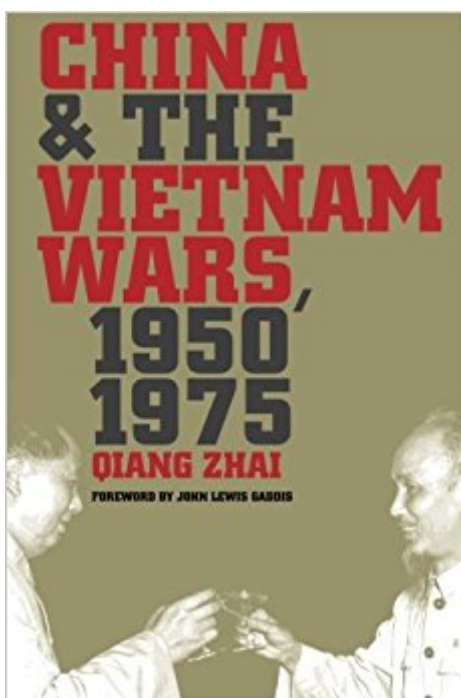


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China And The Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975 (The New Cold War History)



Synopsis

In the quarter century after the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, Beijing assisted Vietnam in its struggle against two formidable foes, France and the United States. Indeed, the rise and fall of this alliance is one of the most crucial developments in the history of the Cold War in Asia. Drawing on newly released Chinese archival sources, memoirs and diaries, and documentary collections, Qiang Zhai offers the first comprehensive exploration of Beijing's Indochina policy and the historical, domestic, and international contexts within which it developed. In examining China's conduct toward Vietnam, Zhai provides important insights into Mao Zedong's foreign policy and the ideological and geopolitical motives behind it. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, he shows, Mao considered the United States the primary threat to the security of the recent Communist victory in China and therefore saw support for Ho Chi Minh as a good way to weaken American influence in Southeast Asia. In the late 1960s and 1970s, however, when Mao perceived a greater threat from the Soviet Union, he began to adjust his policies and encourage the North Vietnamese to accept a peace agreement with the United States.

Book Information

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works on the subject . "Journal of Military History" "An engaging account of the thoughts and actions of the decision makers on both sides of the Sino-Vietnamese connection." "American Journal of Chinese Studies" "Fair-minded, clearly written, and deeply researched, Zhai's study supersedes all previous works on the subject . "Journal of Military History"

Zhai's engaging study of China's involvement in Vietnam during the time of America's longest war is packed with new information, much of it gleaned from recently opened Chinese sources.--Political Science Quarterly Drawing upon a wealth of new Chinese sources, Qiang Zhai has produced the most authoritative and balanced assessment to date of the complex Sino-Vietnamese relationship. His strikingly original book should prove indispensable to all students of the Vietnam War, modern Chinese foreign relations, and the Cold War in Asia.--Robert J. McMahon, University of Florida A valuable contribution, not only to the Vietnam saga, but also to an understanding of the Cold War and U.S. policies during that time.--International Law and Politics An engaging account of the thoughts and actions of the decision makers on both sides of the Sino-Vietnamese connection, the book constitutes a fresh and important contribution to the historiography during a crucial period of China's foreign policy.--American Journal of Chinese Studies The key role of Mao's China in arming and guiding the thirty-year struggle has only now been clarified by the researches of Qiang Zhai. . . . Zhai makes . . . many illuminating disclosures.--London Review of Books Sweeping in scope and rich in detail, [this] book provides the most authoritative account yet published of Chinese policymaking and the ever-changing relationship between Beijing and Hanoi during the period of U.S. entanglement in Vietnam. . . . Anyone interested in Chinese foreign policy, the international history of the Cold War, and the Vietnam wars will be deeply in Zhai's debt.--Journal of Cold War Studies Qiang Zhai's book is a must for those working within the field of Cold War history, but the subject should also stir interest among scholars in other fields. The book is well written and gives valuable insights into a so far hidden story.--Journal of Peace Research A must for those working within the field of Cold War history.--Journal of Peace Research Zhai's survey of Sino-Vietnamese relations makes an important contribution. . . . A significant, informative, and engaging new book in Cold War international history.--American Historical Review [A] thorough and detailed study. . . . Zhai skillfully illustrates how a nation's self-interest is at the heart of its foreign policy.--Choice Qiang Zhai's deft use of a treasure trove of CCP Central Committee documents he discovered in the Jiangsu Provincial Archives--and of a myriad of other Chinese sources--reveals the extent of Chinese support for the Vietnamese in their long struggle against France and the United States. Vietnamese efforts to belittle China's role will never again be taken seriously.--Warren Cohen,

University of Maryland Baltimore County
Chen Jian and Qiang Zhai have established themselves as the leading authorities on Chinese policy Zhai's study looks set to remain the standard work on the subject from some time to come.--Journal of Contemporary History
Deploying an impressive array of Chinese archival, memoir, and secondary sources, Qiang Zhai's outstanding study details the roles and illuminates the motives of China's involvement in the first and second Indochina wars between 1950 and 1975. . . . Fair-minded, clearly written, and deeply researched, Zhai's study supersedes all previous works on the subject and merits a broad readership by students of cold war international relations.--Journal of Military History
A useful and provocative book.--China Information
As groundbreaking as it is clear. Scholars who seek a model on how to state, construct, and support an argument can do little better than this.--Intelligence and National Security
A crucial contribution to the history of the Indochina wars because it offers a compelling description of the role China played in starting and exacerbating conflict. Zhai does an outstanding job. . . . Current debates about how ideology, culture, and external threats shape Chinese foreign and defense policy might be informed by Zhai's description of how China's leaders balanced competing interests during the Vietnam wars.--Journal of American History

Very complicated book because of how much info is in it. However with time, it will really give you a lot of information what was going on there and the reason of the Vietnam War

Qiang Zhai did a commendable job of revealing and analyzing new information from Chinese sources on the 1950-1975 period. China's role in both the French and American involvement was explained far better than previous publications.

China & the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975 examines the relationship between Communist China and Communist Vietnam in the course of the two wars in Vietnam: The first Indochina War and the Vietnam War (the second Indochina War). The author provides many interesting insights on this love/hate relationship over the two decades with documentary support from Chinese archival sources and published collections. The relationship between the PRC and the DRV was complex because of the influence of the Soviet Union over Vietnam and the role of the United States in the Cold War period. North Vietnam was able to take advantage of the Sino-Soviet conflict to receive aids from both masters, perhaps thanks to the U.S. escalation of the war which was perceived as threat to both China and the Soviet Union.
Chapter One: This chapter reviews the history of the Sino-Vietnamese relationship through the early contacts between Ho Chi Minh and the Chinese

Communist Party (CCP). During this time, Ho Chi Minh's Vietminh seized power in Hanoi in 1945 and began the war against the French, starting the first Indochina War. The CCP was fighting against the more powerful Chiang Kai-Shek's KMT forces. There was limited mutual assistance between the CCP forces and the Vietminh. Subsequently, after Mao founded the PRC in 1949, Ho vigorously sought assistance from the CCP and the Soviet Union. In their meeting in 1950, "Stalin told Ho that assisting the Vietminh was primarily a Chinese business" (p. 17). The author believes that the reason why Mao was eager to help Ho was Mao's vision of revolutionary internationalism when China was at the time also supporting North Korea. China's assistance to the DRV included both military and advice on land reform program.

Chapter Two: With military assistance from China and their advice on mobilizing a huge peasant support for the war against the French, the Vietminh defeated the French after the battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954. Zhou Enlai worked together with Soviet leaders in shaping their strategy regarding the Geneva conference. Under pressure from Zhou, North Vietnamese accepted the 17th parallel as the demarcation line dividing Vietnam into North and South, but this pressure might be perceived unfavorably by North Vietnamese negotiators (p. 63). While it is clear that without Chinese assistance, the DRV could not defeat the French, this period also started the beginning of friction between the two.

Chapter Three: China continued its military and economic assistance to the DRV, but the "increasing animosity between Beijing and Moscow caught the DRV in a dilemma" (p. 86). Ho "decided to talk directly with Chinese and Soviet leaders to appeal for unity" (p. 87) but Ho's mediation was "obviously not successful" (p. 88). Eventually, North Vietnam couldn't maintain a strict neutral position in the Sino-Soviet split and "would move closer to Beijing in its ideological orientation" (p. 91).

Chapter Four: The Geneva Conference on Laos brought a minor crisis. "Beijing and Hanoi increased their involvement in Laos" while "Moscow completely disengaged from the country" (p. 110). "Sino-North Vietnamese competitions in Laos constituted one of the reasons for the eventual breakdown of Beijing-Hanoi cooperation" (p. 111).

Chapter Five: Despite their minor friction over Laos, "Hanoi moved closer to Beijing in the Sino-Soviet dispute" (p. 123). Soviet's indifference regarding Southeast Asia further pushed North Vietnam closer to China. "Le Duan commended Mao's theory of revolutionary war" (p. 125). "Moscow's economic assistance and exports to North Vietnam dropped in 1964" (p. 128).

Chapter Six: The U.S. began escalating its military assistance to South Vietnam and attack on North Vietnam after the Gulf of Tonkin incident. At North Vietnam's request, China increased its military assistance significantly. "The total number of Chinese troops in North Vietnam between June 1965 and March 1968 amounted to over 320,000" (p. 135). This might reflect Mao's sense of insecurity regarding the American aggression. During this time, Hanoi was able to get "Beijing and

Moscow to agree on a new arrangement for transporting Soviet arms through China to the DRV" (p. 154). Chapter Seven: Johnson's escalation of the war created a dilemma for the Soviet Union because Moscow didn't want "a direct confrontation with the United States over Vietnam" (p. 158). Kosygin proposed to the DRV and China a peaceful solution but Beijing rejected the Soviet proposal. China continued condemning "Moscow's cooperation with the U.S. scheme for 'peace talks' on Vietnam" (p. 167). In turn, China clashed with the DRV's "strategy of negotiating while fighting" (p. 168) even though Hanoi might be only interested in "trick[ing] Washington into halting its bombing" (ibid.). Chapter Eight: The Tet Offensive contradicted to Mao's military doctrine and "revealed the independent nature of the decision making in the DRV" (p. 179). Sino-Soviet relations continued to deteriorate while Nixon "showed his desire to end the breach with China" (p. 181). The situation in Cambodia created tension between China and North Vietnam. Chapter Nine: "China's détente with the United States might push Hanoi further into the arms of the Soviet Union" (p. 195). The 1972 Spring Offensive showed Hanoi's miscalculation of the ability of Washington to react (p. 204). "Relations between Beijing and Hanoi continued to worsen during the remaining years of the war" (p. 208). In April 1975, North Vietnam succeeded in the war against the South. "In 1975, Beijing reduced aid to the DRV while increasing assistance to Cambodia" (p. 213). Tensions between China and North Vietnam were fully revealed during Le Duan's visit to Beijing in September 1975. The author believes that "it was not just the United States that lost the Vietnam War. China also failed in Vietnam." (p. 220). Mao was preoccupied "with the Soviet factor in the making of China's foreign policy" (p. 222) and that might explain the reason for Mao's willingness to tolerate North Vietnam's sometimes recalcitrant behavior. The author painted a vivid picture of the love/hate nature of the Sino-North Vietnamese relationship through the ups and downs of the world geopolitics during the 25 years from 1950 to 1975. The author took the view that the Vietnamese "had a tradition of looking to the Central Kingdom for models and inspiration" while trying "to preserve their independence and cultural heritage" (p. 6). This view is overly simplistic in light of the historical tradition of the Vietnamese animosity against China over a thousand years. The author did a good job in presenting the Sino-North Vietnamese relationship over the period in question. Without Chinese and Soviet assistance, North Vietnam would not be able to defeat the French in the first Indochina War (p. 62). During the Vietnam War, the Chinese assistance to North Vietnam was also much more significant than the DRV wanted to admit. The author provides a one-page description of all the military items provided by China to North Vietnam from 1964 to 1975 (p. 136). However, the overall presentation is mostly one-sided from China's point of view with only superficial treatment on what went on within the DRV leadership. In totalitarian regimes,

personalities of leaders contribute significantly to an understanding of the history. In this context, "Hanoi's War" by Lien-Hang T. Nguyen is a good complement to fill this gap. In addition, "Behind the Bamboo Curtain" edited by Priscilla Roberts should also be consulted.

Everybody already is familiar about the Berlin Wall and the Euro Cold War with the USSR. The Cold War with PR China in SE Asia, especially concurrent with the Korean Conflict in the early 50s, is not so well known. Using "declassified" Mao Ze-dong, Zhou En-lai and Deng Xiao-ping documents in PRC archives and CCP biographies and memoirs recently published in Chinese, China History Professor at Auburn U, Alabama, weaves a compelling, readable and understandable history of the early Vietnam War, especially before the January 1968 Tet Offensive. Not shy in sharing his sources, Zhai shows that both PRC and USSR were heavily involved in supplying arms, supplies and training with the North Vietnamese Liberation Army under Ho Chi Minh during the 50s and 60s. And Ho was clever in playing off PRC and USSR to get the best deals. After the NVA strategic 1968 Tet Offensive, Nixon attempted an end run with the PRC; starting with "Ping Pong" diplomacy p194 and the historic first US Presidential visit onto mainland China soil during Feb 21-28, 1972. Ho's relationship with Mao quickly soured, he turned to the USSR for assistance, and eventually declaring the Sino-Vietnamese conflict of 1979. Vietnam was united and free from foreign influence at last.-----Professor Zhai was a PRC native and began becoming a China history scholar at Nanjing U (near Shanghai) in the 80s. Then he earned his PhD in history from Ohio U, Athens in 1991. After more research, this is his second book covering PRC history since end of WWII. In the Acknowledgments section on p.xi-xii, he lists his mentors and colleagues that he has collaborated with since the 1996 and 1998 Asian Cold War / Diplomacy History Conferences at U of Hong Kong. This Reviewer recommends that using another book published at the same time to get fresh, fair and balanced POV of US-Vietnam war in the historical record. For example, Kenneth Conboy & Dale Andrade book titled "Spies and Commandos: how America lost the secret war in North Vietnam," was published by UKansas in 2000. Conboy and Andrade uses recently declassified CIA and DoD archives, where Ft Leavenworth, Kansas is the center for Army Command, Intelligence, and War College. Additionally to understand the Vietnam Conflict at the highest political level, watch former Secretary of Defense McNamara's autobiographical memoir video "The Fog of War (2004)," where Director, Errol Morris, won an Oscar for best documentary film. McNamara, 85 yrs old at the interview, was a bombing analyst during the WWII Japanese war theatre for Army Air Corp General LeMay and SECDEF for Pres Kennedy and Johnson. He had forecasted that the VN War was unwinnable, was fired by Johnson for his belief, and proved that it was indeed a Viet civil war at a

Council on Foreign Relations Conference in Hanoi, Nov 7, 1995 that included China and North VN delegates and war generals, especially Vo Nguyen Giap. All books and DVD should be in large university library collections.-----This scholarly book has 9 chapters and covers only from 1950 through the "Fall of Saigon" on April 30th, 1975. It includes the French loss at the Battle of Dien Bien Phu (53) and Geneva Accords dividing the country in 1954. CIA and Army support of the SVN Diem gov't and resulting PRC entanglements supporting NVN Ho Chi Minh. US-PRC Peace talks regarding VN 1965-68. Prof Zhai's book is illustrated with a map of the entire IndoChina peninsula and detail map of North VN, however, does *not* include the transport and supply routes from southern Chinese provinces, cities, and military supply depots and ports to support details mentioned in his book. His book does not include infographics that military campaigns and timelines that are in most US war books, such as from Time-Life World War II series. His book includes 16 pixs, usually diplomatic pixs of meetings. And there is one Table p136 which summarizes CN military aid to NVN by year. Aid items include guns, artillery, bullets, shells, radios, telephones, tanks, ships, aircraft, vehicles, and uniforms. It also includes 320K troops PRC sent to NVN between 1965 thru 1968, for defense, building infrastructure, and training. A total of 1.1K casualties and 4.2K wounded was incurred by the PRC Army. A secret depot was built in PRC's Hainan Island and Yen Bai in NVN p137 and connecting network of roads, river, and rail lines from the Yunnan Province border into NVN, Laos and down the border into Cambodia. The last quarter of the book covers an extensive 42-pgs of Notes and 27-pg Bibliography of sources, including many PRC articles from diplomatic memoirs and military documents, divided between English and those written in CN. There is a 9-pg Index. Conclusively Prof Zhai book is a book based upon great scholarship, yet gives a quite readable narrative for understanding VN-PRC history, and gives a new and comprehensive view of PRChina's substantial role in supporting Ho Chi Minh during his War with America.

This is very important history. For much of the last 50 years the history of Vietnam has mostly been one of the history of the Vietnam war, there has been little attention paid to the history of the country or its relations with its other neighbors such as Cambodia or China. Yet the Chinese relationship is immensely important. Even during the Vietnam war the relationship was very complex, especially in light of Detente. By the high point of Detente in 1973, Vietnam and China had many differences, not onyl culturally and historically but also in terms of power-politics. Vietnam became mostly an ally of the U.S.S.R. After the fall of Saigon and the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia things changed again and China demonstrated along the Vietnamese border and invaded the country for a few

kilometers to teach it that China was the boss of southeast Asia, not Vietnam. After all Vietnam ousted China's ally, Pol Pot, from Pnomh Penh. However this book does not make light of this, it ends in 1975 and for that this book is a shame for it should have continued the story. Nevertheless this is an important book and an important contribution. Seth J. Frantzman

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