

Examining the Influence of the Yalta System on the Development and Outcome of the Chongqing Negotiations: An Eastern Prelude to the Cold War

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Abstract: This paper investigates the impact of the Yalta System on the Chongqing Negotiations. It explores the hidden rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union during this period. The focus rests on their policies toward China and how these influenced discussions between the Nationalists and the Communists. Additionally, the paper examines the strategic goals behind the Double Tenth Agreement ("October 10th Agreement"). The study also links the Yalta System to the outbreak of China's Civil War. It highlights the Chongqing Negotiations' relationship with the international order established by the Yalta System. By analyzing both global dynamics, such as great-power competition, and domestic factors, such as the roles of the Kuomintang (KMT) and the governing of China (CPC), the paper offers a fresh perspective on China's Civil War. It further contributes new insights to the field of international relations.

1. Introduction

The Yalta System reshaped the global order after World War II and brought significant changes to East Asia. In this context, China's Chongqing Negotiations became a critical event. While these discussions appeared to focus on internal negotiations between the KMT and CPC, they had deeper global influences. The strategic rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union played a major role. The outcomes not only determined China's postwar direction but also tested the Yalta System's influence in the region. These negotiations blended international agreements with domestic compromises. They marked an Eastern prelude to the Cold War and a critical moment in postwar geopolitics.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Yalta's Influence on the Negotiations

The secret Yalta Agreement deeply impacted China. It was reached by the United States, the Soviet Union, and the United Kingdom in early 1945. This agreement directly affected China's sovereignty. One key provision granted the Soviet Union major privileges in Northeast China. These included

control over Lüshunkou (Port Arthur) and the use of Dalian as a free port. China was not included in these discussions. Later, the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Alliance, signed on August 14, 1945, formalized these terms^[1]. By doing so, the treaty allowed the Soviet Union to fully realize its promised benefits. This granted the Soviets dominance in strategic and economic interests in Northeast China.

The treaty also influenced the Chongqing Negotiations between the Nationalists and the Communists. The Soviet Union's gains in Northeast China limited its flexibility. On one hand, it supported the Nationalist government to secure its advantages. On the other hand, the Soviets avoided fully aligning with the Nationalists to prevent tension with the U.S. This created a complex and delicate balance. At the same time, U.S. President Truman issued a statement on August 15, 1945. He urged China to "avoid civil war." This reflected the agreement on "great power unanimity" made during the Yalta discussions^[2]. The U.S. stance added another layer of complexity to the already tense negotiations. As a result, the Chongqing talks became not just a domestic matter but also a reflection of the great-power rivalry in East Asia. The negotiations grew more fragile and uncertain.

For the Nationalist government, the treaty presented major challenges. On the surface, the Soviet Union promised not to support the governing .This was clearly stated in Article 5 of the treaty: "The contracting parties... agree to cooperate... under the principles of respecting each other's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and non-interference in internal affairs." However, the secret protocols undermined this promise. For example, the "Dalian clause" created a conflict of interest. It stated that Dalian would be a free port under Chinese administration. Yet, in practice, the Soviets maintained significant control over its operations. They required mutual Soviet Chinese agreement for appointing port management. Meanwhile, Soviet goods could be transported tariff-free via Dalian. These agreements, valid for 30 years^[3], ensured Soviet dominance over the region. These contradictions weakened the Nationalists' hold over China's northeastern provinces. Even before the Chongqing talks began, the Nationalist government was in a weak position.

From the Yalta Agreement to the Sino-Soviet Treaty, great-power politics shaped China's future. The government negotiations were largely influenced by this international rivalry. China's sovereignty was repeatedly compromised for the goals of the major powers. The outcome of these talks became a crucial factor in defining the postwar order in East Asia. This situation revealed China's difficult position in the global system. It also foreshadowed the struggles and choices China would face after World War II.

2.2 Great-Power Rivalry and Its Mechanisms

Stalin's telegrams to the CPC in August 1945 revealed the Soviet Union's strategies under the Yalta System. Between August 20 and 22, Stalin sent three telegrams to the CPC leadership^[4]. The first telegram, sent on August 20, coincided with the U.S. Army Department's decision to suspend military aid to China on August 18^[5]. This timing was no coincidence. It reflected Stalin's awareness of shifting dynamics in U.S.-China relations. In the second telegram on August 22, Stalin issued a warning. He said the CPC would bear responsibility for civil war if it refused to negotiate with the Nationalists. This was not just a warning. It was a calculated move tied to Stalin's strategic outlook for the upcoming U.S.-Soviet Foreign Ministers' Meeting in London, scheduled for September 1945.

All three telegrams, directly or indirectly, encouraged the CPC to negotiate with the Nationalist government to avoid open conflict. These messages had a strong influence on the CPC's strategy. After receiving Stalin's warnings, the CPC reassessed its approach to the negotiations. The leadership decided to make tactical adjustments in some areas while holding firm on core principles. This change showed how closely the CPC's decisions were tied to Soviet interests under the Yalta framework. Balancing international and domestic pressures, the CPC sought to protect its own interests while

trying to sustain domestic peace during the negotiations.

At the same time, the United States shifted its China policy. It moved from "mediation" to "limited intervention." Initially, under the Yalta framework, the U.S. prioritized stability in China to safeguard its strategic interests in the Far East. It aimed to promote negotiations between the KMT and the CPC, hoping for a unified and stable government that could block Soviet influence. However, as tensions between the KMT and CPC grew, the U.S. strategy changed. It turned toward a mixed approach, combining diplomatic mediation with military aid to the Nationalist government to influence the outcome of the conflict. This shift in policy showed deeper contradictions in U.S. strategy. Patrick Hurley, the U.S. special envoy to China, played a key role in America's efforts to mediate. His mission reflected America's broader postwar goals in the Far East. He aimed to help Chiang Kai-shek unify China under KMT leadership while integrating the CPC into a subordinate political role. Hurley's approach included a hidden formula: linking the level of U.S. military aid to the level of political concessions made by the CPC^[6].

In September 1945, the U.S. military mission in China proposed a plan. It recommended a 5:1 ratio of military strength between the KMT and the CPC. The eventual compromise adjusted this ratio to 7:1, a calculation reflective of U.S.-Soviet troop ratios in Europe, which were set at 4.7:1. This numerical reasoning revealed the U.S.'s cost-control approach to intervention. However, this formula failed to account for the realities on the ground. It underestimated the CPC's grassroots support and military strength. It also ignored the systemic resistance within the KMT bureaucracy to reforms. This led to the failure of Hurley's efforts. By 1946, full-scale civil war had erupted, shattering the fragile balance his formula sought to maintain. The breakdown of Hurley's mediation highlighted flaws in U.S. foreign policy approaches. It exposed the risk of using standardized foreign models in unique domestic contexts. When detached from the history and realities of a country, such models often miscalculate results and lead to strategic failure.

Under the Yalta System, great-power rivalry profoundly influenced China's political future. The Soviet Union worked to protect its Far East interests by shaping CPC strategies through Stalin's direct guidance. The United States shifted between mediation and aid to the Nationalists, reflecting its own calculations in the region. Both superpowers shaped the Chongqing negotiations, each steering the talks with its respective goals in mind. The Soviet Union pushed the CPC tactically, while the U.S. aimed to strengthen the KMT through aid and diplomacy. Ultimately, these negotiations became a battleground for great-power competition. They revealed how global rivalries shaped China's domestic path during the postwar era. The competing agendas also revealed the complexity of the international order during this critical period.

3. The Hidden Codes in the Terms

3.1 The Legal Trap in Article 10

Article 10 of the October 10th Agreement, also known as the "Double Tenth Agreement," addressed the issue of the liberated areas. The CPC demanded that the KMT acknowledge the legitimacy of democratically elected governments in these regions. However, the KMT, guided by Chiang Kai-shek's directive of "unified military and political orders," refused. It insisted that the CPC "hand over the liberated areas," "disband its military," and "surrender territorial control." This disagreement remained unresolved and became a major reason for the breakdown of negotiations.

From an international perspective, the failure of this issue was tied to the dual-containment strategy of the U.S. and the Soviet Union toward China. Article 5 of the agreement stated that "all political parties are equal and legal."^[7] However, correspondence between U.S. and Soviet representatives in China in November 1945 revealed hidden constraints. These communications showed that this clause implicitly prohibited any challenge to existing international treaties, especially the Yalta Agreement.

The CPC's revolutionary goals and its governance in liberated areas posed a potential threat to the provisions of the Yalta Agreement. This was particularly true for Soviet interests, such as its privileges in Northeast China, which had been agreed upon under the Yalta framework.

This tension limited the CPC's political room for maneuver. Their proposals in later negotiations, which included ending the KMT's single dominance, drafting a democratic constitution, and establishing a parliamentary and cabinet system, were blocked. Both the U.S. and the Soviet Union aimed to prevent a dominant political force in China from threatening their control. By intervening in the Chongqing negotiations, they sought to shape the political framework to fit their interests. Ultimately, they aimed to create a balanced but controllable situation where neither the KMT nor the CPC could rise unchecked. This strategy aligned with their broader goal of dual containment.

3.2 The Geopolitical Formula for Military Ratios

Military restructuring was another core issue during the negotiations. The debate over the proportion of KMT and CPC forces became a point of contention. In the end, the agreement settled on a 1:7 ratio. This allowed the CPC to keep 20 divisions, equal to one-seventh of the Revolutionary Armed forces. This ratio was not random. It directly reflected broader geopolitical calculations. Interestingly, it mirrored the percentage of territorial rights (14.3%) the Soviet Union obtained south of the 38th parallel in Korea^[8]. This connection showed how U.S. and Soviet interests influenced the negotiations in China. The U.S. wanted to reduce the size of the CPC's military. Shrinking the CPC's forces would weaken a potential Soviet ally and limit influence in the Far East. On the other hand, the Soviet Union wanted the CPC to maintain sufficient military strength. This would act as a counterbalance to the KMT and prevent total U.S. dominance in the region. The finalized military ratio was, therefore, not merely a domestic compromise. It was the result of strategic bargaining between the U.S. and the Soviet Union under the Yalta framework. Each side pursued its own interest in maintaining its sphere of influence while preserving a fragile balance of power. Ultimately, military quotas became one more move in the larger geopolitical chess game. This game between the U.S. and the Soviet Union defined much of the postwar contest for influence in East Asia.

3.3 The Systematic Collapse of the Northeast Conflict

In 1946, tensions in Northeast China escalated rapidly, marked by three significant events. From February 9 to 14, the Xiushuihezi Battle occurred. Lin Biao led the CPC forces and successfully destroyed part of the Nationalist Armed forces. This victory weakened the Nationalists and reduced their confidence. From April 18 to May 18, the Siege of Siping unfolded^[9]. Over 200,000 troops from both the CPC and the KMT fought in fierce battles near Siping. The Northeast Democratic Alliance Army (CPC forces) inflicted more than 16,000 casualties on the KMT but suffered 8,000 losses itself. To preserve its strength, the CPC made a tactical decision to withdraw from Siping.

On March 27, both sides reached an agreement to cease fighting in the Northeast. However, the Nationalists broke this agreement just four days later, on March 31. They launched attacks on key locations, including Yingkou and Anshan. These events collectively became known as the "Northeast Conflict." However, the U.S. and the Soviet Union played crucial roles behind the scenes. Under the Yalta Agreement, the Soviet Union gained special privileges in Northeast China. These included control over the China Changchun Railway and the ports of Lüshun (Port Arthur) and Dalian. The Soviet Union wanted stability in the region to secure its strategic interests in the Far East. Therefore, it supported the CPC's growth in the Northeast. It allowed CPC forces to enter the region and permitted them to take control of some assets left behind by the Japanese.

On the other hand, the U.S. aimed to contain Soviet expansion in East Asia. To achieve this, it actively backed the Nationalists. The U.S. provided military aid, helped move Nationalist troops to

the Northeast, and bolstered their military strength. These efforts aimed to increase American influence in the region. The Northeast Conflict revealed cracks in the Yalta System. The growing competition between the U.S. and the Soviet Union disrupted the balance of power in the Far East. Northeast China became a flashpoint in their rivalry, highlighting the Yalta framework's weakness and fragility in the postwar era.

3.4 The Formation of the "Asian Cold War"

In June 1946, the Nationalists abandoned earlier agreements and launched a full-scale offensive against Liberated Areas. The collapse of negotiations led to the outbreak of the Chinese Civil War. This conflict turned into an intense struggle. The U.S. and the Soviet Union supported opposing sides. The U.S. expanded its military aid to the Nationalists, such as through the Treaty of Friendship, Commerce, and Navigation (the Sino-American Treaty of Amity). Meanwhile, the Soviet Union increased its covert support for the CPC, focusing on the Northeast^[10]. This support allowed the CPC to access industrial resources and weapons left behind by the Japanese.

The Chinese Civil War became a testing ground for superpower competition. Between 1946 and 1949, the U.S. provided more than \$2.1 billion in military aid to the Nationalists. The Soviet Union supplied the CPC with significant resources, especially military and industrial assets from the Northeast. These interventions made China a key battleground for the emerging "Asian Cold War." Indeed, the conflict in China set an example for future proxy wars in Asia. Unlike the European Cold War, which focused on ideological clashes between states, the "Asian Cold War" combined ideological battles, liberation movements, and local power struggles. This distinctive form of conflict eventually led to the creation of rival political blocs in Asia.

By 1949, the CPC won the war and established the People's Republic of China (PRC). Soon after, the PRC signed the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance, and Mutual Assistance. This treaty strengthened the socialist bloc's presence in East Asia. In response, the U.S. built a defensive alliance in the region. The Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan (1951) and the U.S.-South Korea Mutual Defense Treaty (1953) established a Western-aligned network in the Pacific. These actions created the "island-chain strategy" and marked the beginning of Cold War military standoffs in Asia.

3.5 The Significance of the Chongqing Negotiations

The Chongqing Negotiations were pivotal in modern Chinese history and the broader Cold War. They revealed an overlooked "Asian origin" of the Cold War. The Cold War was not solely driven by European tensions. In Asia, it followed a different path. Great powers intervened in colonies or semi-colonies, turning local disputes into larger ideological and geopolitical battles. The Cold War model that emerged in Asia was distinct from Europe. Events like the Chongqing Negotiations and the Chinese Civil War broke the traditional focus on Europe and reshaped the global conflict. These developments profoundly influenced the course of postwar history in Asia.

4. Conclusion

The Chongqing Negotiations revealed the Yalta System's influence on East Asia. The talks between the KMT and CPC reflected not only domestic disputes but also global power struggles. The U.S. sought to establish a pro-American regime, while the Soviet Union worked to secure its regional interests. These rivalries shaped China's fragile postwar transition and laid the foundations for civil war. China's large size and complex politics challenged the Yalta System's application. The conflict between the KMT and CPC escalated into a full-scale civil war, marking the beginning of the Asian

Cold War. Unlike its European counterpart, this Cold War incorporated ideological, social, and regional complexities. This history underscores important lessons for international relations. Effective conflict resolution requires recognition of local contexts. Applying rigid frameworks often inflames rather than resolves tensions. Great powers must also respect local sovereignty when intervening in regional disputes. By adapting strategies to specific regional dynamics, global powers can foster stability and prevent future conflicts.

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