

How did Mao challenge the bi-polar world order, 1949-72?



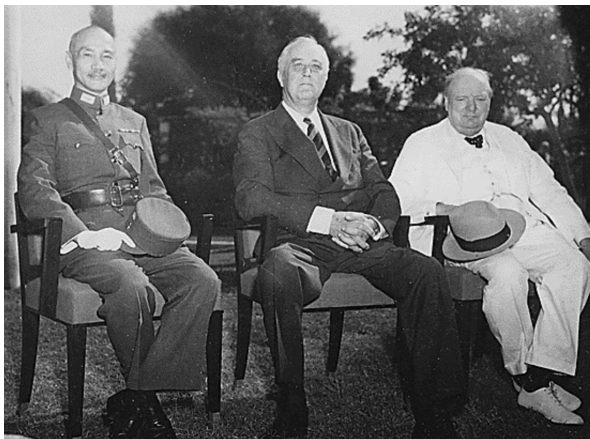
Mao Zedong (1893-1976) was Chairman of the People's Republic of China from 1949 to 1959 and Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party until his death.

After the **PRC** won the civil war against the **Kuomintang** or **Guomindang** (Nationalist Party of China) in 1949, China needed economic and military assistance from the USSR but Beijing was unwilling to accept Soviet political control.

The USSR accorded China official recognition on 2 October 1949 and the other nations of Eastern Europe followed within two months. Many Western countries did likewise and by 1968, a total of 51 countries recognized the People's Republic although 65 others supported the Nationalists on Taiwan.

Aside from the issue of territorial control (on 1 October 1949 Nationalist armies still operated in western and southern China though the last were defeated when Xinjiang province fell in March 1950) the urgent strategic question was the status of **Taiwan**. It is thought China was preparing to declare war on Taiwan in 1950 (which it considered as a breakaway province) but the outbreak of the Korean War precluded this.

In support of Taiwan, the Americans had moved the Seventh Fleet to the Straits of Taiwan and extended military aid to **General Kai-shek** making the nationalist regime a *de facto* protectorate of the USA. The US State department also referred to Mao's victory in 1949 as the 'Loss of China' and continued to support Chiang Kai-shek's government until 1971 and to recognize it as the only legitimate China until that date when talks began with the USA resulting in **President Nixon's visit** in February 1972 and the parting of the **Bamboo Curtain** (figurative way of describing China's hostile attitude towards non-Communist countries).



General Kai-shek at the Cairo Conference 25th November 1943 (he was Chairman of the National Government of China from 1 August 1943 until 20 May 1948, he subsequently became President of the Republic of China (or Taiwan) from 1 March 1950 to 5 April 1975).

Korean War

Korea had been occupied by Japan from 1910 to 1945 and was partitioned along the 38th parallel following Japan's defeat in WW2 with the USA taking responsibility for protecting the area to the South of that line, while the USSR did the same in the North. In 1950, the North Koreans crossed the parallel with the aiming of imposing Communist control over the entire peninsula.

The US State Department assumed this invasion was a joint venture by Mao and Stalin – whilst it is now known that Mao backed North Korea, he did not initiate the invasion. China's plans focused exclusively on Taiwan, Xinjiang and Tibet.

Historians now think Stalin colluded with **Kim Il Sung** (1912-94) the autocratic leader of North Korea between 1948 and 1994 because he was convinced the attack would suck the Americans into a conflict in Asia which it could not win. The prospect of the PRC becoming involved had the added benefit (for Stalin) of distracting China from challenging USSR leadership of international communism or causing trouble over disputed Sino-Soviet border territory. (This later led to an undeclared military conflict between China and the USSR between March and September 1969 – see map below).



Mao was hesitant at first to get involved but felt obliged to enter since Korea was **too close geographically for China to remain detached** – it also followed the Soviet lead because in 1950 **China lacked resources** and was **dependent on the USSR as its only possible supplier**. Thus, when US troops crossed over the 38th parallel China went all in for a three-year struggle which ended with the **Panmunjong Truce** in 1953 and 1 million Chinese dead. It also involved China diverting much of its industrial resources meant for domestic growth to war production and having to pay the USSR for the weapons it imported.

Sino Soviet Split

Mao had a nationalistic interpretation of Marxism and did not want revolutionaries outside China to dictate their actions. He came to believe that the USSR was motivated by self-

interest and wanted China to remain divided so that it could not dominate Asia. The 1950 Sino-Soviet Treaty (later acknowledged as an insult to the Chinese people by Nikita Khrushchev (First Secretary of USSR's Communist Party 1953-64), charged China with the upkeep of the 10 000 Soviet economic and political advisors who had been sent there and made China repay a \$300 million advance as a loan with interest. The USSR also refused to let China have access to the atomic bomb unless the USSR had control of China's defense policy. In **1959 the USSR withdrew its scientists** from China. However, Chinese nuclear physicists were able to piece back together the records Soviet advisors had shredded before they left resulting in the first Chinese test detonation in 1964.

Relations with Africa

During the Cold War, **foreign aid an important political tool that China used to gain Africa's diplomatic recognition and to compete with the United States and the Soviet Union for Africa's support.**

Between 1963 and 1964, Zhou Enlai (Prime Minister 1949-76) visited 10 African countries and announced the "Eight Principles of Foreign Economic and Technological Assistance." These aid principles were designed to compete simultaneously with the "imperialists" (the United States) and the "revisionists" (the Soviet Union) for Africa's approval and support. These efforts were enhanced during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76) under the influence of a radical revolutionary ideology, motivating China to provide large amounts of foreign aid to Africa despite its own domestic economic difficulties. One famous example was the Tanzania-Zambia Railway built between 1970 and 1975, for which China provided a zero-interest loan of RMB 980 million.

Eight Principles of Foreign Economic and Technological Assistance:

China always bases itself on the principle of equality and mutual benefit in providing aid to other nations; China never attaches any conditions or asks for any privileges; China helps lighten the burden of recipient countries as much as possible; China aims at helping recipient countries to gradually achieve self-reliance and independent development; China strives to develop aid projects that require less investment but yield quicker results; China provides the best-quality equipment and materials of its own manufacture; in providing technical assistance, China shall see to it that the personnel of the recipient country fully master such techniques; the Chinese experts are not allowed to make any special demands or enjoy any special amenities.

"Zhou Enlai Announced Eight Principles of Foreign Aid," *China Daily*, August 13, 2010.