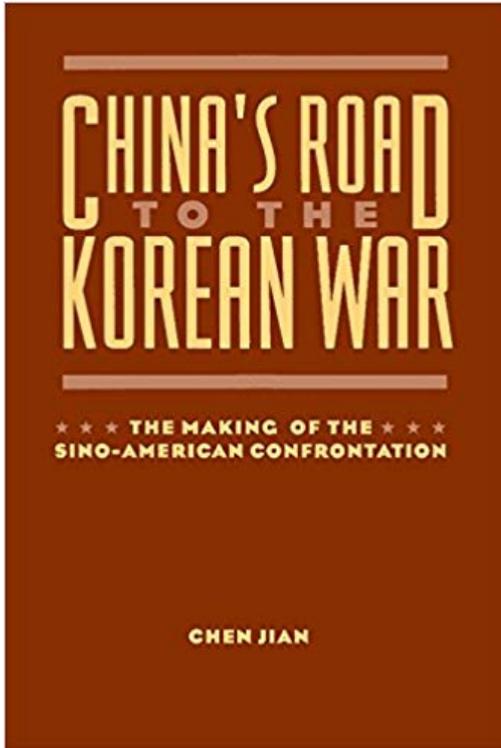


China's Road to the Korean War *by* Jian Chen



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ISBN: 0231100256

ISBN13: 978-0231100250

Author: Jian Chen

Book title: China's Road to the Korean War

Pages: 339

Publisher: Columbia University Press; Reissue edition (April 15, 1996)

Language: English

Category: Humanities

Size PDF version: 1425 kb

Size ePUB version: 1747 kb

Size FB2 version: 1904 kb

Other formats: azw doc lrf rtf

Through the use of recently released Chinese documents, conversations with People's Republic of China scholars, and in-depth interviews with people who were present at key decision-making meetings, this book aims to discover China and the USSR's roles in the outbreak of the Korean conflict.



Reviews of the *China's Road to the Korean War* *by* Jian Chen

Opilar

This book takes the reader back to a time when the thinking on all sides was different and when all the countries involved pursued their beliefs with determination though the beliefs forced them all to endure a horrible conflict. We see it in an especially interesting light now after the incredible progress and the development of true democracy in the South and the economic collapse and governmental horrors of the North. Truman's firmness with restraint look very wise now, although Vietnam shows that every situation holds its own mysteries.

Nettale

Ah, now here is an excellent book on the Korean War which meets several standards that make it required reading. First and foremost it contains evidence which places the role China played in the Korean War in new light. Second it is well written. Third, it manages to place the Korean War in the context of the larger cold-war/northeast asian conflict between powers without also getting sidetracked into every widening spirals of intrigue between European allies, Russia, China, and the USA. Finally the book is pleasant to read, which is not an easy accomplishment for a text that has so much new material to offer on a historical subject.

The insights begin right with the introduction, when it becomes clear that Jian has a more mature approach to the War and China's role in it. He assumes that China's motives were determined by the Chinese themselves: they were not, as many western analysts assume even to this very day, a 'response to American actions' and initiatives. There was much more at stake than just 'preserving the Sino-Korean border!' China had just re-emerged as a world power; it had aligned itself with Moscow; and it was anxious to appear in the vanguard of the socialist revolution. Given these roles Jian argues there was "little possibility that China's entrance into the Korean War could have been averted."

Chinese nationalism was rooted in part on their feeling of 'cultural superiority:' something we Americans should understand, as we feel the same way. China was, in those 1940s and early 1950s, re-emerging as a world power as it finally won its civil war with Chiang Kai Shek and re-established its territorial (Tibet) integrity and of course, sought to finish the job with Taiwan. Their task was to oppose (American) imperialism everywhere in the world, going so far as to neither trade nor accept aid from such nations. China was in no rush to be 'recognized' by foreign nations, nor did they acknowledge diplomatic initiatives and titles given by the old Guomindang regime.

China had to 'prove to the Soviets that, while they were an independent Communist state' they were not 'Titoists;' though the Chinese 'leaned to one side' (Russia) in their dealing with the superpowers, Russia was willing to let China carry the ball with respect to Asian revolutionary struggles. In a sense you might argue that Russia took responsibility for the European theatre and left Asia to the Chinese. The cooperation between Stalin and Mao with regard to Kim Il Sung's plans to attack the South, was discussed at length in Khrushchev's memoirs. The author believes that Shi Zhe's account was more detailed: Mao held great reservations about Kim's plan, even though he felt Kim would proceed with the attack in any case.

China's approach in asia was based upon its conviction that the Maoist revolution (1) represented a break from imperialism; (2) that it would inevitably spread beyond China; (3) it was China's responsibility to assist these other peoples with their uprisings, and (4) countries such as Vietnam, Korea, and Taiwan were the areas where these conflicts would be waged. China's support of Ho Chi Minh against the French was a test case of this doctrine. And since Koreans had fought with the Communists against Chiang in the civil war, ties between the countries were so great that a 'historian would have trouble explaining why the Chinese did NOT intervene' in Korea.

The outbreak of the war and American intervention was both a crisis and opportunity for China. They had expected war to breakout at one of 3 places (Korea, Taiwan, Indochina) anyway, and had downsized but strengthened their forces. They used the war domestically as part of a great mobilization to 'Resist America and Assist Korea.' By the end of July the 'Northeast Border Defense army' was in place. The Chinese followed the war closely and even successfully wargamed the In'chon landing, providing six reasons why that port would be preferable over Hungnam, Kunsan and others. Mao, upon hearing about MacArthurs' arrogance and stubbornness, stated "Fine! An arrogant enemy is easy to defeat!" Unfortunately Kim Il Sung was similarly arrogant and refused to pay attention to Chinese warnings about an In'chon landing. China was, in fact, rarin' to go into Korea by early August, but they had to rally the Communist party to their cause. In addition Russia

had still to be consulted and North Korea's leader still felt he could do it on his own. After In'chon the crisis became more acute. Using global statements and diplomacy that was straight out of the playbook of the American right, China urged the Russians to support China's intervention in Korea: if Korea was to fall to American/Imperialist forces, other countries in Asia, and Manchuria, would be menaced next.

From the Chinese perspective-especially that of the Chinese soldier, marching in the bitter cold-it is a pity the Stalin now showed his true colors and reneged on his promise to provide the Chinese troops with ammunition, air and logistical support. China decided to go in anyway-proof again of the authors central theme, which is that China acted in its own interests, not those of allies or opponents-but still, the seeds for the Sino-Soviet split were sown in those early 1950s.

China took three bitter lessons from the Korean War. First, Russia and Stalin were no more to be trusted than those dastardly western imperialists. Second, conflicts with the west could be used to strengthen the legitimacy of their regime domestically by rallying troops and citizens to the anti-western cause. Third, Mao realized that it took more than massive human waves to win a war. American technology had cost the lives of hundreds of thousands of Chinese. They would need advanced armaments, and an atomic bomb of their own.

Yozshujinn

For those of us who are students of the Korean War, one of the great questions was why did The Peoples Republic of China enter the war and why so late.

Up to this point CHINA CROSSES THE YALU , the Rand Corporation study published in 1960 was the reference.However, Chen Jian has done a masterful job of giving us China's perspective not only from the perceived external threat to her National Security, something that has been talked about and debated for years, but he gives us a new outlook as it relates to China's internal struggle and how it played a part in the ultimate decision.

All in all an excellent job on a very elusive subject.

Yla

this book was the most interesting and revealing look at how China made the decision to intervene in the Korean War in 1950. the discussion of the relationship between Mao Zedong and Joseph Stalin was fascinating reading. Should be required reading for China scholars and Cold War historians.

Ranterl

An enlightened perspective into China's decisions to enter the Korean War, a must read.

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