liu concluded, the Bandung Conference “might exert a major impact on the anti-colonial struggle of Asian-African countries, on the effort to expand the force of peace in Asia and Africa, and on China’s endeavor to win more acceptance of its principle of peaceful coexistence by Asian-African countries.”<sup>39</sup>

The Chinese government kept its Soviet counterpart informed of its preparations for the conference. On April 6, 1955, Huang Zhen, the Chinese ambassador to Indonesia, told D. A. Zhukov, the Soviet ambassador to Indonesia, about the composition of the PRC delegation, which included a Chinese Muslim leader. Zhukov replied that the inclusion of a prominent Muslim figure in the delegation had “great significance.”<sup>40</sup>

---

38 U Nu was one of the promoters for inviting China to the Bandung Conference. Because some countries opposed the invitation of China to the meeting, U Nu declared publicly that he would not go to Bandung if Zhou Enlai was not invited. Maung Aung Myoe, *In the Name of Pauk-Phaw*, p. 27. The Indian scholar Giri Deshingkar wrote: “At the Bandung Conference in 1955, Nehru decided to adopt a low profile for himself and to promote Zhou Enlai and the new Chinese state on the international scene.” Giri Deshingkar, “India-China Relations: The Nehru Years,” *China Report* 27:2 (April-June 1991), pp. 85–10 (The quote is on p. 90).

39 Liu Shaoqi’s speech at the National Representative Conference of the CCP, March 22, 1955, in *Jianguo yilai Liu Shaoqi wengao*, vol. 7, p. 129.

40 Zhukov journal entry, April 12, 1955, in Cold War International History Project Digital Archive, e-Dossier no. 26: “Soviet Policy in Indonesia during the ‘Liberal Democracy’ Period, 1950–1959,” introduced by Larisa M. Efimova [accessed on November 9, 2011].

Zhou Enlai was appointed as the head of the Chinese delegation to the Bandung Conference. During the meeting, he greatly improved China's international image and diversified its global contact through his diplomacy of moderation, reconciliation, and pragmatism. He sought to impress leaders from the developing countries by soft-pedaling communist principles and by emphasizing common historical experiences that China shared with them. "In the wake of the Second World War," Zhou contended, "many countries became independent. Some countries were led by communist parties while other countries were led by nationalist leaders. Both groups, however, shared the same background of achieving independence from colonial rule. There is no reason why they should not understand, respect, and support each other. The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence should serve as a foundation for friendship and cooperation among them."<sup>41</sup> China initially applied the Five Principles to its relations with India and Burma. Zhou now extended them to China's ties with all Third World countries, treating them as the cornerstone for the post-imperialist and post-colonial world order.

Zhou Enlai's efforts to avoid confrontation and seek consensus made it possible for the Bandung Conference to reach a satisfactory conclusion. He refrained from distinguishing between countries which maintained military alliances with Washington and those which had close ties with Moscow. The emphasis on themes common to all participants, such as political independence, social progress, economic development, and racial equality, allowed the meeting to hold together where it otherwise might have collapsed. That the ten-point Bandung Communique was based on the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence demonstrated Zhou Enlai's success in promoting these ideas to the delegates at the conference.

Zhou Enlai touched many delegates with his grace, reasonableness, and soothing words. He made a major impact on Prince Sihanouk and Cambodia's subsequent international orientation by convincing him that non-alignment provided the best safeguard for Cambodia's security

---

41 Pei, *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo waijiaoshi*, pp. 243–244; Li Shenzhi and Zhang Yan, *Yafei huiyi riji* [Asian-African Conference Diaries] (Beijing: Zhongguo xinwen chubanshe, 1986); Ronald C. Keith, *The Diplomacy of Zhou Enlai* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), p. 83.

against its neighboring historical antagonists (South Vietnam and Thailand), both of which were allied to the United States.<sup>42</sup> Toward Indonesia, Zhou tried to dispel apprehension about a Chinese fifth column by signing an agreement providing that overseas Chinese with dual citizenship should choose one nationality or the other. With the Philippines, a SEATO member, Zhou offered to conclude a non-aggression treaty. Thailand's delegates were invited to tour the Thai Autonomous Zone of Yunnan to assure themselves of the peaceful purposes of that zone. With Pakistani representatives, Zhou expressed understanding of their assurances that Islamabad's membership in SEATO was not directed against China.<sup>43</sup>

The Soviet Union came under attack at Bandung. Delegates from anti-communist countries like Iraq, Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand, and Turkey accused the USSR of practicing neo-colonialism in Eastern Europe and of posing a new threat to the world. Zhou Enlai refuted the accusation as "contradictory against the facts." Zhou's strategy to deflect criticism of the Soviet Union was to emphasize the importance of decolonization, racial equality, and national independence. He urged participants at the meeting to "seek common ground while preserving differences."<sup>44</sup>

---

42 Sophie Richardson, *China, Cambodia, and the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), p. 32. Sihanouk later described his first meeting with Zhou Enlai as "a case of 'love at first sight.'" Norodom Sihanouk with Wilfred Burchett, *My War with the C.I.A.: Cambodia's Fight for Survival* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1973), p. 202.

43 Xiong Huayuan, "Zhou Enlai and the Bandung Conference," *Dangshi wenhui* [Collection of Articles on Party History] 6 (1987), pp. 4–8; Xia Zhongcheng, *Yafei Xiongfeng: Tuanjie hezuo de yafei huiyi* [Strong Winds of Asia and Africa: United and Cooperative Asian-African Conferences] (Beijing: Shijie zhishi chubanshe, 1998), pp. 55–78; Tao Wenzhao, ed., *Zhongmei guanxi shi, 1949–1972* [A History of Sino-American Relations, 1949–1972] (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1999), pp. 195–203; John W. Garver, *Foreign Relations of the People's Republic of China* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1993), p. 49.

44 Zhou's telegram to the CCP Central Committee and Mao, April 30, 1955, in The PRC Foreign Ministry Archives, ed., *Zhongguo daibiaotuan chuxi 1955 nian yafei huiyi* [The Participation of the Chinese Delegation in the 1955 Asian-African Conference] (Beijing: Shijie zhishi chubanshe, 2007), pp. 87–90.

During the Bandung Conference, China took steps to defuse tensions in the Taiwan Strait. Its attack on the offshore islands had not only failed to prevent Washington and Taipei from drawing closer to each other but also caused great fear among Southeast Asian countries, which desired a stable and peaceful international environment. During his speech before the political committee on April 23, Zhou Enlai announced that China was ready to negotiate with the United States.<sup>45</sup> Washington accepted Zhou's proposal, and the Sino-American ambassadorial talks began shortly afterwards in Geneva.<sup>46</sup>

What made the overture to the emerging postcolonial nations of Asia and Africa so attractive to the PRC, and what so unsettled American officials about it, was that Beijing seemed to possess a number of distinct advantages over the West in any competition for the hearts and minds of the Third World. Common experiences of victimization and humiliation at the hands of Western and Japanese imperialism, deep-rooted resentments against the hubris and arrogance of white racism, an abiding desire for speedy economic growth—all made the Third World arena highly susceptible to Beijing's olive-branches. Issues with regard to race, color, and religion were unavoidably prominent at a gathering of representatives from former colonies who were determined to terminate colonial

---

See also Pei, *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo waijiaoshi*, pp. 245–249. At Bandung, Nehru also tried to tone down the anti-Soviet rhetoric by some delegates. He took issue with the claim of the prime minister of Ceylon that the Soviet Union was committing “imperialism” in Eastern Europe. Nehru insisted that the countries of Eastern Europe were independent and recognized as such by the United Nations. Brown, *Nehru*, p. 261.

45 Carlos Romulo, chairman of the Philippine delegation to the Bandung Conference, later recalled that Zhou's statement “electrified the conference before the political committee.” Carlos P. Romulo, *The Meaning of Bandung* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1956), p. 19.

46 For a detailed account of the Sino-American ambassadorial talks, see Yafeng Xia, *Negotiating with the Enemy: U.S.-China Talks during the Cold War, 1949–1972* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006).

control by white men throughout the globe as soon and as widely as possible.<sup>47</sup>

Expanding China's influence in the Middle East was one of Zhou Enlai's goals at Bandung. The meeting provided him with a platform to voice China's views on contentious issues in the Middle East. To the surprise and pleasure of the Arab delegates, Zhou supported a conference resolution which demanded rights for the Palestinians, implementation of UN resolutions on Palestine, and peaceful settlement of the Palestine question. He called for rejection of foreign meddling in the Middle East, insisting that there was a parallel between the issues of Palestine and Taiwan and that neither could be solved peacefully unless intervention by outside forces was excluded.<sup>48</sup> In his report to Mao after the conference, Zhou wrote that his speech on the Palestine question "won the good will of many Arab countries, especially Egypt and Syria."<sup>49</sup>

Zhou Enlai first met Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser on April 14 in Rangoon when they were on their way to the Bandung Conference. Nasser told Zhou that Egypt faced threat from Israel and was in urge need of arms. He asked whether China could sell any weapons to Egypt. Replying that China was too dependent on Russian supplies to provide any assistance, Zhou suggested that Egypt should turn to Moscow for arms, and he promised that he would take the matter up with the Soviet Union. A few days after the Egyptian delegation had returned home from Bandung, Daniel Solod, the Soviet ambassador in Cairo, confirmed that China had transmitted the Egyptian request to his government. The Soviet Union, Solod said, would be willing to offer

---

47 According to Carlos Romulo, "there was clearly . . . a *racial element* . . . in the listing of the invited states. No 'white' nation was invited." (italic in the original) See Romulo, *The Meaning of Bandung*, p. 2.

48 George McTurnan Kahin, *The Asian-African Conference: Bandung, Indonesia, April 1955* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1956), p. 16; Lillian Craig Harris, *China Considers the Middle East* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1993), pp. 87–88; Kuo-kang Shao, *Zhou Enlai and the Foundations of Chinese Foreign Policy* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), pp. 222–224.

49 Zhou's telegram to the CCP Central Committee and Mao, April 30, 1955, in The PRC Foreign Ministry Archives, *Zhongguo daibiaotuan*, p. 88.

any amount of weapons, including modern tanks and airplanes, against deferred payments in Egyptian cotton and rice.<sup>50</sup>

At Bandung, Nasser informed Zhou Enlai that the Western domination of the world cotton market impeded the sale of Egypt's cotton, one of the country's principal exports. Zhou replied that if every Chinese wore clothes two inches longer, China would consume the entire annual production of cotton in Egypt. After the conference, Nasser dispatched his minister of industry and commerce to China to conclude trade agreements and to establish commercial offices in each other's capital.<sup>51</sup>

In sum, the Bandung Conference was a landmark event in post-WWII international politics. It reflected convergence of several trends in the post-colonial history of the world. The idea of Afro-Asian solidarity and the appeal of non-alignment were greatly enhanced at Bandung and remained important dreams and ideals in both continents for decades to come. Asia and Africa had awakened, and the psychology that had underlined and sustained "the white man's burden" had been banished to the historical dustbin. Zhou Enlai made an important contribution to the successful holding of the Bandung Conference. He raised China's international profile and frustrated Washington's effort to isolate the PRC. He promoted South-South cooperation at Bandung, triggering fears in Washington of the emergence of race-based Pan-Asianism.

After Bandung, there was a high degree of pessimism within the Eisenhower administration regarding developments in East Asia. Many

---

50 Muhamed Hassanein Heikal, *The Cairo Documents: The Inside Story of Nasser and His Relationship with World Leaders, Rebels, and Statesmen* (New York: Doubleday, 1973), pp. 302–303; Anthony Nutting, *Nasser* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1972), p. 101; Yitzhak Shichor, *The Middle East in China's Foreign Policy, 1949–1977* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 41.

51 Zhang Yue, "Zhou Zongli pai wo chushi Feizhou" [Premier Zhou Sent Me to Africa], in Gao Yong et al, eds., *Bujin de sinian* [Endless Memories] (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1987), pp. 463–468. Zhang Yue served as deputy director of the Chinese Commercial Office in Cairo in 1956. See also Xiaohong Liu, *Chinese Ambassadors: The Rise of Diplomatic Professionalism since 1949* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), p. 60; Pei, *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo waijiaoshi*, pp. 276–277; Rami Ginat, *The Soviet Union and Egypt, 1945–1955* (London: Frank Cass, 1993), p. 192.

American observers felt that the United States was on the way to losing the Cold War in Asia.<sup>52</sup> What disturbed American officials the most was the rise of anti-Americanism not just among developing countries but also in Western Europe. It was ironic that many emerging nations, while formally neutral, tilted toward the Communist camp, mainly because of their hostility toward Western European imperialism; and the Western European countries displayed more sympathy toward neutralism partly because of their suspicion of American expansionism and partly because of their apprehension about being dragged into a nuclear conflict in the developing world.<sup>53</sup> In a meeting with the American ambassador Douglas Dillon on October 4, 1955, French Foreign Minister Antoine Pinay warned that “the US had not fully recognized the dangers inherent in the fusion of the Bandung and Soviet blocs, which he considered the gravest threat to the stability of the world.”<sup>54</sup>

The Sino-Soviet “peace offensive” in 1955 exemplified by Khrushchev’s “smile diplomacy” in South and Southeast Asia and by Zhou Enlai’s dazzling performance at Bandung forced the United States and Great Britain to respond. Washington distanced itself from colonialism by lavishing aid to the post-colonial and anti-communist regime led by Ngo Dinh Diem in South Vietnam.<sup>55</sup> London dis-

---

52 Matthew Jones, “A ‘Segregated’ Asia? Race, the Bandung Conference, and Pan-Asianist Fears in American Thought and Policy, 1954–1955,” *Diplomatic History* 29 (November 2002), pp. 841–846; idem, *After Hiroshima: The United States, Race and Nuclear Weapons in Asia, 1945–1965* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), chap. 7.

53 Alessandro Brogi, *Confronting America: The Cold War between the United States and the Communists in France and Italy* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011), p. 204.

54 Telegram from the Embassy in France to the Department of State, October 4, 1955, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955–1957*, vol. 18, *Africa* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1989), pp. 222–224.

55 On the Eisenhower administration’s policy toward Vietnam, see George C. Herring, *America’s Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950–1975*, 4th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2001), chap. 1; David L. Anderson, *Trapped by Success: The Eisenhower Administration and Vietnam, 1953–1961* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991); John Prados, *Vietnam: The History of an Unwinnable War, 1945–1975* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009), chap. 1.

played a much more flexible attitude toward Malaya's constitutional development.<sup>56</sup>

## Solidarity with Egypt in the 1956 Suez Crisis

In September 1955, Nasser concluded an agreement to purchase weapons from Czechoslovakia.<sup>57</sup> Seven months later, he withdrew recognition of Chiang Kai-shek's government and recognized the PRC. Nasser's decision antagonized the pro-Chiang Kai-shek China Lobby in the United States. They pressured the Eisenhower administration to suspend American aid to Egypt. In Congress, they found an easy alliance with two groups of lawmakers: congressmen from southern states, who questioned the U.S. policy of helping Egypt build the planned Aswan Dam which would allow Egyptian cotton to compete with American cotton; pro-Israel congressmen who were worried about Nasser's anti-Israel stance. In July 1956, Secretary of State Dulles announced the American decision to withdraw its offer to finance the construction of the Aswan Dam. Stung by this blow to his prestige and his ambition for the economic takeoff of his country, Nasser retaliated a week later by nationalizing the Suez Canal Company and indicating his plan to use the revenue from the canal to defray the costs of building the dam.<sup>58</sup>

---

56 On British policy toward Malaya, see John G. Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation: The Retreat from Empire in the Post-War World* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), pp. 202–204; Anthony J. Stockwell, "Insurgency and Decolonization during the Malayan Emergency," *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* 25:1 (1987), pp. 71–81.

57 Guy Laron, "Cutting the Gordian Knot: The Post-WWII Egyptian Quest for Arms and the 1955 Czechoslovak Arms Deal," *Cold War International History Project Working Paper* 55 (February 2007).

58 Walter LaFeber, *America, Russia, and the Cold War, 1945–1992*, 7th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993), p. 185; William R. Keylor, *The Twentieth-Century World and Beyond: An International History since 1900*, 5th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 277; Douglas Little, *American Orientalism: The United States and the Middle East since 1945*, 3rd ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), pp. 170–172.

Both Khrushchev and Mao displayed solidarity with Nasser during the Suez Crisis. After Britain and France invaded Egypt in late October, Khrushchev intervened. He proposed to the Eisenhower administration that a Russian-American settlement be imposed upon the area and warned British-French forces that, unless they immediately withdrew, the Soviet Union would resort to force, perhaps long-range rockets, to destroy their armies.<sup>59</sup>

On November 1, the Chinese government issued a statement condemning the Anglo-French intervention in the Middle East and pledging Chinese support to Egypt. Two days later, it lodged protest to the British and French governments, calling their actions in Egypt a violation of the UN Charter and a threat to world peace and demanding that they withdraw their troops from Egypt. Watching the Suez war closely, Mao even asked Zhou Enlai to send Nasser a proposal regarding Egyptian military deployment and strategic principles. For three days in a row (November 3–5), mass rallies were held throughout China in support of the Egyptian struggle against the British-French aggression. In a telegram to Nasser on November 10, Zhou Enlai indicated that China was willing to offer a cash donation of 20 million Swiss francs to Egypt. In the meantime, the Chinese Red Cross notified the Egyptian Red Crescent that it was prepared to donate medical supplies worth 100,000 Chinese yuan and to send medical teams to Egypt. In his reply to Zhou Enlai on November 22, Nasser expressed appreciation for China's assistance.<sup>60</sup>

Both Soviet and Chinese leaders drew encouraging and optimistic lessons from the Suez Crisis. Considering the eventual withdrawal of the British, French, and Israeli forces from Egypt a triumph of his diplomacy and nuclear bluff, Khrushchev felt that his policy in the Middle East since 1955 had been vindicated. He seemed to have convinced himself that the nuclear bluff was a useful tool to intimidate Soviet opponents on

---

59 Fursenko and Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War*, pp. 133–134; LaFeber, *America, Russia, and the Cold War*, p. 186; Salim Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), p. 53.

60 Pei, *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo waijiaoshi*, pp. 282–284; Zhonggong zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi, ed., *Zhou Enlai nianpu, 1949–1976* [Chronicle of Zhou Enlai, 1949–1976] (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1997), vol. 1, p. 636.

the cheap.<sup>61</sup> “In the midst of the strategic stalemate in Europe and the Far East,” historian Vladislav Zubok has observed, the Middle East “provided a new outlet for the Kremlin’s renewed optimism and ideological romanticism.”<sup>62</sup>

For Mao and his colleagues, the Suez conflict had highlighted the rise of nationalist power and exposed divisions within the capitalist bloc. Zhou Enlai said at a party meeting on November 16, 1956 that “the Egyptian incident demonstrates that imperialist powers do not dare to initiate large-scale wars. We should take advantage of this favorable situation to further reduce tensions in the East. Because there is less conflict between the interests of countries in the East, possibility exists to reduce tensions.”<sup>63</sup> Mao told a group of party provincial secretaries on January 27, 1957 that “imperialist countries were more afraid of us than we are afraid of them.”<sup>64</sup> In his speech at the Moscow Conference of Communist Parties on November 17, 1957, Mao specifically mentioned that the Soviet warning during the Suez Crisis checked the British and French aggression. He referred to the Suez war, the Soviet launch of Sputnik, the British disengagement from Asia and Africa, the Dutch exit from Indonesia, the French retreat from Syria, Lebanon, Morocco, and Tunisia, and the Algerian conflict, as indications that “the East wind is prevailing over the West wind.”<sup>65</sup>

## Conclusion

The demise of the imperial era and the concomitant emergence of the so-called Third World constituted two central and defining characteristics of twentieth-century international history. The process of decolonization (the North-South conflict) in the wake of WWII introduced great

---

61 Fursenko and Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War*, p. 137.

62 Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, p. 110.

63 *Zhou nianpu*, vol. 1, p. 638.

64 Excerpt of Mao's talk at the meeting of Party provincial secretaries, January 27, 1957, in *Mao waijiao wenxuan*, pp. 280–283.

65 Excerpt of Mao's speech at the Moscow Meeting of Communist and Workers Parties, November 18, 1957, in *Mao waijiao wenxuan*, pp. 291–300.

turmoil, violence, and upheaval to many parts of the world. This process shaped and was in turn shaped by another of the post-WWII era's central, defining features: the political and ideological competition between the United States and the Soviet Union for global influence and power (the East-West conflict). The appearance of Communist China as a regional power added a new dimension to the challenges that the former colonial powers and their nationalist successors would have to confront.

When the CCP took over power in China in 1949, it found itself caught in the middle of the two intertwining historical processes of decolonization and the Cold War. Mao threw in his lot with Stalin in the intensifying East-West confrontation. Sharing a common hostility toward capitalism, they were eager to make the world safe for communism. Intent on fostering communist revolution in Asia, they worked out a division of labor, by which the CCP would shoulder the primary responsibility of assisting radical movements in Southeast Asia, particularly Ho Chi Minh's war of independence against the French. Championing proletarian revolution in the world was a central part of Soviet and Chinese communist identities. Class struggle was the driver and shaper of politics, and without their revolutionary missions the Soviet Union and the PRC would possess no convincing self-justification and credibility.

Mao followed closely Stalin's lead in dealing with bourgeois nationalist regimes in Asia. After WWII, the decolonization process accelerated in Asia, and Stalin found himself unprepared and confused. He dismissed nationalist leaders like Nehru as mere agents of imperialism. Mao echoed Stalin's voice by labeling Nehru a "running dog" of imperialism. In the early 1950s, Moscow and Beijing synchronized their policies and approaches toward the newly emerging countries in Asia.

By the mid-1950s, however, the communist bloc had begun to display a greater sense of realism and willingness to compromise. Leaders in both Moscow and Beijing came to understand that the Third World was emerging as an important force in world politics, recognizing that the Third World was the best ground on which to compete with the West and that this would be possible only if the Soviet Union and the PRC befriended governments constituted differently. Beijing actively participated in the Bandung Conference, praising the virtues of neutralism in Asia. The friendly smile and the peaceful image certainly smoothed the

way for Zhou Enlai's encounters with many delegates. He narrowed the gap between China and their countries by shying away from communist rhetoric and by stressing shared opposition to colonialism and racial discrimination. His developmental messages displayed a kind of non-ideological flexibility few had expected from communist China.

The first half of the 1950s represented a "golden era" in the complex saga of Sino-Soviet relations. During this period, Beijing and Moscow closely coordinated their activities in confronting the U.S.-led capitalist world and in dealing with the emerging Third World. After 1956, however, the Sino-Soviet partnership began to fall apart as Khrushchev showed increasing interest in promoting "peaceful coexistence" and "peaceful competition" with the United States and as Mao switched to a more radical and militant direction in his domestic and foreign policies.