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Abstract:

The U.S. government's 2017 *National Security Strategy* claimed, "China and Russia challenge American power, influence, and interests, attempting to erode American security and prosperity."¹ Three years later, the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the U.S. foreign policy community's discursive shift towards Realist competition with China, with officials from the past three presidential administrations coming to view China as a threat to democratic governance and America's security posture in Asia. The discourse underpinning the U.S.-China relationship, however, remains understudied. During key moments in the relationship, U.S. policymakers' Realist intellectual frameworks failed to account for Chinese nationalism, suggesting a problem embedded within America's strategic discourse. This manuscript uses discourse analysis to analyze why and how American officials failed to create a strong, united, and democratic China during the Marshall Mission (1945-1947). The use of Realist constructs, great-power frameworks, and theories of geopolitical realism prevented U.S. officials from accounting for Mao Zedong's postcolonial nationalism, leading to the Mission's failure.

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¹ "National Security Strategy of the United States of America," The White House, December 2017, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>

Introduction:

In 2011, President Barack Obama announced an American “Pivot to Asia”, triggering widespread speculation that the Pivot was designed to check China’s rise in the Asia-Pacific, despite its emphasis on diplomatically engaging countries across Northeast, Southeast and South Asia (Green, 2016). Over the following years, the U.S. Navy deployed more ships to the region, patrolling sea lanes, islands and ports as part of its buildup (Reuters, 2012). When Xi Jinping was elected President of China in 2013, and began nationalist calls for the “rejuvenation” of China to fulfill a “Chinese Dream”, American, Asian and European policymaking communities feared it heralded escalating military competition between the U.S. and China in the Pacific Ocean (BBC, 2013). These fears grew as the Chinese Navy began to expand its presence in the South China Sea, as President Xi announced his Belt and Road Initiative, and as the U.S. and China entered into a trade war in 2017. Indeed, in 2019, Henry Kissinger proclaimed that the U.S. and China were in the “foothills of a Cold War.” (Bloomberg News, 2019). On March 3, 2021 current Secretary of State Anthony Blinken stated that, “Our relationship with China will be competitive when it should be, collaborative when it can be, adversarial when it must be” (Blinken, 2021).

In an effort to analyze the potential shortcomings of the growing shift in popular consensus towards political-military competition with President Xi’s nationalist China, this manuscript uses discourse analysis to analyze prior instances where American policy failed because of a basic misunderstanding of Chinese nationalism. How has U.S. discourse previously failed to account for China’s nationalism? To answer this question, this paper analyzes the evolution of U.S. policy discourse during the build-up and collapse of the Marshall Mission (1945-1947), from Imperial Japan’s surrender on August 15, 1945, to the Mission’s effective

end-date during the Manchurian Crisis (May 4, 1946). From 1945-1947, President Truman sent General George Marshall to China to broker a peace deal between Mao Zedong's Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and Chiang-Kai Shek's Nationalist Party, or Kuomintang (KMT), hoping to form a postwar unity government. The negotiations failed, and China's Civil War began, eventually delivering victory for Mao's CCP. This paper uses discourse analysis to examine how the Realist spectrum of the Truman Administration's thinking about China precluded an accurate understanding of nationalism in Maoist thought. It demonstrates how U.S.-China discourses can construct political realities which lead to inaccurate, misjudged foreign policies. This paper argues that the Truman Administration's embrace of great-power politics, Realist theories of international relations, and geopolitical realism elided the postcolonial nationalism of Mao Zedong from U.S. discourse, placing the U.S. and the CCP on the glide path to confrontation which erupted during the Manchurian Crisis. It demonstrates that nationalist ideologies can confound Realist expectations of international politics. With President Xi embracing Chinese nationalism today while U.S. officials embrace Realist policies in Asia, this paper highlights the gap between American thinking and China's behavior.

Up until 2020, the spectrum of debate over the best strategy for the U.S. to adopt allowed room for arguments including coexistence and diplomatic engagement with China, as well as for arguments embracing military competition. In 2005, Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick called for China to be a, "responsible stakeholder" of world order, promoting a U.S. policy of engaging China (Zoellick, 2005). Key architects of the Pivot such as President Obama's Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and Pacific Affairs, Kurt Campbell (2019), and Former National Security Advisor to Vice-President Biden, Jake Sullivan (2019), advocated for a policy of engaging President Xi on issues of common global concern, such as climate change, pandemic

spread, nuclear proliferation, and counterterrorism while maintaining military deterrence capabilities in the Pacific. Fareed Zakaria (2019) coined this approach “engagement plus”. By contrast, scholars within the U.S. military’s colleges argue for stronger military competition with China, citing its provocative behavior. Naval War College Professor Toshi Yoshihara (2012) argued that the People’s Liberation Army’s (PLA) pursuit of Alfred Thayer Mahan’s geopolitical theories, and the PLA’s employment of asymmetric, anti-access and area-denial defense strategies are proof that China seeks to prevent the U.S. Navy from conducting military operations in the East and South China Seas.

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated tensions between the U.S. and China, ushering in a discursive shift within the U.S. policymaking community towards Realist great-power competition and away from “engagement plus”. The new consensus identifies China as a political enemy, signaling that both countries see each other as irreconcilable with their respective interests in the Asia-Pacific. Crucially, the shift is bipartisan, and happened at the start of the U.S. COVID-19 outbreak. Now President Biden’s Indo-Pacific Coordinator, Kurt Campbell (2020) claimed in March of 2020 that, “As Washington falters...[Beijing] is working to tout its own system, provide material assistance to other countries, and even organize other governments.” Similarly, President Trump’s Deputy National Security Advisor Nadia Schadlow (2020) wrote that, “at some point, an American administration needed to shift the conversation away from hopes for an imagined future China to the realities of the Communist Party’s conduct.” From the Bush Administration, former National Security Council Director for Asia, Evan Medeiros, and former Special Assistant to the President Michael Green, argued that Beijing has seen an opportunity to undercut the U.S., “...launching an international campaign stressing the failures of democratic governance and casting itself as the leader of the global pandemic

response.” (Green & Medeiros, 2020). Collectively, these officials represent key Asia policymakers from the past three presidential administrations. Each now argues that China is a political-ideological threat to the U.S., which must be checked through security competition. In one year, U.S. policy towards China has pivoted dramatically towards major-power confrontation. Is American Realist discourse accurate in its appraisal of Chinese strategy, intentions, thinking or behavior? Does it fully take into account the CCP’s nationalism?

The question of how Realism’s discursive shortcomings may have been responsible for U.S. policy failures in the Marshall Mission (1945-1947) remains understudied in international relations literature, despite its critical importance. Introspection is necessary because of the shift in American strategic discourse towards Realist precepts regarding China today. International relations literature on U.S. policy towards China coalesces around three disciplines: International Relations Theory, Regional Security Studies, and Diplomatic History. Surprisingly, each discipline lacks critical examinations of American foreign policy’s failures in its encounters with Chinese nationalism, specifically during the Marshall Mission (December 1945-January 1947).

International Relations Theory and China’s Rise:

Liberal and Realist theories of international relations establish divergent expectations of international politics. The Realist discourse of U.S. policymakers during the Marshall Mission makes this theoretical divergence relevant to historical policy failures in U.S.-China relations. Furthermore, the assumptions of Liberalism and Realism have been reflected in 21st century debates over an appropriate American foreign policy vis-à-vis China’s rise.

Liberal theories of international relations argue that global institutions, integrated economies and multilateral frameworks can shape nations’ behavior and enable cooperation

(Keohane & Nye 1977). While Liberalism is comprised of multiple theories, two are most relevant to this manuscript: Institutional Liberalism, and Liberal Internationalism. Michael Doyle and Robert Keohane have outlined Liberalism in these contexts extensively. Doyle (1983) claimed that Liberalism is tied to the freedom of individuals, with the belief in “moral freedom” generating global rights and institutions. Keohane (2012, p.126-127) argues that Institutional Liberalism reflects a basically Madisonian worldview, where institutions are the key to expressing, “pluralist conceptions of power and interests”, and to protecting against, “the consequences of unchecked power”. Keohane (2012, p.126) establishes that the legitimacy of constructing such institutions lies in their ability to enhance cooperation in world politics, by promoting, “beneficial effects on human security, human welfare and human liberty as a result of a more peaceful, prosperous and free world.” Globally, institutions can be facilitative of state cooperation while taming state power.

Doyle (1986) links Liberalism and Liberal Internationalism to philosophers such as Immanuel Kant. Kant’s *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch* established the foundation of Democratic Peace Theory, the pursuit of which can manifest as Liberal Internationalism. Kant maintained that a *foedus pacificum* (league of peace) could “make an end” of war if it expanded to include more and more democratic states (Doyle, 1986, p.1158). For Doyle (1986), democratic peace, therefore, is the belief that amongst liberal states there exists a “separate peace”, and an aversion to aggression against one another. James Ray (2001) and Spencer Weart (1998) have echoed such arguments.

In the context of U.S.-China relations, Liberal scholars such as G. John Ikenberry believed China would be integrated into the existing world order of multilateral institutions, eventually promoting domestic market reforms and political reforms, thereby taming the

Communist Party's rule (Ikenberry, 2008). Institutions, for Ikenberry, could create a peacefully rising China. Robert Zoellick (2005) hoped that China could be a "responsible stakeholder", representing the Institutional Liberal view that if enmeshed in global multilateral architectures, China's foreign policy would be directed towards upholding the broader liberal order they flowed from. Left out of Ikenberry's and Zoellick's arguments was an examination of how Liberal trajectories may experience pushback from the nationalist CCP.

Realism, by contrast, focuses on states' pursuit of power and takes a fatalistic view of international politics, born out of the interwar years and World War II. Edward Hallett Carr, Hans Morgenthau, and Kenneth Waltz were the architects of Realist scholarship in the 20th century. Realists traditionally argue that power-politics and security competition are an inevitable outcome of world politics (Carr, 2001; Morgenthau & Thompson 2005; Waltz, 1959). Rather than taming power or facilitating cooperation, Carr (2001, p.10) states that Realism, "tends to emphasize the irresistible strength of existing forces and the inevitable character of existing tendencies, and to insist that the highest wisdom lies in...adapting oneself to...these tendencies." Classical Realists such as Morgenthau (2005) emphasize states' universal "tendency to dominate". Realism also focuses on major-powers. For Morgenthau (2005, p.35), "The aspiration for power being the distinguishing element of international politics...international politics is of necessity power politics." According to Mearsheimer (2014), Structural Realism as expressed by Kenneth Waltz simply holds that states compete for power because of an unstable—or anarchic—world; state aggression is not intrinsic, but a reflection of external conditions.

Realist scholars of U.S.-China relations argued that escalating security competition between the U.S. and China was likely, and that China would seek to end U.S. hegemony in Asia

as it rose to great-power status (Allison, 2017; Mearsheimer, 2014). John Mearsheimer's theory of Offensive Realism claimed nations believe security is best achieved through power maximization in the international system (Mearsheimer, 2014). This theory predicts a major-power war with the U.S. as a byproduct of China's rise, and its consequently expanding security interests (Mearsheimer, 2014). Mearsheimer acknowledges that nationalism can expand nations' security interests, but does not critically examine how established great-powers interact with rising-power nationalism, or with nationalism more broadly. To develop the analytical strength of Realism in U.S.-China relations, recent research applied the phenomenon known as "Thucydides' Trap" to China's rise (Allison, 2017). In Thucydides' Trap, rising-powers come into conflict with established great-powers as a result of competing interests and the great-power's fear of the rising-power (Allison, 2017).

Implicit in this intellectual universe is the idea that great-power tensions arise as rising-powers pursue new security strategies. Yoshihara and Holmes (2018) argue that structural, socioeconomic forces are "impelling" China to the Pacific, where it seeks to secure its economic and political interests. This manuscript shows that the CCP's nationalist ideology lent itself to long-term security goals in Asian waters from at least 1937. The CCP, then, represents a more intractable regime-type than that suggested by Realist interpretations of international relations. At the theoretical level, the Truman Administration's reliance on Realism in crafting its China policy acts as a useful case study in Realism's tension with nationalism.

Despite the research conducted by international relations theorists into the future trajectory of China's rise and the implications for U.S. hegemony in Asia, the field has not explored prior failures in the U.S.-China relationship in detail. As COVID-19 worsens U.S.-

China military competition today, Realist assumptions have come to act as the intellectual touchstone of regional security studies.

Regional Security Studies in the United States:

The field of Asian regional security studies seeks to shape future competition between the U.S. and China by providing policy analysis, but it lacks a comprehensive analysis of how the constructs it utilizes may fail to capture the nature of Chinese nationalism. As a result, its intellectual underpinnings may exhibit similar parallels to the Marshall Mission's inability to accurately describe Chinese behavior. The discipline is distinct in its reach: universities, think-tanks, the Department of Defense, the Department of State, the Intelligence Community, and military colleges and universities all contribute to ongoing research. As a result, this field's ability to shape ongoing policy debates is significant. The fact that it crystallizes around epistemological constructs similar to Liberal and Realist theories of international relations demonstrates the impact of theory-based discursive spectrums on policy analysis, and therefore on policy formulation.

Starting in 2007, when the PLA undertook its first significant budget increase, the field began to organize itself into two broad camps: scholars and officials forecasting escalating U.S.-China military competition, and scholars recognizing the damage a bipolar, major-power competition could do to Asia's security. American research on Asia's security environment shifted towards analyzing how China's rise would affect the Asia-Pacific's constituent nations, and consequently America's security posture in the region (Friedberg, 2011).

The U.S. military's colleges house more hawkish perspectives on U.S.-China relations, drawing from geopolitics and military theories to analyze future competition. Drawing on the

geopolitical realism of 19th and 20th century strategists such as Alfred Thayer Mahan, Sir Halford Mackinder and Nicholas J. Spykman, scholars from the U.S. National Defense University, the Naval War College and the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments (CSBA) argue that China's rise poses an existential strategic threat to American maritime power. In an echo of John Mearsheimer's Offensive Realism, Toshi Yoshihara and James R. Holmes have brought geopolitical precepts to bear on China's naval strategy, arguing that PLA generals studied the maritime theories of Mahan in order to grow the regional strength of their navy (Holmes & Yoshihara 2007; 2018). Similarly, National Defense University research initiatives have examined President Xi Jinping's consolidation of power over the PLA, focusing on his effect on the PLA's ability to conduct joint-operations in any conflict in the Pacific Ocean (Saunders, Ding, Scobell, et al., 2019).

The scholarship of the think-tank community on the subject is conducted by a core mix of former government officials who conduct research across a range of institutions. Their failure to examine prior inaccuracies in U.S.-China policy magnifies the potential impact of discursive failures across think-tanks and government agencies. For example, a major study conducted by Ashley Tellis and Robert Blackwill—both former National Security Council staffers under President George W. Bush—for The Council on Foreign Relations argued that because, “the American effort to “integrate” China into the liberal international order has now generated new threats to U.S. primacy in Asia...Washington needs a new grand strategy toward China that centers on balancing the rise of Chinese power rather than continuing to assist its ascendancy.” This report provided the intellectual foundation for hawkish perspectives to gain traction (Blackwill & Tellis, 2015, p. 4). Left out of its analysis was how American grand strategy interacted with Chinese nationalism. Instead, its focus was on Yoshihara's (2018) “impelling”

structural forces in China's politics. CSBA and defense policy scholars have attempted to describe China's vision of its hegemony and its strategic conceptions of U.S.-China security competition (Rolland, 2020; Yoshihara, Friedberg & Rolland 2020). Their research finds that President Xi envisions Chinese leadership of the international system, with a region-wide Chinese sphere of influence (Rolland, 2020). Other research examines the contours of China's military strategy (Fravel, 2019).

Three major scholars demonstrate the divide between those who argue for escalating competition, and those who believe it acts against the interests of Asian nations. In a recurring pattern, their arguments lie parallel to the major debates in International Relations Theory. Thomas Christensen—Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs from 2006-2008—argues that great-power competition between the U.S. and China need not lead to a Cold War (Christensen, 2020; 2015). However, peer scholars such as David Kang—Director of the University of Southern California's Korea Studies Institute— and Susan Shirk—Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs from 1997-2000— oppose the broader presumption of competition being inevitable. They argue that China's rise is not necessarily an existential threat to Asian nations, and that both the U.S. and China need not engage in great-power competition (Kang, 2017; Shirk, 2008). Similar to Liberal perspectives of China's international relations, Shirk (2008) argued that China's economic development heightened political insecurities in the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Kang (2017) finds that Asian nations have not adopted security policies which would indicate a fear of China's regional rise. This raises the question: Is the U.S. foreign policy community accurately conceptualizing the potential risks of China's behavior in Asia today?

Regional security studies as a whole are concerned with providing U.S. policymakers an accurate interpretation of China's security strategy. However, in its shift towards great-power competition as a result of COVID-19, it lacks an understanding of how prior debates have gotten China wrong, and how policy discourse can lead to policy failures. As demonstrated by military scholarship and think-tank initiatives, the field is populated by a core group of scholars and ex-government officials, multiplying the impact of this oversight on U.S. foreign policy.

The Need for Introspection:

International relations literature across its constituent disciplines does not provide discourse analysis on why U.S. officials failed to understand China in the Marshall Mission (1945-1947). With the Mission's failure to unify Mao Zedong's Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and Chiang Kai-Shek's Nationalist Party (KMT) leading to China's Civil War, it stands as a major event in history with significant lessons for U.S.-China relations in the 21st century. The Marshall Mission was the Truman Administration's attempt to shape postwar China using Realist theories of international politics. The failure of the Mission demonstrates a more subtle failure by Realism in its encounter with Chinese nationalism. For this reason, the Marshall Mission is a critical source of insight into international relations theory and U.S.-China competition in the 21st century, where the Biden Administration increasingly relies upon Realist policies, while President Xi increasingly adopts nationalist stances.

Diplomatic histories provide the best insights into the Mission, because many scholars have included the Marshall Mission in their periodization of the Korean War and pre- and post-war American foreign policy in Asia. However, the Mission's intellectual constructs are not the focus of existing scholarship. Bruce Cumings (2004), discusses Dean Acheson's theorizing of U.S. security postures in Asia from 1947-1950, arguing that U.S. foreign policy sought to set a

bulwark in Asia against Communism based either in Taiwan or at the 38th Parallel on the Korean Peninsula. Chalmers Johnson (1962) identified the role “revolutionary” peasant nationalism played in Mao’s expansion of the CCP during its war against Japan, but did not analyze the Marshall Mission’s inability to grasp such nationalism. Similarly, Barbara Tuchman (1971) argued that the corruption of Chiang Kai-Shek’s KMT frustrated U.S. policy aims before the Marshall Mission, but did not extend her argument to a comprehensive examination of the Mission’s discourse. Christensen (1995) rebuts the notion that a “Lost Chance” for U.S.-CCP rapprochement existed in 1949, analyzing Maoist thought towards the Truman Administration. However, the discourse of decision-making during the Marshall Mission is not his focus. Michael Schaller (2016) demonstrates that the U.S. Army Observer Group known as the Dixie Mission favored a U.S. policy that backed Mao and bucked Chiang Kai-Shek. Schaller (2016) illustrates how while living with the CCP in Yan’an from 1944-1947, this group’s communications with Washington were obstructed by the psychologically-delusional Ambassador Hurley. This manuscript includes Hurley’s communications starting in August of 1945 to contextualize the Truman Administration’s China discourse, but does not exclusively focus on Hurley. Additionally, the 1944-1945 time period lies outside the scope of this paper’s examination of discourse after Imperial Japan’s surrender in World War II, on August 15, 1945. While this sub-field critically examines U.S. policy towards China before, during, and after World War II, it does not analyze the Realist discourse of the Marshall Mission (1945-1947).

This paper uses discourse analysis to explore the epistemological assumptions and themes which shaped U.S. policy towards China during the Marshall Mission, arguing that U.S. policymakers’ inability to understand China stemmed from their Realist constructs, great-power frameworks, and theories of geopolitical realism, preventing a full analysis of Mao Zedong and

the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) postcolonial nationalism. It argues that a similar gap between the Biden Administration's Realism and President Xi's nationalism may exist today.

Research Design:

In this paper, I use discourse analysis to explore why U.S. officials failed to accurately predict Chinese behavior during the Marshall Mission (1945-1947). I identify the discursive limitations in U.S. policy that prevented a full understanding of China. In my conclusion, I compare the failure of Realist discourse to U.S.-China relations in the 21st century, particularly from 2020-2021. To conduct my discourse analysis, I examined almost 200 documents from the U.S. Department of State's *Foreign Relations of the United States* collection. My focus within the collection was on the years 1945-1946. Specifically, I read documents 304-344, and documents 541-578 from the 1945 Far East collection. I also read documents 1-29, 124-140, and 420-470 from the 1946 Far East: China collections. In order to analyze Mao Zedong as a postcolonial nationalist, I read the first 21 speeches, reports, and letters published by China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs in *On Diplomacy*, which covered the years 1937-1947. Taken as a whole, these documents form the core of my discourse analysis.

I answer my question inductively, using discourse analysis to develop a broader claim about why Realist American security discourse failed in its encounter with Mao's nationalism. The larger object being studied is the effect of Realist, great-power assumptions and epistemological constructs on U.S. security discourse. My project restricts its focus to the Marshall Mission in order to provide a specific, deep analysis of these constructs during this key moment in the U.S.-China relationship. Mao's postcolonial nationalism established the ideology of the CCP, which persists into the 21st century and drives Chinese perspectives of American maritime strategy (Kissinger, 2011). My conclusion uses this continuity to briefly compare the

Biden Administration's security discourse on China, arguing that it fails to grasp the drivers of President Xi Jinping's nationalism because it is a discourse rooted in geopolitical realism.

Alternate Methodological Approaches:

Discourse analysis of the Marshall Mission (1945-1947) is an appropriate methodological framework for my research. While its inductive, qualitative nature of inquiry distinguishes it from deductive, hypothesis-based political science, these features ultimately strengthen its analytical power.

Deductive, variable-based case studies, military doctrine studies and grand strategy methodologies appear often in current U.S.-based international relations research into U.S.-China competition. Taylor Fravel and Graham Allison, respectively, have re-introduced deductive case study methodologies into the discipline. Fravel's scholarship on China's border conflicts seeks to identify variables which caused China to use cooperation or conflict to resolve its border disputes during the 20th century (Fravel, 2008). Similarly, Allison's comparative case studies of rising-power trajectories seek to pinpoint the key variable which determines whether rising-powers will fight a war against an established great-power, controlling for different rival explanations (Allison, 2017). Military doctrine studies use similar analytical frameworks, attempting to forecast China's military strategy into the coming decades using probabilities of "lead indicators" of likely military scenarios (Yoshihara, Friedberg, Rolland et. al., 2020). And lastly, grand strategy methodologies have embraced increasingly pseudo-quantitative methods as well. Certain scholars analyze China's grand strategy by identifying recurring variables across China's 20th century history, arguing that a continuous "Chinese national interest" has existed despite leadership changes (Khan, 2018). Problematically, such deductive methodologies are enmeshed in Realist security theories of hegemony, which predict states will exist in a struggle for power-

maximization in the international system because of their national interests (Mearsheimer, 2014). This manuscript demonstrates that in its perceived struggle for power with the Soviet Union, U.S. discourse could not analyze the importance of postcolonialism in China.

Discourse analysis focuses on the processes through which political-social reality is constructed, often focusing on individuals' writing to assess the intellectual constructs baked into their thinking. National leaders and other influential actors may act as agents of "construction" (Holzscheiter, 2014; Fierke, 2002; Milliken, 1999; Said, 1978).

Discourse Analysis and International Relations:

A leading member of France's Freudian School, Michel de Certeau's *The Writing of History* (1992) provides the intellectual context for my discourse analysis. His work rethought the configuration of history itself. In the translator's introduction, Tom Conley (1992) writes, "'discursive formations' produce the ideological range of représentation, what [de Certeau] calls 'the limits of what can be thought.'" I attempt to focus on how Realist discourses constructed the "limits of what can be thought", in the context of the Marshall Mission (1945-1947) and U.S.-China relations more broadly.

Holzscheiter (2014) provides a definition of discourse analysis where, "discourse analysis is an engagement with...the linguistic and communicative processes through which social reality is constructed." Accordingly, "discourse" may be defined as "the space where intersubjective meaning is created, sustained, transformed and, accordingly, becomes constitutive of social reality," (Holzscheiter, 2014). For other scholars, discourse, "approaches language as a picture of the logic of reality," (Fierke, 2002). It follows that in international relations and political science, discourse can be understood as the medium used by humans to construct their political realities.

In discourse analysis, the actors who construct Holzsheiter's "social reality" are elevated in place of the state. Consequently, discourse analysis tends to appear in constructivist, post-structuralist, postmodernist, feminist and social-constructivist scholarship (Milliken, 1999).

The constructivist nature of discourse analysis makes it well-suited for research into American security discourse on China during the Marshall Mission, when U.S. officials sought frames of reference to make sense of their status as the world's pre-eminent great-power, in the days, weeks, and months after World War II. Discourse analysis in international relations targets such acts of construction, asking, "for the social and political effects...of particular constructions of reality on the agency and identity of individuals and groups. Any singular event of speaking or producing text...is part of a larger social and political process." (Holzscheiter, 2014). My research identifies how Realist discourse placed limits on what could be thought about China, creating a Realist, geopolitical, great-power context around which China was intellectually organized. Policymakers from the U.S., CCP, and Chiang Kai-Shek's KMT each experienced a degree of subjective, constructed reality which informed their thinking, their actions, and their behavior. As de Certeau (1992) made clear, examining the discourse which underpins the process of construction is an effective method of identifying the source of its "social and political effects". In my research, I argue that Realist constructs, great-power frameworks, and theories of geopolitical realism led to the political effect of America's failure to understand Mao Zedong's postcolonial nationalism.

Source Material and Qualitative Analysis:

Approaching the *Foreign Relations of the United States* collection and Mao Zedong's *On Diplomacy*, I analyzed how publications, memoranda, reports, intelligence analyses, cables and summaries of China demonstrated specific constructions of political reality which were

inaccurate. I identified Realist international relations theories as the chief operative influence in this discourse, tracing their argumentative structures.

The Department of State's *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS)* record from 1945-1947 contains thousands of documents, representing officials' thinking regarding China during the moments I am studying. In doing so, they also reflect policymakers' embedded assumptions. I narrowed my focus to document sections which specifically included political analyses of the political conditions in China, ensuring my discourse analysis drew from the documents best able to represent how U.S. officials made sense of China. These documents included crucial examples of policy discourse, including Ambassador Hurley's recommendations from his post in China to Secretary of State James Byrnes, Department-wide summaries concerning the future of Mao Zedong's Communist Party and Chiang Kai-Shek's Nationalist Party, and the strategic debates of Commanding General Wedemeyer and Chief of Staff George Marshall; *FRUS* offered a whole-of-government perspective on the postwar Marshall Mission.

In order to measure the accuracy of American policy discourse from these official documents, I analyzed the founding ideology of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), reading *On Diplomacy* as a representation of Maoist thinking. Shirk (2008) highlights the top-down organizational structure of the CCP, noting the massive policy transition ushered in when Deng Xiaoping replaced Mao Zedong (Shirk, 2008, p.18). The emphasis on top-down leadership meant that Mao Zedong spoke for the entire party. By extension, I can credibly state that Mao's ideology as expressed in *On Diplomacy* reflected the CCP's platform.

Argument:

American policymaking discourse on China during the Marshall Mission (1945-1947) was rooted in the language of great-power politics and geopolitical realism, and in its operative assumptions, reflected core beliefs held by Realist theories of international relations. This Realist framework left no intellectual space to analyze the postcolonial nationalism of Mao Zedong's Chinese Communist Party (CCP), or its corollary vision of security in Asia. For the Marshall Mission, this resulted in a failure to grasp the locus of CCP power until the CCP's military victory in China's Civil War appeared increasingly likely. In the broader context of American foreign policy and Asian security, the legacy of this moment lies in its outlier status amidst an Asia reconstituted by postwar U.S. hegemony. As General Marshall embarked on his mission, the partition of the Korean Peninsula and the structural reconstruction of Japan—bolstered by U.S. air and naval basing in Okinawa and Guam—were just beginning. In this respect, the Mission's failure to construct a U.S.-oriented China left a legacy felt into the 21st century: a divergent vision of Asian security, seated in the CCP. In its demonstration of the limitations of Realist thought in analyzing nationalist movements, the Mission provides critical insights for U.S.-China relations in the 21st century, and for international relations theory more broadly.

Mao Zedong as a Postcolonial Nationalist

Mao Zedong's speeches, essays and interviews from 1937-1947 illuminate the undercurrent of postcolonial and anti-Japanese nationalism which drove the CCP's ideology. Marxist-Leninist theory certainly pervaded Mao's writing, but the role postcolonial nationalism played in the CCP's vision of Asia's international relations suggests it was a defining feature of Maoist thought. From 1937-1945, Mao laid out the crux of his vision, situating the CCP's theory of postcolonial, nationalist international relations against Japan's invasion of China—and by

extension, against hegemony which restricted China's agency in the Western Pacific. By mistaking this nationalism for Communism because of major-power tensions with the U.S.S.R., U.S. policymakers during the Marshall Mission constructed an intellectual monolith wherein the CCP was a mere extension of the Soviet Union. The Truman Administration misunderstood the core nationalism of Mao's ideology because it viewed China through Realist, great-power frameworks.

In 1937, Mao articulated his nationalism in the context of China's war with Japan, but established principles which by 1945 would encompass a broader vision of Asian security upheld by liberated, independent Asian countries. Mao believed that the Soviet Union represented the strongest great-power ally available to the CCP in its resistance to Japan's invasion. In declaring an anti-Japanese foreign policy, Mao argued that China needed to, "...closely unite with the Soviet Union, the country which is most reliable, most powerful, and most capable of helping China to resist Japan."² However, in this same declaration, Mao emphasized national pride and set the limits of foreign assistance, arguing that China alone needed to be responsible for Japan's military defeat. Evaluating potential major-power partners, Mao called on the CCP to, "Enlist the sympathy of Britain, the United States, and France for our resistance to Japan, and secure their help provided that it entails no loss of our territory or our sovereign rights."³ Indeed, Mao believed the CCP, "...should rely mainly on our own strength to defeat the Japanese aggressors; but foreign aid cannot be dispensed with, and an isolationist policy will only play into the enemy's hands."⁴ For Mao, the CCP's independent prosecution of the war—augmented by foreign assistance—against Japan was of paramount importance. Unstated but implied was the

² Mao Zedong, "Adopt an Anti-Japanese Foreign Policy I," in *On Diplomacy*, ed. Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1998), p. 1.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

logical extension of this argument: by defeating Japan largely through its own efforts, the CCP could legitimate its presence in China as a liberating, anti-imperial force. In this way, Mao aligned the CCP's aims with the fundamental existence of the Chinese state, and the future of the Chinese people.

Two months later, in August of 1937, Mao repeated his limits on foreign assistance in the overthrow of Japanese imperialism. Mao advocated for concluding alliances, "...with all countries that are opposed to Japanese aggression, provided that this entails no loss of our territory or of our sovereign rights."⁵ In this dictum, Mao again alluded to the legitimating process of war. Mao called for his troops to, "Fight to the finish in defense of northern China and the seacoast. Fight to the finish for the recovery of Beiping, Tianjin and northeastern China."⁶ By "fighting to the finish", Mao was calling for the CCP to make total sacrifice in "defense of" and in "recovery of" Chinese territory. Defending and recovering Japanese-held land at such expense again tied the CCP to the future of the Chinese state, laying an intellectual foundation whereby Mao's guerillas would be responsible for China's post-imperial security. From these early writings in 1937 emerge the contours of postcolonial nationalism in Maoist thought: resisting imperialism and regional hegemony, protecting sovereignty and territorial integrity, and gaining legitimacy through anti-imperial liberation.

Starting in 1938, Mao applied these basic principles to broader world politics, developing a distinct theory of postcolonial international relations, underwritten by nationalism and grounded in resistance to hegemony. Delivering a speech in Yan'an in February, Mao placed China's war with Japan in a global context. Mao viewed the meeting as one significant to all of

⁵ Mao Zedong, "Adopt an Anti-Japanese Foreign Policy II," in *On Diplomacy*, ed. Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1998), p. 2.

⁶ *Ibid.*

China, in its, “objective of combating wars of aggression” as waged by Japan.⁷ In the speech, Mao painted this objective as one pursued globally, where, “...the opposers to aggression are uniting the majority of the world’s peoples to safeguard world peace against aggressive wars.”⁸ Applied to China, opposing Japanese aggression meant that the CCP did so on behalf of the Chinese people. The rest of the speech casts “the world’s peoples” as the deciding force in the battle against imperial aggression—and therefore in the CCP’s liberation of China. Mao believed that, “All Chinese people refusing to be slaves of a foreign power, regardless of party affiliation, belief, sex or age, are uniting to strive for an identical objective.”⁹ In this struggle, Mao placed the CCP on the side of the Chinese people, arguing that, “To combat aggression is our common objective.”¹⁰ As an instrument of, “The tremendous force of a united people all over China,” the CCP was positioned as a nationalist movement.¹¹ It was the champion of China’s postcolonial liberation vis-à-vis Japanese hegemony, and a reflective microcosm of wider, global movements against wars of aggression which facilitated aggressive hegemonies.

In the summer and fall of 1938, Mao outlined a basic, nationalist strategic doctrine to be employed in resisting wars of aggression, building on prior themes of liberation and territorial sovereignty. Its significance, however, lay in its implications for China’s perspective on security in Asia. While delivering his “On Protracted War,” lectures, Mao drew a distinction between just and unjust wars, claiming that, “All wars that are progressive are just, and all wars that impede progress are unjust.”¹² Applied to the war with Japan, Mao argued that, “The revolutionary wars

⁷ Mao Zedong, “Speech at the Yan’an Anti-Aggression Meeting,” in *On Diplomacy*, ed. Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1998), p. 5.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid, p. 6.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Mao Zedong, “Fighting for Perpetual Peace,” in *On Diplomacy*, ed. Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1998), p. 8.

which have already begun are part of the war for perpetual peace. The war between China and Japan...will take an important place in this war for perpetual peace, and out of it will come the liberation of the Chinese nation.”¹³ For Mao, revolutionary wars were to be fought against capitalism.¹⁴ Despite this Marxist bent, progressive, just wars remained tied to liberation from imperialism. By extension, unjust wars impeded progress, suppressing postcolonial sovereignty. Mao believed that,

“The way to oppose [unjust] war of this kind is to do everything possible to prevent it before it breaks out and, once it breaks out, to oppose war with war, to oppose unjust war with just war, whenever possible...Japan’s war is an unjust war that impedes progress.”¹⁵

Broadly, Mao framed a policy of preventive deterrence by calling for the prevention of unjust war before it broke out. Deterrence would take effect before China was threatened—for example, preventing Japan from invading China at all. For the future, Mao’s logic implicitly called for the deterrence of threats to China’s postcolonial liberation, to be realized through the CCP’s struggle. As demonstrated, Mao’s theory of liberation encompassed the recovery of territory in northern China, and the CCP’s overthrow of Japanese imperialism. Deterring threats to this progress meant resisting hegemony which threatened China’s sovereignty. In other words, Mao sought to deter future wars of aggression, seeking to prevent the rise or establishment of another Asian hegemon which could threaten China in the Western Pacific.

Despite Mao’s belief in a global struggle against aggression, in 1939 he was careful to distinguish China’s war in the Pacific from World War II, fusing his just war theory with postcolonialism and nationalism to do so. Recalling the tropes from his speech in Yan’an in

¹³ Mao Zedong, “Fighting for Perpetual Peace,” in *On Diplomacy*, ed. Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1998), p. 8.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

February of 1938, Mao cast the Chinese people as the vehicle of China's liberation from Japan. In the preface to the English translation of his *On Protracted War*, Mao stated that, "In the great War of Resistance...there is no doubt that the forces in China, now that they are called into action, will not only become invincible, but also subdue the enemy and drive him away."¹⁶ The ramifications of this swelling force within China became clear in September of 1939. In an interview with *A New China Daily*—on the same day as Germany's invasion of Poland—Mao discussed China's trajectory in the coming war. One possibility was, "...perseverance in resistance, unity and progress, which would mean national rejuvenation."¹⁷ The "forces in China" would liberate the country through their resistance, leading to a postcolonial "national rejuvenation" for the nation. Analyzing the constellation of global alliances, Mao claimed both the Allies and the Axis powers were, "fighting for the domination of colonies" while "waging a predatory war", meaning that, "This war is not at all a just war. The only just wars are non-predatory wars, wars of liberation."¹⁸ Fundamentally, the situation in China was different from the conflict enveloping the world. China's war was a just war of resistance, of progress, and of liberation—a nationalist war for a postcolonial future.

Mao distilled China's foreign policy during World War II from this basic difference, establishing an understanding of the war which would diverge from that held by U.S. officials during the Marshall Mission. Following his interview with *A New China Daily*, Mao wrote,

¹⁶ Mao Zedong, "The Relationship Between the War of Resistance and Foreign Aid—Preface to the English Translation of *On Protracted War*," in *On Diplomacy*, ed. Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1998), p. 15.

¹⁷ Mao Zedong, "Interview with *A New China Daily* Correspondent on the New International Situation," in *On Diplomacy*, ed. Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1998), p. 19.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

“To maintain that China should join the Anglo-French imperialist war front is a capitulator’s view, which is harmful to the War of Resistance [against Japan] as well as to the independence and liberation of the Chinese nation, and it should be flatly rejected.”¹⁹

Mao’s reasoning rested on the logic and meaning of capitulation. Framing the Allied war effort as an “Anglo-French” project of imperialism positioned it as the antithesis of China’s war for liberation and sovereignty. Surrendering to this “front” was to pollute the CCP’s ideology. If China needed to become a formal Allied power in order to defeat Japan, Mao’s emphasis on self-liberation with foreign aid would be null; the invincibility of the Chinese people would be proven false. Logically, such an alliance would render void the roots of China’s war. Stemming from this argument for differentiation, Mao subtly illustrated a worldview consisting of imperial powers, and countries seeking the overthrow of imperialism.

Sorting international relations into major-power imperialism and postcolonial struggle lent itself to a corollary vision of security in Asia. In 1940, Mao began to connect the theories underpinning China’s resistance to Japan with regional East Asian order. According to Mao, the CCP’s foreign policy was predicated on its distinctions between how world powers behaved in East Asia and the Pacific.²⁰ These distinctions were,

“...between German and Italian imperialism which are allies of Japan and have recognized ‘Manchukuo’ and British and U.S. imperialism which are opposed to Japan, and between the Britain and the United States of yesterday which followed a Munich policy in the Far East and undermined China’s resistance to Japan, and the Britain and the United States of today which have abandoned this policy and are now in favor of China’s resistance.”²¹

¹⁹ Mao Zedong, “Adopt an Anti-Japanese Foreign Policy III,” in *On Diplomacy*, ed. Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1998), p. 2.

²⁰ Mao Zedong, “Adopt an Anti-Japanese Foreign Policy IV,” in *On Diplomacy*, ed. Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1998), p. 3.

²¹ *Ibid.*

By building a foreign policy on such distinctions, Mao indicated what actions were most important in evaluating major-powers. Specifically, evaluations rested upon countries' recognition of Manchukuo—the puppet state run by Japan in formerly-Chinese Manchuria—and countries' appeasement of Japan's aggression. Conceptually, Mao was evaluating how nations reacted to aggressive hegemony in the Pacific; his distinctions were grounded in how the U.S., Britain, Germany, and Italy treated the prosecution of unjust war. Against the backdrop of Mao's prior speeches, lectures, and writings, his distinctions between types of imperialism appears to contradict his organization of international relations into imperial and colonial powers. Anti-Japanese sentiment, however, proved his discriminating tool: in the hierarchy of Mao's ideology, resistance to Japan was ranked higher than being a perceived imperial power. Consequently, American and British imperialism could be reconciled with the CCP's aims because they became invested in China's war of resistance. This benchmark fed into Mao's analysis of East Asia. Comparing the U.S. and Britain's regional foreign policies before and after 1939 to the Munich Agreement, which appeased German fascism, Mao subtly argued that both countries were transitory powers in Asia. In other words, their actions in the region were not constant, but circumstantial. If Germany, Italy, and Japan were in conflict with postcolonialism in Asia, and the U.S. and Britain were not reliable allies in the struggle for liberation, then who could permanently uphold regional security? In their omission from this analysis and in their subjugation by the major-powers, Asian colonies were left as the only viable guarantors of a future, postcolonial order.

Mao left this conclusion implied until 1945. Two weeks before the Allies declared victory in Europe, Mao issued a report to the Seventh National Congress of the CCP, laying out

his vision for a postwar Asia.²² Mao's theory of nationalism crystallized into a philosophy holding that, "The people, and the people alone, are the motive force in the making of world history."²³ Indeed, the people would, "...win the war, win the peace, and win progress."²⁴ As the arm of this animating force, the CCP was intellectually aligned with similar movements across Asia, in the name of liberation. This alignment resulted in a postcolonial geography stretching from India to Japan. Mao stated,

"...it will be necessary to help all the democratic forces of the Japanese people to establish their own democratic system so that Japanese fascism and militarism may be thoroughly wiped out, together with their political, economic and social roots. Unless the Japanese people have a democratic system...it will be impossible to ensure peace in the Pacific."²⁵

The CCP echoed this argument for Korea, India and Southeast Asia:

"We consider...the independence of Korea to be correct. The Chinese people should help the Korean people win liberation. We hope that India will attain independence...an independent and democratic India...is essential for world peace. As regards...Burma, Malaya, Indonesia, Vietnam and the Philippines—we hope that after the defeat of the Japanese aggressors, their people will...establish independent and democratic states of their own."²⁶

In Japan, Korea, India, Burma, Malaya, Indonesia, Vietnam, and the Philippines, Mao placed the CCP on the side of the people. Mao's vision therefore rested upon sovereign Asian states. Left implied was the logic that their liberation was in the interest of the CCP because such forces opposed aggression. In 1938, for example, Mao had declared, "the world's peoples [have united] to safeguard world peace against aggressive wars."²⁷ The Asia-Pacific Mao sought was free of

²² Mao Zedong, "The Present International Situation and the Fundamental Principle of the Foreign Policy of the Communist Party of China," in *On Diplomacy*, ed. Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1998), p. 31.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

²⁶ *Ibid.* p. 34.

²⁷ Mao Zedong, "Speech at the Yan'an Anti-Aggression Meeting," in *On Diplomacy*, ed. Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1998), p. 5.

imperialism; postcolonial order from the Western Pacific to the Indian Ocean was the path to China's permanent security from hegemony. Combined with his theory of deterring unjust wars, this report hinted at the lengths Mao would go to in order to realize such a security environment.

August-December 1945: Constructing a Realist Discourse

In the wake of Imperial Japan's surrender on August 15th, 1945 and their newfound global power emerging from World War II, American officials immediately turned their attention to postwar peace and security in Asia. U.S. diplomats' Realist discourse laid the foundation for President Truman's Realist policy towards China, which would be articulated in December of 1945. From the outset, officials such as Ambassador to China Patrick Hurley and Ambassador to the U.S.S.R. Averell Harriman cast the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) as little more than a guerilla force, while also positioning the CCP and China more broadly relative to the Soviet Union. In this moment and through this Realist discourse, Mao's postcolonial nationalism was elided; American discourse began to erase any distinction between the CCP and the Soviet Union, constructing a Communist monolith which stretched from East Berlin to Yan'an. As a result, the great-power contours of President Truman's policy found their antecedents in the months leading up to General Marshall's trans-Pacific voyage. Before the Marshall Mission began, China and the CCP had been subsumed by major-power, geopolitical concerns in the broader project of securing American hegemony on the flanks of the Eurasian landmass, in the interregnum between World War II and the commencement of the Cold War.

Less than 24 hours after Japan's surrender, Ambassador Hurley sent a telegram to Secretary of State James F. Byrnes establishing concerns about the CCP's intentions in China. The Ambassador's analysis positioned the CCP as a hostile force free of nationalist motivations. On the night of Japan's surrender, Ambassador Hurley met with Chiang Kai-Shek—leader of

China's Nationalist Party (Kuomintang) and the President of the Republic of China—in Chongqing, to recommend inviting Mao Zedong to discuss China's future.²⁸ Ambassador Hurley shifted the burden of peace in China onto Mao, declaring that if Mao accepted the invitation, then, "...the armed conflict between the Communist Party of China and the National Government may be reduced to a political controversy."²⁹ For the Ambassador, the question of, "whether Japan will be permitted to surrender any of her arms to the armed Communist Party in China?" could derail Chiang's relationship with Mao.³⁰ The reason for this source of tension, however, was not a complex one, with Ambassador Hurley arguing that, "Unquestionably...the Communists desire to acquire Japanese arms to continue their position as a belligerent within China."³¹ His articulation of the postwar tensions in China constructed a logic of reality whereby Mao became a belligerent bent on seeking the surrender of Japan's arms to the CCP for ulterior purposes, while Chiang sought to reduce tensions to a "political controversy". In this intellectual universe of binary, unquestionable motives, Mao's nationalism could not be the driving force of his desire to accept Japan's surrender; his place in China was reduced to that of a hostile, belligerent guerilla.

The officials surrounding Ambassador Hurley shared his analysis, deepening policymakers' inability to grasp the postcolonialism which drove Mao and thereby establishing divergent memories of China's liberation. Harry Stevens, the Second Secretary of the U.S. Embassy in China, wrote Ambassador Hurley that the CCP's retention of Japanese arms in Shaanxi represented, "...such defiance on the part of the Communists," which showed, "...the

²⁸ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1945, The Far East, China, Volume VII*, eds. David M. Baehler, Herbert A. Fine, Ralph R. Goodwin, N. Stephen Kane, Ronald D. Landa, Lisle A. Rose, William F. Sanford, Jr., and Ilana M. Stern (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1983), 304.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

faction's lack of appreciation for Allied assistance in liberating the homeland from Japanese domination, but also its unpatriotic determination to arm for civil war...".³² The Secretary's argument reprimanded Mao and the CCP, describing them as a group of immature, illogical belligerents. With their newfound liberation, why would the CCP seek to begin arming for civil war? For Secretary Stevens and his peers, such behavior could only be explained by ingratitude, or an "unpatriotic" idiocy which failed to grasp China's national interest in avoiding civil war.

Alongside this nascent discourse, America's diplomats in the Soviet Union began discussing CCP-Soviet designs for China, gradually bringing China into great-power dialectics. The day after Japan's surrender, Soviet diplomats met with Adam Watson, from the British Embassy, to discuss their growing, "perplexity" as to why the United States appeared to be so interested in China."³³ Indeed, the Soviet officials became suspicious of U.S. intentions when meeting Ambassador Averell Harriman, whose eyes allegedly, "glittered when the subject of China was mentioned..."³⁴ and led the Soviets to believe that, "...the Americans appeared to be particularly interested in the Chinese Communists."³⁴ In this fog of suspicion, The Second Secretary of the U.S. Embassy in the Soviet Union assuaged George F. Kennan—then Counselor to the Embassy—that, "When asked what Soviet interests in China were Pavlov disavowed any Soviet concern over internal Chinese affairs."³⁵ Despite this assurance, the basic, mutually-shared suspicion and fear implicitly organized Chiang Kai-Shek's government and Mao Zedong's guerillas around major-power polarities. As a result, future discussion of China by U.S.

³² *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1945, The Far East, China, Volume VII*, eds. David M. Baehler, Herbert A. Fine, Ralph R. Goodwin, N. Stephen Kane, Ronald D. Landa, Lisle A. Rose, William F. Sanford, Jr., and Ilana M. Stern (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1983), 305.

³³ *Ibid.*, 306.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

officials in the buildup to President Truman's Realist China policy would revolve around great-power competition, and the geopolitics of U.S. and Soviet positions in Asia.

By the fall of 1945, Averell Harriman and George F. Kennan presented Soviet propaganda concerning China as evidence that the Soviets and the CCP were coordinating their messaging, and by implication, could well be coordinating their actions in China. On August 29, 1945, Ambassador Harriman cabled Secretary Byrnes to describe a significant article in the Soviet Ministry of Defence's official *Red Star* newspaper.³⁶ According to Harriman, it argued that, "1. China cannot continue to be a backward, semifeudal state. 2. Efforts to maintain reaction will provoke "democratic" resistance. 3. USSR and world democratic forces support democratic development of China. 4. Agents of Japanese imperialism are now seeking to disrupt democratic unity."³⁷ Harriman presented two conclusions. The first hardened latent suspicions that the Soviets were the patron of the CCP, because the publication "carries the first statement in our memory of categorical Soviet support of Chinese "democratic" forces."³⁸ Strengthening the link between the CCP and the Soviets initiated the elimination of Mao Zedong's postcolonial nationalism from policy discourse, gradually reducing the CCP to little more than a Soviet pawn.

Of equal importance, Harriman and Kennan's campaign dismissed Soviet propaganda's anti-Japanese overtones as an analog to Soviet propaganda in Europe, thereby overlooking the growing anti-Japanese sentiment in China by subsuming it under great-power geopolitics. Harriman's second conclusion tied China into the latticework of U.S.-U.S.S.R. competition across Eurasia, arguing that, "The hint that agents of Japanese imperialism seek to disrupt

³⁶ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1945, The Far East, China, Volume VII*, eds. David M. Baehler, Herbert A. Fine, Ralph R. Goodwin, N. Stephen Kane, Ronald D. Landa, Lisle A. Rose, William F. Sanford, Jr., and Ilana M. Stern (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1983), 310.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

democratic unity in China hints at the technique employed in Europe of identifying as Fascist every opponent of the Popular Front movement.”³⁹ In short, Soviet propaganda on China mattered because it portended Soviet proxy support for the CCP, and because it fit into a wider pattern of major-power tension. Lost in this analysis was the question of why the Soviet Union, in their mission “to disrupt democratic unity” would target semi-feudalism, “democratic” resistance, and the shadow of Japanese imperialism in China. If the goal was disruption, then these three issues were clearly seen as pivotal—the Soviets sought to inflame anti-Japanese sentiment, while Harriman’s emphasis on great-power tactics overlooked it.

As Harriman continued to convince President Truman and Secretary Byrnes of the crystallizing great-power dimensions of China’s civil divide, events in China demonstrated that the breach was one pitting divergent memories of the war against Japan against one another. On August 30th, Major General Clayton Bissell sent War Department intelligence memorandums to Washington, claiming that, “Shanghai is reported surrounded by Communist forces who have expressed determination to fight should Central Government forces attempt to enter the city.”⁴⁰ Presumably, the CCP forces recalled Mao’s demand that they fight to the finish in defense of and in recovery of China’s coastline. Refusing to allow Chiang’s National Government to enter Shanghai and re-establish his authority was to refuse to cede the grounds for the CCP’s nationalist war for a postcolonial future. Problematically, as local tensions were accelerating towards confrontation, America’s China policy continued to bend towards great-power

³⁹ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1945, The Far East, China, Volume VII*, eds. David M. Baehler, Herbert A. Fine, Ralph R. Goodwin, N. Stephen Kane, Ronald D. Landa, Lisle A. Rose, William F. Sanford, Jr., and Ilana M. Stern (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1983), 310.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 311.

competition. Great-power politics was crucial to understanding potential conflict in China, but using it exclusively was to omit nationalism entirely from policy debates.

Ambassador Harriman continued to frame China's conflict in terms of U.S.-Soviet competition. He depicted *Red Star* propaganda as the groundwork for a Soviet policy seeking to weaken Chiang Kai-Shek's legitimacy. Re-organizing the sentences from another publication, he described a logic in which, "...a significant series of associations [leave] door open to place responsibility on Chungking [Chongqing] if agreement with Yen-an [Yan'an] is not reached."⁴¹ In the context of KMT-CCP relations, Harriman believed the Soviets were attempting to force Chiang into granting Mao concessions, leveraging him with the threat of, "...accusations that certain Chungking elements collaborate with Jap diversionists. Same holds true for Chungking forces sent to liberated areas."⁴² In Harriman's analysis, Mao was evidently powerless to negotiate unless the Soviets backed him. Following Harriman's argument, the Soviets were attempting to gain de facto hegemony over China, with the CCP as their vehicle to dominion.

On-the-ground realities, however, revealed how nationalism was driving conflict in China. Within the CCP, Mao's authority itself was challenged in the name of postcolonial nationalism. Secretary Stevens reported intelligence that the Military Chief of the CCP, Zhu De, apparently believed "...that the Communist troops under his command would not tolerate any compromise made by Mao Tze-tung at Chungking which might challenge...Chu's...command of 18th Army forces."⁴³ Zhu's argument revealed his perception of the nationalist sources of CCP power. Contrasting his position relative to Mao, Zhu believed that he, "...represents 200,000,000

⁴¹ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1945, The Far East, China, Volume VII*, eds. David M. Baehler, Herbert A. Fine, Ralph R. Goodwin, N. Stephen Kane, Ronald D. Landa, Lisle A. Rose, William F. Sanford, Jr., and Ilana M. Stern (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1983), 313.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 316.

people in this country, most of whom are...residing in areas formerly under Japanese control, and that Mao's influence is primarily among several million party adherents...that have never been occupied by the Japanese."⁴⁴ Zhu felt assured of his ability to force negotiating parameters on Mao based on what he would "tolerate" because his authority was derived from the anti-Japanese nationalism of local populations. So convinced was Zhu of postcolonial nationalism's power that he urged Mao to, "...constantly bear in mind that, with or without Soviet backing, their 1,000,000 regulars and 2,000,000 guerrillas were more than a match for any force that the Central Government could muster against them."⁴⁵ While American officials increasingly refracted the CCP through Harriman's prism of great-power relations with the Soviet Union, the Military Chief of all CCP forces believed the Soviets to be redundant; growing nationalism across China was more important to his success than major-power patronage.

American diplomats' projection of great-power politics onto China solidified into a shaping discourse in the ensuing months, cementing the occlusion of postcolonial nationalism from the vocabulary of the Truman Administration. By mid-September, Harriman's fixation on the Soviets was bolstered by a powerful ally: Chargé of the U.S. Embassy in the Soviet Union, George F. Kennan. Cabling Secretary Byrnes, Kennan heightened the suspicion over bilateral coordination established by Harriman. He claimed, "Similarity of CCP and Moscow line is not surprising. Timing is worth noting. First appearance in Soviet press of common line was in August 29 *Red Star* followed by stronger statement on August 31."⁴⁶ Harriman and Kennan's conceptual interpretation of major-power patronage was not an isolated one, however. In

⁴⁴ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1945, The Far East, China, Volume VII*, eds. David M. Baehler, Herbert A. Fine, Ralph R. Goodwin, N. Stephen Kane, Ronald D. Landa, Lisle A. Rose, William F. Sanford, Jr., and Ilana M. Stern (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1983), 316.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 318.

October, U.S. Consul Philip Sprouse analyzed a public statement issued by ten faculty members from China's National Southwest Associated University for Secretary Byrnes.⁴⁷ Sprouse applied the same framework as Harriman and Kennan in his positioning of the statement's authors, claiming, "The writers represent the middle-of-the-road view of the Chinese "liberal", who is the product of American or British higher education, and their sympathies have always been with the Anglo-Saxon powers, the members of the group being particularly pro-American."⁴⁸ This interpretation constructed a spectrum that organized China by great-power ideologies and sorted the Chinese people by their great-power affinities. Chinese liberalism was enabled by American and British tutelage, while Chinese Communism was nurtured by Soviet patronage. This elision of China's agency complemented Harriman and Kennan's argument, while also creating a subtle racial stratification of power in China. With China's politics set relative to the U.S. and the Soviet Union, there could be no room for other, independent ideologies such as Mao's postcolonial nationalism.

The discursive foundation laid by U.S. officials set the contours of the Truman Administration's Realist China policy, to be implemented by General Marshall. From December 9th-December 15th, President Truman, General Marshall, Secretary of State Byrnes, Undersecretary of State Dean Acheson, Director of the Office of Far Eastern Affairs John Carter Vincent, and Chief of Staff to the President Admiral William Leahy used Realist constructs and great-power rivalry with the Soviet Union to craft the Marshall Mission's objectives. The result was to place the Marshall Mission at loggerheads with Mao's postcolonialism from its inception. Secretary Byrnes wrote a memorandum providing instructions to prepare the War Department to

⁴⁷ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1945, The Far East, China, Volume VII*, eds. David M. Baehler, Herbert A. Fine, Ralph R. Goodwin, N. Stephen Kane, Ronald D. Landa, Lisle A. Rose, William F. Sanford, Jr., and Ilana M. Stern (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1983), 332.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

support the Marshall Mission, expressing President Truman's anxiety that, "...the unification of China by peaceful, democratic methods be achieved as soon as possible."⁴⁹ Byrnes simultaneously recast America's war against Japan, implicitly establishing American preeminence in the Asia-Pacific region. He cited prior testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, where he argued,

"During the war the immediate goal of the United States in China was to promote a military union of the several political factions in order to bring their combined pow[e]r to bear upon our common enemy, Japan. Our longer-range goal, then as now, and a goal of at least equal importance, is the development of a strong, united, and democratic China."⁵⁰

For Byrnes, the U.S. role in World War II's Pacific theater was to "bring" the combined power of Mao and Chiang together, reflecting a balance of power with the U.S. as the region's chief hegemon. As a result of this apex position, U.S. policy could set "longer-range" goals to fashion a security environment in Asia that rested upon a, "strong, united, and democratic China." Byrnes also recalled Ambassador's Hurley's dismissal of Mao and the CCP as "belligerents", calling on, "...the Central Government...as well as the various dissident elements...to compromise."⁵¹ Juxtaposed against Byrnes's implied understanding of American hegemony's potential to re-shape the Pacific, his binary view of the "Central Government" and "various dissident elements" reflected the hazards of using great-power apertures to capture the situation in China. Viewed from a regional perspective, China's CCP appeared to be a dissident, belligerent group standing in the way of a "strong, united, and democratic China" which would promote U.S. interests in the postwar Asia-Pacific. Discursively, it became lumped together with

⁴⁹ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1945, The Far East, China, Volume VII*, eds. David M. Baehler, Herbert A. Fine, Ralph R. Goodwin, N. Stephen Kane, Ronald D. Landa, Lisle A. Rose, William F. Sanford, Jr., and Ilana M. Stern (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1983), 547.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

Sprouse's Chinese "liberal", as a group which could not grasp Secretary Stevens's impression of China's obvious national interest.

Byrnes's memo further demonstrated the occlusive effect of employing geopolitical, great-power discourse, as evidenced by its conversion of China's social, nationalist reality rooted in memory into a phraseology of discrete, strategic objectives. In this language, the emotion of Mao's postcolonialism was elided, allowing American policy to overlook its approaching confrontation with the CCP. Tellingly, Byrnes's memo framed U.S. policy in the context of, "the China Theater".⁵² Against this strategic backdrop, Byrnes articulated a policy revolving around elements and arrangements, calling for, "...arrangements to assist the Chinese National Government in transporting Chinese troops to Manchurian ports," while emphasizing the importance of General Marshall's attempt to convene, "a national conference of representatives of the major political elements" in China.⁵³ China became the staging ground for U.S. power, a space over which American troops and supplies were moved, and political "elements" were to be fused into a unity government. Byrnes even stated that if negotiations failed, the U.S. should deploy Chiang's troops into Manchuria directly, "to secure the long-term interests of the United States in the maintenance of international peace."⁵⁴ Viewing China as a project of geopolitical management in the context of newfound U.S. global power removed its clashing ideologies and swelling nationalism from U.S. discourse. As a result, Byrnes could confidently support a policy in which the U.S. military moved Chiang's troops into "Manchurian ports"; the emotion Mao attached to the CCP's war for a postcolonial future in northern China was unknown.

⁵² *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1945, The Far East, China, Volume VII*, eds. David M. Baehler, Herbert A. Fine, Ralph R. Goodwin, N. Stephen Kane, Ronald D. Landa, Lisle A. Rose, William F. Sanford, Jr., and Ilana M. Stern (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1983), 547.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

In meetings from December 9th to December 11th, President Truman's key foreign policy advisors demonstrated a Realist perspective on U.S. policy in China, assigning Manchuria importance because of its geostrategic position. By employing the same grammar of power as Secretary Byrnes, U.S. policy coalesced into a strategic project seeking to lock-in America's hegemonic position in a postwar Asia. On December 10th, Byrnes held a meeting at the State Department with Undersecretary of State Dean Acheson, General Marshall, Director of the Office of Far Eastern Affairs John Carter Vincent, and Chief of Staff to the President Admiral William Leahy to set General Marshall's agenda in China. Byrnes presented an argument representative of Classical Realist theories of international relations. According to minutes taken by Lieutenant General Hull, he argued that if the Marshall Mission failed, and China lay divided, "...we could expect Russia to ultimately take control of Manchuria and maintain a dominant influence in North China. His view was that there was no other step the Russians could be expected to take if China could not, itself, control Manchuria."⁵⁵ In short, the Russians would obey Morgenthau's basic logic of great-powers, seeking to maximize their power in the existing world order by consolidating and expanding their territorial hegemony over North China.

On December 11th, General Marshall echoed this analysis in a meeting with President Truman and Admiral Leahy, claiming that if negotiations failed, "there would follow the tragic consequences of a divided China and of a probable Russian reassumption of power in Manchuria, the combined effect of this resulting in the defeat or loss of the major purpose of our war in the Pacific."⁵⁶ With Imperial Japan defeated, the fact that a weakened China and hegemonic Russia would defeat "the major purpose" of America's Pacific war hinted at the key

⁵⁵ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1945, The Far East, China, Volume VII*, eds. David M. Baehler, Herbert A. Fine, Ralph R. Goodwin, N. Stephen Kane, Ronald D. Landa, Lisle A. Rose, William F. Sanford, Jr., and Ilana M. Stern (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1983), 548.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 555.

strategic condition of the postwar environment, now at risk: an Asia-Pacific free from a U.S. rival. The Marshall Mission, then, was part of a larger, geopolitical undertaking to secure America's position of hegemonic supremacy in the Pacific. China was to be understood at the level of great-power strategies, not postcolonial tendencies.

The result of this discourse was President Truman's official statement on U.S. policy aims in China, issued to General Marshall upon his departure. The, "peace and prosperity of the world" depended upon, "the ability of the sovereign nations to combine for collective security in the United Nations organization."⁵⁷ In a prelude to the language of the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan, the Truman Administration believed that, "a strong, united and democratic China is of the utmost importance to the success of this United Nations organization and for world peace" because, "a breach of peace anywhere in the world threatens the peace of the entire world."⁵⁸ Universalizing global security, however, simultaneously minimized the distinctions between regions in which peace could be threatened. Pursuing peace in China, the U.S., "recognizes and will continue to recognize the National Government of China and cooperate with it in international affairs".⁵⁹ As a result, being, "committed to the liberation of China, including the return of Manchuria to Chinese control" placed the U.S. and the CCP on a path to confrontation in North China.⁶⁰

The document also reflected America's memory of World War II, in its, "continuation of the constant and close collaboration with the National Government of the Republic of China in

⁵⁷ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1945, The Far East, China, Volume VII*, eds. David M. Baehler, Herbert A. Fine, Ralph R. Goodwin, N. Stephen Kane, Ronald D. Landa, Lisle A. Rose, William F. Sanford, Jr., and Ilana M. Stern (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1983), 558.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

the prosecution of this war,”⁶¹ Mao’s interpretation of the CCP’s role in fighting for China’s liberation lay in tension with this portrayal of U.S.-KMT joint operations. The document’s framework of Realist constructs, great-power relations, and geopolitical realism rendered it irreconcilable with the CCP’s emotional, postcolonial nationalism. As the culmination of American discourse since the surrender of Japan, President Truman’s *U.S. Policy on China* finalized the elimination of Mao’s nationalist interpretation of China’s social history and colonial memory from the discourse underpinning the Marshall Mission.

The Marshall Mission (December 1945): Solidifying Great-Power Perspectives

The Realist discourse leading to the Marshall Mission affected its conduct, placing the U.S. on a path to confrontation with the CCP. Its effects would be felt in three moments: General Marshall’s first meetings (December 1945), first cease-fire negotiations (January-February 1946), and the Manchurian Crisis (April-May 1946). Each of these moments demonstrated the blinkering effect of the Truman Administration’s Realist China policy on the parameters of U.S. discourse.

From the outset of the Mission, General Marshall focused on pursuing a policy that followed the Realist logic of prior debates and the Truman Administration’s *U.S. Policy on China*, embedding misunderstandings of Mao’s postcolonialism in the Mission’s agenda. The attaché to the U.S. Embassy in China, James Shepley, wrote a memorandum to Marshall on December 19th, summarizing the political situation in China. Shepley minced no words about Chiang Kai-Shek’s Nationalist Government, claiming that prior constitutions Chiang had proposed, “provided nothing more than what might charitably be called a constitutional

⁶¹ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1945, The Far East, China, Volume VII*, eds. David M. Baehler, Herbert A. Fine, Ralph R. Goodwin, N. Stephen Kane, Ronald D. Landa, Lisle A. Rose, William F. Sanford, Jr., and Ilana M. Stern (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1983), 558.

dictatorship” and even declared that, “on the face of it the moral right seemed to lie with the dissident elements.”⁶² Shepley employed the same vocabulary used by his peers, classifying the CCP in his “dissident elements”. Echoing the confident condescension Ambassador Hurley and Secretary Stevens’s early memos, Shepley described the CCP’s demand to receive Japanese troops’ surrender as, “bickering back and forth”.⁶³ And yet, as U.S. discourse had established, the Mission had to stand by Chiang, because the Soviets could come to dominate North China should the CCP rise to power. Left unanswered was how a China led by a leader aspiring to “constitutional dictatorship” could possibly resist Soviet hegemony.

Minimizing the postcolonial nationalism of Mao while pursuing great-power concerns vis-à-vis the Soviet Union resulted in a hubristic assumption that U.S. officials understood the problems of China better than the bickering Chinese themselves. This hubristic confidence bled through Shepley’s agenda for Marshall, which consisted of four points: the establishment of an interim government with Chiang at its head, the consequent surrender of the CCP’s 8th and 4th Route Armies, the interim government’s re-establishment of Chinese sovereignty, and the selection of political representatives to a national assembly which would formalize a unity government.⁶⁴ The scope of the Mission was one of management, organization, and democratization, subsuming the breach in China’s social memory. Reflecting the degree of American misunderstanding of Mao, Shepley argued that the CCP’s surrender of its armies was, “certainly not too much to expect...if Chiang gives them a voice in a coalition government.”⁶⁵ This gratitude borne by a desperation for power was tenuous, with Zhu De already threatening

⁶² *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1945, The Far East, China, Volume VII*, eds. David M. Baehler, Herbert A. Fine, Ralph R. Goodwin, N. Stephen Kane, Ronald D. Landa, Lisle A. Rose, William F. Sanford, Jr., and Ilana M. Stern (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1983), 560.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

Mao based on the nationalism of his troops, and with Mao's own history of connecting the CCP's nationalist legitimacy and its war against Japan since 1937.

Upon his arrival in China, General Marshall held separate meetings with Chiang Kai-Shek, CCP diplomat Zhou Enlai, and members of the Democratic League, a minor political faction. Throughout these meetings, U.S. officials refracted China's divide through the Realist lens of the American experience in World War II, and through great-power understandings of strength. In his first meeting with Chiang, Marshall listened carefully as Chiang recounted the resistance encountered by Nationalists in reclaiming territory in North China. Chiang stated,

On October 24th the Russians withdrew [from Yinkow and Hulutao] permitting the Chinese Communists to move into those two ports. Our attempts to land at Yinkow and Hulutao were opposed by Chinese Communists. We realized now that the Chinese Communists occupied those two ports by consent and assistance of the Russians.⁶⁶

The drivers of the CCP's obstructionist strategy could be understood if Marshall had been aware of Mao's vow to fight to the finish in defense of such ports, but by the time the Mission began, the CCP had already been reduced to the status of belligerents, of tools in Soviet maneuvering. Marshall demonstrated his relative ignorance of the situation, telling Chiang that, "This is the first time I have heard much of what the Generalissimo [Chiang Kai-Shek] has stated."⁶⁷ Despite this unfamiliarity, Marshall instantly reached for the comfort of America's experience with the Soviets when Chiang asked for his advice on the situation in China. He stated,

I am just learning many of these details for the first time. Mental processes of the Russians are different. Throughout the war we have had some difficulties with them. I must say however in justice to them that this was due to lack of faith on both sides. I found in my personal dealings with Stalin that he inspired me with confidence in contrast to his Foreign Office, however I felt this way in my contacts with the British Foreign Office. I dealt all right with the Prime Minister.

⁶⁶ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1945, The Far East, China, Volume VII*, eds. David M. Baehler, Herbert A. Fine, Ralph R. Goodwin, N. Stephen Kane, Ronald D. Landa, Lisle A. Rose, William F. Sanford, Jr., and Ilana M. Stern (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1983), 567.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

Our own State Department might be considered in a similar manner—they use mysterious language.⁶⁸

In short, Marshall reached for the familiarity of U.S.-Soviet relations, implicitly applying that framework to understand KMT-CCP conflict.

Marshall's second meeting, with Zhou Enlai, demonstrated divergent impressions of the source of U.S. and CCP legitimacy. For Marshall, America's legitimacy in China rested upon its status as a great-power and its newfound hegemony in the Pacific. Marshall asked Zhou to understand that while, "China was, of course, in the midst of a bitter struggle with an overwhelming enemy for a number of years, [he] doubted if even the Chinese people realized the extent of America's effort in the Pacific war."⁶⁹ Marshall added that he doubted whether China was aware of, "...the tremendous American land, sea and air power in the Pacific which precipitated the end of the war. The American forces...had built up tremendous power in the Pacific ... They brought the war to an end by generous expenditures of men, air power and sea power and atomic power..."⁷⁰ For Marshall and the U.S. more broadly, the logic of American power in the Pacific allowed the U.S. to become involved in China's conflict, enabling the U.S. to seek the "longer-range goals" that Secretary Byrnes had spoken of before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. As a result, Marshall could claim that, "How the various groups reach accord in China is a Chinese affair, but the U. S. feels the accomplished fact is our affair."⁷¹ China fit into the broader context of regional American military power, making its peace an exercise in hegemony. In responding to Marshall, Zhou made clear the contrast between the

⁶⁸ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1945, The Far East, China, Volume VII*, eds. David M. Baehler, Herbert A. Fine, Ralph R. Goodwin, N. Stephen Kane, Ronald D. Landa, Lisle A. Rose, William F. Sanford, Jr., and Ilana M. Stern (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1983), 567.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 568.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

sources of U.S. and CCP legitimacy in China. Zhou stated that, "...the Chinese people had made great sacrifices during the war. He recalled that China had been in the war for eight years, and if you reckon from Mukden, for fourteen years. The losses were especially heavy in occupied areas."⁷² Where Marshall emphasized a legitimacy conferred by theories of great-power hegemony, Zhou emphasized a legitimacy drawn from suffering.

In his third meeting, with the Democratic League, Marshall delved deeper into the points made with Zhou, reflecting a geostrategic perception of China which revolved around managing Asia as a project of hegemony. Marshall returned to his explanation of the source of American interests in China, stating that the U.S. had made, "a prodigious effort in the Pacific in the air and on the ground and on the sea, to destroy the power of the Japanese Government" in an attempt to, "to secure peace in the world and particularly in the Pacific."⁷³ As a result, "the primary purpose on the part of the U. S. Government is to secure that peace and see that it is not destroyed by war in Asia."⁷⁴ For the first time, Marshall connected peace in the Pacific Ocean with peace in Asia, with China acting as the connecting pivot state upon which prospects for peace rested. Marshall expanded on this implicit linkage, claiming that, "...in connection with the criticisms of the American troops in China...our primary purpose...has been peace in Asia" and that the U.S. government sought, "peace in the Pacific."⁷⁵ Marshall's discourse reflected a geopolitical logic where China's conflict was the fractal prism of U.S. hegemony, connecting U.S. postwar naval power with Asia's continental and maritime security at large: peace in Asia depended on a balance of power with China at its center. His demonstration that Asia was interchangeable with

⁷² *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1945, The Far East, China, Volume VII*, eds. David M. Baehler, Herbert A. Fine, Ralph R. Goodwin, N. Stephen Kane, Ronald D. Landa, Lisle A. Rose, William F. Sanford, Jr., and Ilana M. Stern (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1983), 568.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 574.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

the Pacific expanded the scope of American power in China—if the U.S. could succeed in China, it could consolidate a favorable postwar balance of power. In this interpretation of China's significance, Mao and Chiang were simply parts of a larger, Asian and Pacific whole; the specific ideologies animating their conflict were reduced to footnotes in the context of expanding American interests and power.

General Marshall erased any remaining distinctions between China's divide and great-power frameworks in a telegram sent to President Truman on December 29th, 1945. The telegram's language applied America's great-power perspective to Marshall's relationship with Chiang, and by extension, the broader position of the Marshall Mission in China. Marshall built on his instant application of U.S.-Soviet relations to Chiang's problem of reasserting Nationalist sovereignty. He told President Truman that in another meeting with Chiang on Christmas Day, "I think I brought him to realize that many of the embarrassments in Manchuria were not peculiar to that problem but common to Russian procedure everywhere, citing examples."⁷⁶ The issue of Manchuria, pregnant with meaning for Mao's postcolonial nationalism and Chiang's attempt to assert his authority, was subsumed by Russian procedure. Its importance lay in the wider pattern of Soviet operations "everywhere". Marshall's choice of words reflected the confident condescension of U.S. officials, reflective of their status as a great-power in the Pacific. His focus on "citing examples", and "[bringing] Chiang to realize" the true importance of Manchuria was an attempt to avoid a, "posture of cracking the whip."⁷⁷

⁷⁶ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1945, The Far East, China, Volume VII*, eds. David M. Baehler, Herbert A. Fine, Ralph R. Goodwin, N. Stephen Kane, Ronald D. Landa, Lisle A. Rose, William F. Sanford, Jr., and Ilana M. Stern (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1983), 576.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

Marshall situated himself as the seat of logic and pragmatism in China, where, “the practical procedure to secure...ends...are almost completely lacking.”⁷⁸ It was up to Marshall to bring himself to, “plainly and emphatically [indicate this] in my repeated questioning and blunt statements. I think I have made this point glaringly clear to all and they now appear to be struggling towards a more realistic point of view.”⁷⁹ In this management of the Chinese, Marshall’s language mirrored the power dynamic of his explanation of America’s interest in a geopolitical, region-wide balance of power: the Mission’s pragmatism allowed it to guide the Chinese, flowing from America’s embrace of its strategic position in the region. The Realism of the Truman Administration, articulated before the Marshall Mission began, had constructed a discursive worldview emphasizing the scope of American power, thereby leaving the nuance of China’s conflict out of its discourse.

January-February 1946: The Glide Path to Confrontation

One of the first items on the Mission’s agenda was the implementation of a country-wide ceasefire. In these negotiations, the impact of Realist discourses made itself felt, placing the U.S. and the CCP on the glide path to confrontation because of looming fears of great-power competition with the Soviet Union. Kennan and Harriman’s cables had led officials to believe that the CCP was a Russian proxy, key to achieving Soviet hegemony over China. The cease-fire negotiations, combined with Kennan’s resuscitation of Soviet fears, led the U.S. to tie itself to Nationalist sovereignty in Manchuria as part of a territorial deterrent to Soviet expansion.

Marshall’s focus on Russian actions in Manchuria, rendered his mission’s

⁷⁸ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1945, The Far East, China, Volume VII*, eds. David M. Baehler, Herbert A. Fine, Ralph R. Goodwin, N. Stephen Kane, Ronald D. Landa, Lisle A. Rose, William F. Sanford, Jr., and Ilana M. Stern (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1983), 576.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

recommendations inseparable from broader geopolitical concerns. On January 1st, in their first *Cessation of Hostilities Plan*, U.S. officials working with Marshall called for, “the cessation of troop movements within China except those Nationalist Forces destined for Manchuria...for the purpose of re-establishing Chinese sovereignty.”⁸⁰ Two days later, Chargé Robertson relayed a message from Marshall to Secretary Byrnes, in Washington, requesting his, “personal estimate of the Soviet intent in Manchuria and relations between Russia and the Chinese Communists” and, “whether the difficulties the Generalissimo reports in his relations with Russia in Manchuria are not mostly of the same pattern as our own similar difficulties in Europe.”⁸¹ That same day, in a meeting with CCP diplomat Zhou Enlai, Marshall stated, “The U.S. Government is committed to the movement of troops into Manchuria.”⁸² Against the backdrop of American concerns about Soviet expansion into Manchuria, this commitment took on a strategic meaning. By turning Manchuria into a potential staging ground for great-power tensions, the Mission placed it in a framework of competition which occluded Chinese nationalism. Mao’s distinctions between the great-powers, which depended upon their reaction to “Manchukuo” and Japanese aggression, was not analyzed. As a result, Marshall committed the Truman Administration to backing Chiang Kai-Shek’s efforts to re-establish sovereignty in Manchuria, which would eventually face CCP blowback.

This discursive gap became formalized in the fifth rounds of cease-fire negotiations. Marshall met with Nationalist representative Governor Chang Chun, and CCP diplomat Zhou Enlai to review the wording of the cease-fire agreement. Marshall read out, “Paragraph *b*,

⁸⁰ *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1946, The Far East: China, Volume IX, eds. David M. Baehler, Herbert A. Fine, Ralph R. Goodwin, N. Stephen Kane, Ronald D. Landa, Lisle A. Rose, William F. Sanford, Jr., and Ilana M. Stern (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1983), 3.

⁸¹ *Ibid*, 5.

⁸² *Ibid*, 6.

cessation of hostilities order does not prejudice military movements south of the Yangtze River for the continued execution of the plan of military reorganization of the National Government,” and that, “...cessation of hostilities order does not prejudice military movements of forces of the National Army into or within Manchuria or toward ports in China for embarkation for Manchuria which are for the purpose of restoring Chinese sovereignty.”⁸³ Zhou Enlai had already expressed CCP concerns over Nationalist force movement into Chifeng and Tolun, located in Northern China.⁸⁴ The final statement referred broadly to Manchuria as a result, but left the issue of competing CCP and KMT claims in Manchuria for later negotiations. Nonetheless, the cease-fire became an opportunity to consolidate the Nationalist position in China, allowing it to pursue “military reorganization” and move into Manchuria.

U.S. suspicions of Russian intentions would be confirmed by George F. Kennan the next day, whose telegram represented a paradigm shift in the U.S. government’s perspective on China and great-power competition with the Soviet Union. Weeks before his Long Telegram, he explicitly applied the lens of geopolitical realism to China. Kennan claimed that, “USSR seeks predominant influence in China” because, “by revolutionary tradition, by nationalist ambition and by kinetic nature, Russia [is an] expansionist force.”⁸⁵ Describing their “kinetic nature”, Kennan argued that the Soviets were, “strategically obsessed with concept of national defense in great depth” and were, “incredulous that there can exist between nations any satisfactory permanent relationship not based on the recognized ascendancy of one to the other”.⁸⁶ As a result, the Soviets preferred, “...coalition to division of China because latter would probably

⁸³ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1946, The Far East: China, Volume IX*, eds. David M. Baehler, Herbert A. Fine, Ralph R. Goodwin, N. Stephen Kane, Ronald D. Landa, Lisle A. Rose, William F. Sanford, Jr., and Ilana M. Stern (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1983), 22.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 21.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 23.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*.

mean definite restriction of Communist influence to a closely defined area in Northern China, leaving Moscow without direct contact with vast Southeast Asian colonial area.”⁸⁷ Even though Kennan hesitated to brand the CCP as an appendage of Moscow, he stated, “We are quite prepared to believe that Chinese CP like other CP’s is subservient to Moscow. This would be normal state of affairs with respect to any foreign Communist party of which Moscow publicly approved.”⁸⁸ Kennan organized China along the gradients of Soviet strategic depth; in the eyes of U.S. officials, it became the terrain upon which Soviet designs played out. By stating that the U.S.S.R. preferred a coalition government, Kennan implicitly argued for the elimination of the CCP. If they were “subservient” to Moscow, then accepting them into the coalitional government would enable Soviet “expansionist” tendencies, thereby threatening U.S. interests.

The impact of Kennan’s analysis reverberated through U.S. discourse in February, placing a renewed impetus on re-establishing Chiang Kai-Shek’s sovereignty in Manchuria. Operating from Kennan’s Realist framework of great-power competition and geopolitical expansion, American officials ignored the CCP’s nationalist warnings about peace in China. Zhou Enlai sent Marshall three memos detailing cease-fire violations in late January, asking him to see, “the true light of the field situation”.⁸⁹ Zhou’s reports described violations of the CCP’s right to accept the surrender of remaining Japanese troops in China. He claimed, “the Nationalist forces...have either upon their own initiative received surrender of those Japanese forces, which are surrounded by the Communist-led troops and by right should have surrendered to the

⁸⁷ *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1946, The Far East: China, Volume IX, eds. David M. Baehler, Herbert A. Fine, Ralph R. Goodwin, N. Stephen Kane, Ronald D. Landa, Lisle A. Rose, William F. Sanford, Jr., and Ilana M. Stern (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1983), 23.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 166.

latter,”⁹⁰ Zhou demonstrated the CCP’s continued, nationalist connection “by right” between accepting Japanese surrender and gaining legitimacy.

However, Marshall’s own perspective had shifted towards Kennan’s. Writing to President Truman in February, he described his conversation with Chiang Kai-Shek’s Foreign Minister, Dr. Wang Shih Chieh about re-establishing KMT control of Manchuria. Marshall stated that China possessed a, “...vulnerability to Soviet undercover attack, which exists so long as there remains a separate Communist Government and a separate Communist Army in China.”⁹¹ While Marshall was conveying his belief in the security provided by unification, the connection between China’s “vulnerability” and the CCP proved telling; Marshall subtly echoed Kennan’s argument that the CCP was incompatible with China’s future. In this light, America’s unconditional support for Chiang Kai-Shek to move into Manchuria became a means to the end of preventing Soviet expansion. The question, however, was how the emotion-laden nationalism of the CCP could be reconciled with the Nationalist attempt to move into Manchuria. As Zhou Enlai’s memos demonstrated, not even a national cease-fire could hold.

By the end of February, Marshall decided to leave China to discuss the Mission’s progress and future with President Truman, in Washington. His staff, however, re-emphasized the great-power frameworks shaping the Mission’s trajectory. Already in Washington, James Shepley, the Attaché to the U.S. Embassy in China, wrote Marshall that he had, “...outlined briefly the situation as you found it and how you proceeded to get your results.”⁹² Shepley spoke for the Mission when he told President Truman that, “The entire emphasis is on the critical

⁹⁰ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1946, The Far East: China, Volume IX*, eds. David M. Baehler, Herbert A. Fine, Ralph R. Goodwin, N. Stephen Kane, Ronald D. Landa, Lisle A. Rose, William F. Sanford, Jr., and Ilana M. Stern (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1983), 166.

⁹¹ *Ibid*, 187.

⁹² *Ibid*, 208.

necessity of a long-range American program in China, to be directed by a top flight man in the post of Ambassador.”⁹³ The U.S. program’s “critical necessity” was the result of the Soviets’ obsession with hegemony over China. Shepley demonstrated the persistence of American condescension by infantilizing Chiang and Mao. He stated, “I have explained how difficult it is for the Chinese to understand the technique of implementation and how you have been hand feeding this technique.”⁹⁴ In a callback to Byrnes’s “longer-range” goal, Shepley’s call for a “long-range” program represented the culmination of the Mission’s discourse: it at once captured the relationship between American power in the Pacific and China’s role in a regional balance of power, while demonstrating that U.S. officials took their hegemony to heart, projecting it onto their relations with the Chinese.

The day after Shepley’s memo, the problems embedded in the Mission’s discourse and broader U.S. discourse on China came to the fore. The CCP issued a press release on the situation in Manchuria, “...accepted in many quarters as evidence of Chinese Communist-Soviet collusion in Manchuria.”⁹⁵ The statement’s importance lay in its demonstration of the postcolonial nationalism the CCP associated with Manchuria, where new violence, “...would be a blow to the longing for peace and democracy of the Manchurian people who have been trampled for fourteen years and the longing of the entire nation for peaceful settlement of the Manchurian question.”⁹⁶ This nationalist claim built on Mao’s ideology, with the CCP speaking for the “trampled” in pursuit of peace. Problematically, the statement was interpreted in the context of Soviet-CCP relations; the CCP’s zealotry, let alone their nationalism, had already

⁹³ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1946, The Far East: China, Volume IX*, eds. David M. Baehler, Herbert A. Fine, Ralph R. Goodwin, N. Stephen Kane, Ronald D. Landa, Lisle A. Rose, William F. Sanford, Jr., and Ilana M. Stern (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1983), 208.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 210.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

been surgically cut out of American policy discourse. The press release foreshadowed the coming disintegration of the Marshall Mission, in the Manchurian Crisis (April-May 1946).

The Manchurian Crisis (April-May 1946): The Mission's Collapse

The Marshall Mission would officially end on January 8th, 1947. However, its ambitions narrowed significantly after the Manchurian Crisis, with Marshall's agenda turning into a series of re-negotiated cease-fires and attempts to stop the spread of violence into southern China. Functionally, the Mission collapsed on May 4, 1946 because of swelling nationalism, a factor thus far omitted entirely from American discourse and policy debates.

The Soviet Union withdrew its remaining forces in Northern China on May 3, 1946, leaving Manchuria open to KMT and CCP forces. In the weeks leading up to Soviet drawdown, Mao and Chiang both embraced the symbolism of May 4th in Chinese history, whipping up nationalist sentiment and preparing to fight for control over Manchuria. The May 4th Movement of 1919 refers to the, "beginning of China's modern revolutionary era", building upon the Republican Revolution of 1911.⁹⁷ Student-led demonstrations protested, "...the terms of the Versailles Peace Treaty as they affected China, and...the terms of Japan's infamous 'Twenty-one Demands'..." across the country, making it a nationalist, postcolonial moment in China's history.⁹⁸ As demonstrated, U.S. discourse was unable to engage postcolonial nationalism in the CCP's ideology—the May 4th Movement was certainly outside its major-power discursive parameters.

In this moment, the frictions between Chiang and Mao hardened, precipitating violence in Manchuria. Chiang decided to move his headquarters from Chongqing to Nanjing, in time to

⁹⁷ Joseph T. Chen, "The May Fourth Movement Redefined," *Modern Asian Studies* 4, no. 1 (1970): 63.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

commemorate the May 4th Movement and Chinese history. Apart from its history as a site of imperial humiliation in Chinese memory—the First Opium War ended because of the unequal Treaty of Nanjing in 1842, and the Rape of Nanjing in 1937 marked war crimes committed by Imperial Japan—Nanjing also housed the mausoleum for Sun Yat-Sen, a key intellectual in the Revolution of 1911.⁹⁹ On May 5th, 1946, Chiang celebrated the KMT's return to Nanjing by paying public tribute to the mausoleum, bowing to an orchestra of 101 guns.¹⁰⁰

Emboldened by this symbolism, fighting erupted across North China, concentrated in Siping. Mao's CCP recalled their willingness to make total sacrifice against Japan, embracing the slogan, "Do not fear blood or sacrifice."¹⁰¹ Zhou Enlai wrote Marshall that, "With the entry of these forces into Manchuria, not only the offensive of Government troops in that area will be intensified, but there is an increasing danger of having the war spread to China proper."¹⁰² Marshall himself acknowledged the gravity of the situation, cabling President Truman about the new dimensions of China's conflict. He analyzed the crystallization of hard-line nationalism, noting that CCP leaders fighting in Changchun were "jubilant over seizing the place", while "The Generalissimo's political advisors or backers, and I think his military leaders also, urge a policy of force".¹⁰³ The remainder of the Marshall Mission would deal with preventing violence from spreading into "China proper", by organizing individual cease-fires as local attacks mounted. Marshall realized that the ambitions he laid out in meetings with Chiang, Zhou, and the Democratic League were fading, telling President Truman that "The outlook is not promising... I

⁹⁹ Daniel Kurtz-Phelan, *The China Mission* (New York, New York: Norton & Company, 2018), 178-181.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, 181.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, 185.

¹⁰² *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1946, The Far East: China, Volume IX, eds. David M. Baehler, Herbert A. Fine, Ralph R. Goodwin, N. Stephen Kane, Ronald D. Landa, Lisle A. Rose, William F. Sanford, Jr., and Ilana M. Stern (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1983), 431.

¹⁰³ *Ibid*, 434.

am in the midst of the problem. At this moment I submit no recommendations.”¹⁰⁴ The Mission’s discourse, rooted in the language of great-powers, Realism, and geopolitics, had left U.S. officials blindsided by the nationalist dimension of China’s divide.

Conclusion: Getting China Wrong in the 21st Century

This paper argues that the Truman Administration’s Realist policy discourse led to its inability to grasp Mao Zedong’s postcolonial nationalism, leading to the Marshall Mission’s failure. However, the Mission acts as a case study in its demonstration of the tension that exists between Realist expectations of international politics and nationalist movements. Hans Morgenthau (2005, p.35), claimed that states are the basic unit of world politics, and that, “The aspiration for power being the distinguishing element of international politics...international politics is of necessity power politics.” By its nature, Realism is the discourse of great-powers. Mao Zedong’s nationalism could not be captured by it. Realism made itself felt in Ambassador Harriman and Secretary Stevens’s telegrams to Washington before the *U.S. Policy on China* was published. It cast a shadow over Ambassador Harriman’s and George F. Kennan’s campaign to connect China with U.S.-Soviet competition. And in the Truman Administration’s upper-level deliberations in December of 1945, Secretary of State Byrnes and General Marshall each articulated the Realist expectation that the Soviets would occupy Manchuria to maximize their hegemony. During the Mission, Marshall and his staff gave voice to the strategic perspective of America in the Asia-Pacific, situating China as the fulcrum of a balance of power in continental and maritime Asia. With Kennan’s description of the Soviets’ “kinetic nature” in January of 1946, the Mission’s objectives in Manchuria took on a geostrategic urgency in the context of

¹⁰⁴ *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1946, The Far East: China, Volume IX, eds. David M. Baehler, Herbert A. Fine, Ralph R. Goodwin, N. Stephen Kane, Ronald D. Landa, Lisle A. Rose, William F. Sanford, Jr., and Ilana M. Stern (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1983), 434.

power politics. The failure of these whole-of-government Realist assumptions suggests a broader question for international relations theory: is the discourse of Realism equipped to engage with nationalist movements and ideologies? In the 21st century, U.S.-China relations hinge on the answer to this question.

General Marshall left China on January 8th, 1947. The Marshall Mission's disintegration was caused by the latent tensions between the Truman Administration's Realist China policy and Mao Zedong's postcolonial nationalism; violence spread across the country in the ensuing months, and the Mission became a series of cease-fire negotiations, until its total collapse after Chiang Kai-Shek began preparations in the winter of 1946 for a final military offensive.¹⁰⁵ The rapid evolution of its Realist, geopolitical discourse, however, carries significant implications for U.S.-China relations in the 21st century. The discourse limited the ability of the U.S. government to truly grasp the animating force of the CCP, and the power of nationalist sentiment in China, demonstrating the danger of solely relying on Realist prisms to craft policy towards fundamentally nationalist movements. President Xi Jinping draws from the wellspring of postcolonial nationalism established by Mao Zedong to frame Chinese competition with the United States. The Biden Administration's implicit use of Realist logic, however, overlooks the significance of Xi's nationalism, threatening confrontation between the U.S. and Xi's CCP.

Xi's nationalism continues Mao's emphasis on the Chinese people, but frames U.S.-China relations in three dimensions: Chinese history, Asia-Pacific security, and Chinese domestic politics. The historian Rana Mitter (2020) has observed that resistance to aggression forms a rare source of domestic consensus in China's 20th century history, and therefore in the history of the CCP, suggesting that Xi may rely on nationalist appeals to in order to solidify his

¹⁰⁵ Daniel Kurtz-Phelan, *The China Mission* (New York, New York: Norton & Company, 2018), 315-328.

power. At the Chinese Communist Party Congress, in October of 2017, the CCP enshrined “Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for the New Era” into the party constitution, making Xi the most powerful Chinese leader since Mao Zedong and grounding the constitution in a newfound sense of Chinese nationalism.¹⁰⁶ October 19th, 2020 marked the 70th anniversary of China’s entry into the Korean War. For the first time, China used the opportunity to reconstruct its historical role. Cognizant of current U.S.-China tensions, President Xi hailed his country’s “victory in the war to resist American aggression and aid Korea” while releasing a trove of propaganda videos celebrating Chinese volunteer efforts during the war.¹⁰⁷ According to Xi, “Seventy years ago, imperialist invaders brought the flames of war burning to the doorway of the new China...The Chinese people [understand] that in responding to invaders, one must speak to them in a language that they understand.”¹⁰⁸ For Xi, Chinese nationalism must re-cast China’s history to prepare for competition with the United States.

Xi also adopts nationalist rhetoric to invoke Asia’s security, echoing Mao’s embrace of a postcolonial Asia. Before China’s most recent National People’s Congress, Xi claimed, “the East is rising, and the West is declining”, while cautioning that, “the West is [still] strong and the East is weak.”¹⁰⁹ In the context of his claims that, “The biggest source of chaos in the present-day world is the United States,” Xi appears to be juxtaposing the U.S. against the security of the “East”, guarded by China.¹¹⁰ At the National People’s Congress, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang bolstered Xi’s nationalism by applying it to China’s domestic recovery from COVID-19,

¹⁰⁶ “Xi Jinping ‘most powerful Chinese leader since Mao Zedong’,” BBC World News, October 24, 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-41730948>

¹⁰⁷ Chris Buckley, “In Xi’s Homage to Korean War, a Jab at the U.S.,” The New York Times, October 23, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/23/world/asia/china-us-korean-war>

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

claiming that, “Our people worked hard and fought adversity in close solidarity and with the unyielding spirit of the Chinese nation, thus proving themselves true heroes... This is the well of strength that enables us to rise to every challenge and overcome every difficulty.”¹¹¹ With these statements coming days before President Biden convened a meeting of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue—composed of India, Japan, Australia, and the U.S.—to discuss China’s rise and a regional response to COVID-19 in the Indo-Pacific, U.S. policy approaches towards China merit closer examination.

The Biden Administration’s resuscitation of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (the Quad) places the U.S. and China on the path to further confrontation by using the logic of great-power Realism to craft policy towards Xi Jinping’s fundamentally nationalist CCP. After meeting with the Quad, Secretary of State Anthony Blinken and Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin embarked on trips to Japan and South Korea, before Secretary Blinken led a meeting with Chinese officials in Anchorage, Alaska.¹¹² Bolstering U.S. alliances with Tokyo and Seoul to confront, “the biggest geopolitical test of the 21st century”, American officials sought to generate multilateral partnerships capable of deterring China’s maritime expansion in the South and East China Seas, in pursuit of a free and open Indo-Pacific.¹¹³ The underlying assumption of this strategy is that Xi’s China obeys Realist, cost-based logic, whereby Xi’s ambitions would be affected by multilateral security postures—a Realist theory of deterrence in all but name.

The historic geography of these alliances, however, illustrates that they will inflame rather than blunt Xi’s impression of U.S. aggression, by ideologically threatening Mao’s theory

¹¹¹ Amy Qin, “China’s Plan to Win in a Post-Pandemic World,” *The New York Times*, March 5, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/05/world/asia/china-national-peoples-congress>

¹¹² Steven Lee Myers, “Biden Goals Converge in Asia: Rebuilding Alliances and Countering China,” *The New York Times*, March 17, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/15/world/asia/blinken-japan-south-korea>

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

of security in a postcolonial Asia. As General Marshall embarked on his Mission, the partition of the Korean Peninsula had just begun, and U.S. forces were consolidating their naval basing in Okinawa and Guam. And by the time Mao established the People's Republic of China in 1949, Chiang Kai-Shek had fled to Taiwan. Mao's vision for Korea, Japan, and a consolidated Chinese mainland free from a rival hegemon in the Western Pacific never came to fruition because of America's postwar position as the chief naval power of the Asia-Pacific region.

The Biden Administration's pursuit of a free and open Indo-Pacific is arranged around this historic geography, with the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue framed relative to China's regional maritime expansion. In 2012, Naval War College Professor Toshi Yoshihara analyzed the island chains created by such history, with the First Island Chain consisting of Japan, the Ryukyus, Taiwan, and the Philippines, and the Second Island Chain centering on Guam.¹¹⁴ Yoshihara analyzed this geography through the lens of maritime geostrategy, arguing that China's strategists feared strategic encirclement through the framework of geopolitical realism, as articulated by Sir Halford Mackinder, Nicholas J. Spykman, and Alfred Thayer Mahan.¹¹⁵

Viewed historically, however, the island chains represent the long shadow of the 1945-1949 years; for China to accept this map would be to accept what the CCP believes is a revisionist theory of Asian security, relative to the CCP's founding nationalist creed. In his first address to a joint session of Congress, President Biden stated that he told Xi in a phone call that, "we'll maintain a strong military presence in the Indo-Pacific, just as we do with NATO in

¹¹⁴ Toshi Yoshihara, "China's Vision of its Seascape: The First Island Chain and Chinese Seapower," *Asian Politics and Policy* 4, no. 3, (2012): 295.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

Europe — not to start a conflict, but to prevent one.”¹¹⁶ By implicitly re-emphasizing island chain strategies through great-power dialectics in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, the Biden Administration seeks to apply the deterrent logic of geopolitical realism, but is overlooking the deep-seated, historic drivers of Xi’s nationalism. President Xi Jinping’s recent statements demonstrate that he shares Mao Zedong’s belief that, “The people, and the people alone, are the motive force in the making of world history.”¹¹⁷ In this sense, the Marshall Mission’s demonstration of how Realist discourses interact with nationalist movements proves relevant to U.S.-China relations in the 21st century, while outlining an initial question for further study: can U.S. foreign policy in Asia transcend the limitations of Realist discourse, in its second encounter with Chinese nationalism?

¹¹⁶ “Remarks by President Biden in Address to a Joint Session of Congress,” The White House, April 29, 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/04/29/remarks-by-president-biden-in-address-to-a-joint-session-of-congress/>

¹¹⁷ Mao Zedong, “The Present International Situation and the Fundamental Principle of the Foreign Policy of the Communist Party of China,” in *On Diplomacy*, ed. Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1998,), p. 31.

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