

Gallicchio Notes – “The Cold War in Asia”

In Asia...

Superpower interests less clearly defined (unlike in Europe)

More opportunities for taking risks

Less stability as a result

Nationalism in Asia fuels instability

Instability also a result of Japan's quick collapse

U.S. must contend with China, USSR, and nationalist movements.

Background --- FDR – What was his approach to the situation in East Asia?

FDR wants Stalin's help in defeating Japan and pays for it with concessions to the USSR in China.

FDR abandons his vision of US-Chinese cooperation once he sees Chiang is corrupt and ineffective. Instead, he wants US and USSR to stay out of China while it settles its civil war. (Once the Cold War begins, this is no longer a tenable position since it is not sufficiently “anticommunist.”)

FDR realizes colonialism is on its way out; but he delays the day of reckoning – supports the European powers acting as “Trustees” over developing nations until they are “ready” to govern themselves.

Truman maintains FDR policy – hope for a sudden surrender of Japan (A-bomb) but hedge bets by retaining Soviet cooperation to enter the war in August, 1945.

Japan surrenders. What happens next?

Scramble for control of key strategic points → USSR wants Manchuria; US wants Japan; both agree to divide Korea

Stalin plays a double game, officially supporting Chiang but aiding CCP when doing so undercuts American influence in northern China

US is disillusioned with Chiang and begins to pull back from Asia – preoccupied with Europe and the Middle East.

Chinese Civil War?

US backs Chiang reluctantly. US fails to learn the lesson that it is nearly impossible for foreigners to insure the survival of a government that lacks popular support.

USSR is ambivalent. A divided China might benefit Moscow. Soviets want to retain influence in Manchuria, which will be harder to do if the CCP controls China. Also, a weak China is not a threat to USSR

Why did the Chinese Communists (CCP) achieve victory? CCP is less corrupt; the Nationalists (KMT) is a party of landlords. CCP promises land to the peasants (bait and switch since the CCP will later take the peasants land from them and collectivize it)

What's going on in Korea?

UN trusteeship → ignores Korean nationalism and the notion that they might not need “tutelage”

Deep left-right split in Korea; Kim il Sung and Syngman Rhee are both fierce nationalists but ideological enemies.

Why did the US send mixed signals about Korea? What were the results of this confusion?

Secretary of State Acheson indicates Korea is outside US security sphere

Hearing this, Kim il Sung convinces Stalin to support his invasion of the South

Was Korea a justification for NSC68?

In a word, no. Korea was not a “manufactured crisis.” Far too simplistic an explanation. In fact, Truman feared Korea would undermine the policies NSC68 called for.

“Since military spending did increase, therefore the desire to push through military spending increases must have been the reason for the intervention.”

Completely discounts the notion that US officials actually felt threatened by Soviet military power in 1950 – they did.

- Soviet bomb

- “Loss” of China

- Sino-Soviet alliance

- Sino-Soviet support for Ho Chi Minh

- Assistance to Ho Chi Minh from China?

Why does Korean conflict end in 1953?

Stalin dies; new leaders are distracted jockeying for power and want the Korean situation settled

Churchill urges Eisenhower to negotiate with the Kremlin and pursue détente.

Post-Korea

Eisenhower wants better relations with Japan and China, but is subject to pressure from the China lobby and right wing of his own party

Jinmen (Quemoy) and Mazu (Matsu) crisis precipitated by Chiang

Some historians claim there was a basic failure to capitalize on Sino-Soviet tensions. But the Sino-Soviet alliance had been strong and Mao remained ardently anti-American, so perhaps “missed opportunity” is overstated.