Zhou Enlai perceived | An assessment of his diplomacy at the Geneva Conference of 1954

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ZHOU ENLAI PERCEIVED: AN ASSESSMENT OF HIS DIPLOMACY
AT THE GENEVA CONFERENCE OF 1954

by

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B.A. Nankai University, 1982
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Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
The University of Montana
1994

Approved by:

Chairman, Board of Examiners

Dean, Graduate School

Date
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank the people who have contributed their effort and knowledge to make this thesis a reality.

Appreciation for assistance in the preparation of this thesis is due to the chairperson of the thesis committee: Dr. Philip West, who first inspired my interest in the subject, provided helpful comments and guided me in revising and completing the manuscript.

Thanks go as well to the thesis committee member Professor Timothy Bradstock, who gave me very helpful advice in correcting the whole manuscript.

I am especially indebted to Professors Paul G. Lauren and Michael Mayer. During the past three years when I was a graduate student in History Department at the University of Montana, Dr. Lauren taught me diplomatic history from 1815 to 1992 and the theories of international relations; and Dr. Mayer gave me his excellent insight of American history and scholarly writing skill. To Paul and Mike, I owe more, both intellectually and humanly, than I can ever repay.

Gratitude is also extended to Joseph J. Dilenschneider; a friend of mine and a writing advisor at the University of Montana and Sherry Petersen, a friend of mine at the Mansfield Foundation. Joe generously gave me numerous hours in correcting the final manuscript of my thesis and Sherry always encourages me to overcome various difficulties over the past years.

Needless to say, the shortcomings of this thesis are my own.
Zhou Enlai, the first Foreign Minister and the longtime premier of the People's Republic of China, made a considerable contribution to the establishment and development of a distinctive Chinese diplomacy, in both theory and practice. His legacy includes his diplomatic debut at Geneva, and his prominent role in China's tumultuous relations with the United States and the former Soviet Union.

In 1954, Zhou made his diplomatic debut at the Geneva Conference on the settlement of the Indochina War. Throughout the conference, Zhou's approach to international issues revealed that he committed himself to the standard norms and tenets of diplomacy: persuasion, compromise, reciprocity and, if necessary, the use of force. His active and flexible diplomacy confirmed that he pursued China's security and its own legitimate interests in a manner consistent with the rules of the international stability.

The author of this thesis made an effort to trace the historical sources in which Zhou developed his intellectual concept of world politics and diplomacy. The thesis revealed that Zhou and his generation as well prized such Western principles as national self-determination, sovereignty, reciprocity and equality, and they attempted to turn Western ideologies and diplomatic norms into a Chinese approach to diplomacy, which would accomplish China's purposes. With this knowledge of diplomacy, Zhou successfully impressed the world-level diplomats at Geneva and played an important, and in some cases, even a crucial role in the final settlement of the Indochina conflict.

However, at the same time, the thesis also points out that Zhou's diplomacy at Geneva should be assessed appropriately. Although he was accepted as one of the first-class diplomats of the 20th century, Zhou's view on world politics was pointedly Marxist-Leninist. He obtained his understanding of world politics and diplomacy from a historical context in which China was dominated by the Western powers. Therefore, Zhou was extremely sensitive to unequal and non-reciprocal treatment in diplomacy. Such a sense did not conform with Zhou's ideal of international equality in world politics. Zhou's role at Geneva should also be assessed properly in terms of China's domestic politics at that time, in which his views were always subordinant to those of Mao. In brief, as a controversial figure in China's history, Zhou and his diplomacy need further exploration.
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Bibliography
INTRODUCTION

In the annals of China's diplomacy of the twentieth-century, Zhou Enlai, the first Premier of the People's Republic of China (PRC), deserves particular attention. He belonged to a small group of statesmen who represented the establishment of the P.R.C. and who left a lasting imprint on the Chinese political scene. That political elite included Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping. Among them, however, Zhou stood out as the one who exercised a formative and powerful influence over China's diplomacy from the birth of the PRC in 1949 until his death in 1976.

Zhou's former aides and retired Chinese diplomats have unanimously recalled that, although he ranked second only to Chairman Mao in the formulation of Beijing's foreign policy, Premier Zhou was actually the founder of China's diplomacy. As the first Foreign Minister and the longtime Premier of China, Zhou participated in all of the major foreign policy-making and diplomatic activities. His legacy is embodied in his prominent role in China's tumultuous relations with the United States and the former Soviet Union. Zhou made his diplomatic debut at the 1954 Geneva Conference at which he played an important role in the settlement of the Indochina War.

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2 The Geneva Conference of 1954 was the first international conference at which China attended with other major powers to discuss a peaceful resolution in Indochina.
During his tenure, his statesmanship epitomized the foundation and development of a distinctive Chinese diplomacy, both in theory and practice, which continues to the present day. In the words of Qian Qichen, the PRC’s current Foreign Minister:

"Premier Zhou fully deserves to be honored as the founder and preceptor of new China’s diplomacy, to which he made the most outstanding contribution in an all-round way during his 26-year tenure as a [foreign] policy maker, commander, and practitioner.... His expositions on world politics and diplomacy are accepted as the theoretical basis of Chinese foreign policy today."  

Given his influential role in Chinese foreign relations, it is important to understand the intellectual development of Zhou Enlai’s approach to international diplomacy. There have been numerous Chinese biographies and writings on Zhou and his diplomacy. In particular, recently-published memoirs by Chinese diplomats have confided to the public what they thought to be Zhou’s diplomatic thought and style. With few exceptions, however, Chinese accounts have not yet moved beyond the "personality cult" treatment which regarded Zhou as the consummate diplomatist. For instance, Wang

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3 Qian Qichen, "Renzhen yanjiu Zhou Enlai de waijiao sixiang he shijian" (On how to seriously study Zhou Enlai’s diplomatic thought and practice) in Studies on Zhou Enlai, ed., p. 4.


Bingnan, a senior aide of Zhou in 1954 and Qu Xing, a diplomat-scholar, praised the Premier's "always correct" judgments, his notable wisdom and his realistic diplomatic style. But no one has seriously touched on Zhou's personal reflections on world politics and the nature of diplomacy in the conflict-ridden international system.  

Western journalistic and academic writings on Zhou's diplomacy have abounded as well. As early as 1954, TIME magazine called Zhou "the great dissembler" and described his job as making China seem bigger and more formidable than it was or could be for some time to come. In the 1960s, Kenneth Young, a former U.S. ambassador to Thailand, wrote, "Zhou is essentially the consummate political man.... who has spent his entire adult life working to increase Chinese Communist influence in the world." He made an effort to touch on a combination of communist ideology and nationalistic interest that determined Zhou's intellectual concept of world politics. Nevertheless, Young's analysis focused mainly on Zhou's style and his undisputed role in China's foreign policy.


8 TIME, May 10, 1954, p. 32.

9 Young, Negotiating with the Chinese Communists, p. 408.
In recent years, Ronald Keith, a Canadian scholar, provided a historical and theoretical framework in which to understand Zhou's diplomacy. He argued that the influence of Chinese classical thought and strategy, the entwining of modern Chinese nationalism and communism, and the thrust of contemporary Chinese politics "made up the style and the substance of Zhou's diplomacy." But Keith did not analyze convincingly how Zhou acquired and developed his outlook on world politics from those three intellectual and situational dimensions.

The biographies and the writings on Zhou's diplomacy, Chinese and non-Chinese, are helpful in understanding Zhou Enlai. Yet, they have paid scant attention to a fundamental question: why did Zhou try to pursue the goals of China's security and legitimacy through a "rational", instead of a revolutionary, diplomacy during the period prior to its admission to the United Nations in 1972 when China was an isolated, revolutionary power? In order to address this essential question on the attributes of Zhou's diplomacy, this thesis will attempt to probe his perception of world politics and the diplomacy he defined and tried to implement in the 1950s.

For that purpose, the thesis will refer to Zhou's own words as revealed in his manuscripts as well as China's diplomatic documents in order to reveal how Zhou perceived world politics and how he defined diplomacy in the international system of the Cold War. I argue that Zhou's pragmatic diplomacy stemmed from his realistic

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perception of world politics during the Cold War. Historically, Zhou derived his perception from two intertwined sources: modern China's contact with the West and the Chinese new generations' response to the Western impact. The influence of the West included liberal ideas such as national self-determination, sovereignty, and equality between states. Also involved were communist views on colonialism, imperialism, war, and diplomacy. No matter if they served the Chinese Communists or Nationalists, the competing ideas of the West exerted a deep influence on modern China and inevitably molded the views on world affairs of the Zhou's generation. As Teng Ssuyu and John K. Fairbank, two scholars of modern Chinese history, pointed out:

"Modern China, including the communist rise to power there, can be understood only against the background of its contact with the West.... The origin and growth of these forces--nationalism, party dictatorship, the worship of technology, and emancipation of women--all these are new elements inspired mainly by Western contact." 

Zhou's intellectual concept of world politics and diplomacy emerged and developed in the tumultuous context of China's contact with the West from the late nineteenth-century to the early decades of the twentieth-century.

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This thesis, however, does not purport to be an exhaustive and definitive treatment of Zhou’s diplomatic thought and his entire career. It will limit itself to an assessment of his diplomatic debut at the Geneva Conference. One of the reasons for this focus is that the Geneva Conference of 1954 was the first international conference at which China attended with the other major powers – the United States, Britain, France and the Soviet Union – during the heyday of the Cold War in 1954. The Geneva Conference was expected to relax tensions in Korea and Indochina. Beijing was not only proud of its presence at the Geneva Conference but also of its significant role in concluding an accord on the peaceful settlement of the Indochina war. As Robert Randle, a scholar of foreign affairs, put it, the Geneva Conference offered China the means for playing the role of a great power and... it was determined enough to demand a major role in world affairs.¹³

During the 1954 Geneva Conference, Zhou also sought to improve the Chinese security and to establish its legitimacy by diplomacy. His active and flexible approach to the Indochina issue revealed that he committed himself to the standard norms and principles of diplomacy: persuasion, compromise, reciprocity and, if necessary, the use of force. As Kenneth Young later wrote, "Zhou maneuvered imaginatively. Always striving to enhance the status and power of the Chinese People’s Republic, he used flexible tactics and various gambits to try to manipulate various agreements out of the Western

powers [including the United States]."  

Finally, in his conduct of diplomacy at the Geneva Conference, Zhou pursued China’s national interest in a manner not inconsistent with the rules of international stability. In 1954, he stated the "two camps" doctrine was not conducive to relaxing international tensions. Thus, he began to reiterate five principles of peaceful co-existence as a basis of conducting relations among states with different social systems in the bipolar Cold War. As Qu Xing, a diplomat-scholar concluded, Zhou’s conduct of diplomacy and his proposals in the mid-1950s represented "the essential traits of his diplomacy and his real thinking on the nature of world politics and the function of diplomacy."  

Before turning the spotlight on Zhou’s diplomacy at the Geneva Conference of 1954, it is appropriate to build a historical framework in which his intellectual growth and diplomatic career can be understood.

14 Young, Negotiating with the Chinese Communists, p. 17.


16 The five principles are: mutual respect for each other’s territorial integrity and sovereignty; Nonaggression; Noninterference in internal affairs; equality and mutual benefit; peaceful co-existence. see "Heping gongchu wuxiangyuanze," in Selected Works of Zhou Enlai on Diplomacy, p. 63.

Chapter I.

The Sources of Zhou's Perception of World Politics

Zhou Enlai developed his intellectual concept of world politics and diplomacy in the historical context of modern China's contact with the West and, in turn, of the Chinese response toward the Western impact. When Zhou was born in 1898, China under the Qing government had been overrun by the Western powers and, by then, Japan as well. Beginning with the Opium War (1839-42), the modern phase of China's contact with the West was inauspiciously opened by the Opium War (1839-42), in which the Qing empire was forced to accept the treaties system dictated by the Western powers.

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The Opium War was a notable turning point in Chinese history. The weakness laid bare by the British gunboats in the wake of the dispute over the opium trade inevitably in time forced on the Qing rulers a severe choice: the Qing court's extinction or the adoption of the treaties system dictated by the Western powers.

The Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95 once again revealed a China too weak to refuse anyone anything. Under such historical circumstances, Zhou and his generation were destined to seek to understand the West and Japan, and to probe the ways to reinvigorate old China with new spirit.

Mary Wright, ed., China in Revolution. (New Heaven, CT, Yale University Press), p. 4.

This war was fought between the Qing empire and Japan throughout 1894-95, resulting in China's conceding Taiwan to Japan according to the Treaty of Shimonoseki.
of the Western learning. After nearly two decades of confusion, debates, and domestic chaos, the leading Manchu and Chinese officials of the Qing court became convinced that imitating and adopting Western devices and institutions was a matter of survival. The simple line of reasoning in the scholar-officials' minds was that Western techniques were superior and therefore, the Chinese must learn and use these devices for defense. The slogan of the day became "Learn the science and technology of the barbarians in order to control them." From this emerged the Yangwu (literally, Western affairs) or the "Self-Strengthening Movement" as it was commonly known in the West. The Yangwu, which started in 1861 with the early promise, represented that Chinese scholar-officials clung to "the fallacy of halfway Westernization, in tools but not in values." In the following decades (from 1860 to 1895), the Qing regime indeed made definite progress in adopting the Western learning - from science and technology to modern diplomatic practice. In 1861, the Zongli Yamen (the Foreign Office of the Qing regime), was created after the European model. This creation, in the words of Masataka Banno, a Japanese scholar, marked a turning point in modern China's foreign relations.

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21 This proposal was initiated in the 1840s by Wei Yuan, a scholar-official. See John K. Fairbank and E.O. Reischauer, China: Tradition and Transformation, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1973), p. 309.

22 Fairbank, The United States and China, p. 196.

First, it was the end of traditional world order defined by China and of its old perception of world affairs. According to the traditional, self-central Chinese world order, the relations of China with non-Chinese were hierarchic and nonegalitarian. After the Opium War, however, the Qing court of China began to adjust itself to a new international order dominated by the West. Since 1861, the Chinese government learned to handle the diplomatic disputes with foreign powers according to European legal norms, such as sovereignty, juridical equality, and mutual respect for territory. In 1864, for the first time, the diplomatic officials of the Zongli Yamen acquired their successful experience in the application of Western international law. Despite their early rudiments, the diplomats of the Qing court conducted negotiations with the Prussian Minister, von Rehfues, and obtained his concessions on a maritime issue.

Also in 1864, Henry Wheaton’s Elements of International Law was translated into Chinese by an American missionary, W.A.P. Martin. Prince Gong, the de facto head of the Zongli Yamen, gave an order to deliver three hundred copies to local officials for reference. By the late nineteenth century, the phrases, such as international law, diplomatic equality, mutual respect for sovereignty - ideas

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learned from the West to use in argument with the West - began to appear here and there in state papers.\textsuperscript{26} However, primarily, the Yangwu facilitated the regular diplomatic contact between China and the West and involved China in an international system dominated by the Western powers.

In spite of this progress in the application of international law, European diplomatic norms, and modern manufacturing, up to the 1890s, Western cultural impact remained singularly marginal on the Chinese scholarly world. Chinese education remained oriented to the Chinese classical doctrines. Little had been done in the past three decades of Sino-Western contact to facilitate the intellectual communication between the Chinese literati and their counterparts of the West. Although the Tongwen Guan (literally, interpreters' school) had been set up in Beijing in 1862, its task was to train diplomatic officials and interpreters with subjects focusing on European diplomatic norms, law, and foreign languages. As Fairbank wrote, with an American missionary as head and a couple of foreign teachers and with the prompting and support of Sir Robert Hart, a British official, this new college soon had over one hundred Manchu and Chinese students of foreign languages and international law. Yet this innovation had to be defended vigorously against the attack of anti-foreign literati who objected to the teaching of Western subjects.\textsuperscript{27}

As late as 1894, in Chinese-sponsored schools, there was almost

\textsuperscript{26} Wright, ed., \textit{China in Revolution}, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{27} Fairbank, \textit{The United States and China}, p. 199.
no place for so-called "Western learning", such as the Western history, geography, and other social sciences. This amounted to an intellectual insulation of the Chinese literati. Thus, the majority of Chinese gentry-literati still lived in the mental universe of their own tradition. They became aware of their intellectual obscurcation only when national crisis was imminent.

The Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95 completely crushed the pride and complacency of the Chinese scholar-officials. This event was historically significant in two aspects. First of all, it proved that thirty years' efforts by the Qing government in the Yangwu were incomplete and therefore resulted in a tragic end. Second, it surprised Chinese scholar-officials that China could be defeated by Japan, formerly a cultural borrower from China but now Westernized. National crisis was accompanied by a sense of cultural crisis. The dual crises inevitably led the Chinese to question not only the institutional legitimacy of the entire traditional political order but also the tradition per se. Chinese culture was subject to reinterpretation and even renunciation. As a Chinese scholar Jerome Chen said, "Confucian confidence had gone and China was open to the penetration of foreign ideologies."  

The first wave of the Western ideologies penetrating into China in the wake of national crises were various political and social doctrines including early Marxism, anarchism, liberalism and modern

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29 Cf. ibid., p. 25.
nationalism. Among them, the most appealing was nationalism and sovereignty. Since 1900, national self-determination and sovereign rights seemed to appear on nearly every page one read and aroused the Chinese as a nationalistic consciousness.

Since the Yangwu era dated from the 1860s, China exposed itself to the influence of the Western values and norms. But most of them were specific, legal codes and diplomatic norms, rather than intellectual theories. These Western ideas were used conveniently in the negotiations with foreign powers when diplomatic issues arose. Only in the 1900s, did the Western ideas along with dynamic nationalism spread rapidly throughout the entire China. Western culture, including both natural science and social science, was introduced and pursued in all new schools. These new schools were either funded by the Western missionaries or were co-founded in accordance with the Western models. Nankai Middle School where Zhou Enlai pursued his education during 1913-17 was established along the lines of the Philips Academy model.

In these Western-model schools, the Chinese students were eager to be exposed to and then accepted a faith in Western values. They were determined to organize a modern, centralized nation-state, capable of restoring China's sovereignty and reinvigorating China with new political, social, economic, and cultural aspirations.

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32 Wright, ed., *China in Revolution*, p. 4.
This new, educated elite was in many ways the most important group to gain prominence in the future politics of China. Up to the end of 1910s, Chinese students, and youth generally, were excited over the prospect of China's continued reform along Western values and norms, arguing that China would in time be accepted by the Western powers as an equal member in the international system. However, the faith of China's youth in the Western liberalism was shattered to dust by 1919.

The year of 1919 was a watershed in the Chinese history. At that time, internally, Chinese parliamentary institutions based on the Western models were manipulated by corrupt officials and greedy warlords. The young Republic, which replaced the Qing regime in 1912, lacked the necessary authority and efficiency in nation-building. This result greatly discredited Western political values. Externally, the European powers did not fully recognize China's status, even though it abided by international law and obligations. At the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, the great powers once again ignored China's appeal for its territorial integrity. The Chinese were shocked by the news that the Western powers had denied China's appeals. Reflecting their resentment, the patriotic youth of China initiated nationwide demonstrations, strikes, and press campaigns on May 4th 1919. The "May Fourth Movement", as it was later called, represented the massive Chinese nationalism primarily concerned with the survival of China as a nation-state.33

After the Opium War of the 1840s, and in particular since the

33 Y.J. Zhang, China in the International System, pp. 74-76.
turn of the century, the Chinese intellectuals kept seeking an answer or a means of resistance to the expansion of the Western powers which by now included Japan, into China. The "May Fourth Movement" was a reflection of the continuing agonizing concern of Chinese new generation with the debilitation and dislocation of China in the international system even after their complete perceptual change of the world. However, internal chaos, external humiliations and intellectual frustration - all of these elements combined - turned many Chinese intellectuals, especially the young, radical ones, against their early faith in the Western liberalism and toward Marxism-Leninism by the end of the 1910s.

Under such circumstances, Lenin's theory of the oppressing powers in the West and the oppressed nations in the East provided a plausible explanation for China's failure to achieve its rightful claims in the diplomatic arena. According to Lenin's theory of world politics, nation-states, the basic unit of the international system, were dominated by classes having political power based on their economic ownership. Thus, class struggle became the law of society. Imperialism, as a social stage, was exclusively an outcome of the monopoly capitalism of the West. Capitalist monopolies were bent on exporting surplus capital and investing it in underdeveloped areas of the world for greater profits. The unceasing drive for colonies and markets in a world, almost partitioned by the Western

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powers, led inevitably to international imperialist wars for the ‘redistribution’ of colonies as well as to intensified national independent struggle in colonies or semi-colonies. Accordingly, the people and nations in colonies or semi-colonies played a significant role in the revolutionary struggle against capitalist powers. To achieve this end, according to Lenin, a disciplined elite and "democratic-centralist" party must assume the leadership of the revolution.

Lenin’s theory of class struggle and his analysis of Western imperialism, along with his renunciation of the special privileges extorted from China by tsarist Russia, had particular appeal among young, patriotic students in China. As Harold Hinton observed, "It was not only Chinese tradition that had become discredited; so to a large extent had its Western liberal alternative." The impact of Marxism-Leninism on the Chinese intellectuals became significant after the "May Fourth Movement" of 1919.

Zhou Enlai was a student during those years. Between 1913 and 1917, he studied at Nankai Middle School and pursued education in western history, world geography, and political theories such as Rousseau’s "Social Contract," Montesquieu’s "Spirit of Law," and Huxley’s "Evolution." Like other Nankai graduates, Zhou acquired a broad range of knowledge from Nankai’s Westernized and innovative


36 Hinton, Communist China in World Politics, pp. 10-22.

37 Ibid., p. 12.
academic programs. As John Roots wrote, "Zhou's whole Nankai career was an incredible tour de force—a clear indication of the shape of things to come."\(^{38}\) Four decades later, Zhou as the premier the PRC recalled, "I still thank Nankai school for the enlightening basic education that enabled me to pursue knowledge further."\(^{39}\)

Zhou was initially exposed to Marxism-Leninism in Japan.\(^{40}\) But he began to accept communist theory during his stay in Europe from 1920 to 1924. At that time, Zhou, like many student nationalists of the 1920s, looked to the West, the home of Marxism, for an explanation of China's desperate condition of internal chaos and external contempt. Zhou acquired his revolutionary vision in Paris, London, and Berlin. Although no record has been found that Zhou enrolled in any European school, his exposure to living in Europe broadened Zhou's horizons in regard to world affairs, political activities, and Marxist-Leninist theories. This new awareness made him well-prepared to assume a key position of political and intellectual leadership in Chinese politics when he returned home in 1924. Also in Europe, Zhou found communism compatible with his nationalistic and idealistic orientations. He believed that Marxism, especially Lenin's theory of imperialism, was an appropriate and convenient means of achieving China's long-aspired national salvation.\(^{41}\)

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\(^{39}\) Wilson, *Zhou Enlai: A Biography*, p. 36.

\(^{40}\) Zhou's two years in Japan were in many ways very limited although he early was exposed to the Russian revolution of 1917 there. See Chae-jin Lee, *Zhou Enlai*, pp. 115-116.

\(^{41}\) Ibid., p. 175.
More important, Zhou observed firsthand the social and political crisis in Europe. He also witnessed the domestic and international implications of the Russian revolution led by Lenin. His writings at that time revealed an appreciation of Lenin's realism and flexibility in his overtures to Western great powers in the post-war era. As Ronald Keith wrote that Zhou admired Lenin for signing the Brest-Litovsk Treaty with Germany and for his diplomatic overtures to the West. This was in fact a case of "uniting a high degree of flexibility with a high degree of principle" - a unity which was to become Zhou's own lifelong credo in foreign affairs.\(^{42}\)

Zhou prized the principles and language of European diplomacy, such as sovereign rights, national self-determination and mutual respect for territory. He regarded diplomacy as a means to achieve the end of national interest. At the same time, Zhou also adopted Marxist-Leninist theories on world politics. According to Marxist-Leninist doctrines, world politics was the external expression of internal class conflicts, accordingly, world wars were the result of imperialist powers seeking to avert their domestic social crises and competing for the overseas markets. Thus Zhou interpreted world politics in terms of both Western liberalism and communism - a powerful combination of viewpoints that exerted a great and lasting impact upon modern China.

Zhou became involved in China's politics in the early 1920s when he returned to China. During the decade-long civil war between the Chinese Communists (CCP) and the Nationalists (KMT), beginning in

\(^{42}\) Keith, *The Diplomacy of Zhou Enlai*, pp. 18-19.
1927, he became one of the dominant personalities in political, military, and especially foreign affairs in the CCP leadership. From 1936 to 1946, Zhou assumed many of the burdens of the CCP's external affairs. In fact, during this period, it was an important part of Zhou's "diplomatic method" to persuade the foreigners, in particular the Americans, to accept the CCP's analysis of Chinese political, military, economic and social conditions. John Service, a young U.S. diplomat in China at that time, was so impressed by Zhou's analytical abilities that "he loosely compared Chinese Communist approach to the rigorous techniques of Western social science." Thus, persuading and winning over of "good people" became one of the central tasks of Zhou's diplomacy.

In addition, he was particularly attentive to personal contact. He had extensive contacts with foreign diplomats, journalists, and U.S. military personnel who visited China during the World War II. When George Marshall, the private representative of President Truman, made efforts to mediate the conflict between the CCP and the KMT in 1946, Zhou favorably impressed him. As historian George Patterson reported, General Marshall spoke of Zhou with "friendship and esteem" and thought him "a shrewd negotiator and a statesman of international calibre."

Despite his notable activities in China's politics, Zhou never confided to the public his thinking on world politics until 1949,

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43 Ibid.

when he became the head of Communist China’s foreign affairs. During 1949-1950, Zhou presented a series of lectures on China’s diplomacy, world politics, and Chinese diplomatic strategy in the bipolar world. These presentations not only revealed his thinking on world politics and diplomacy, but they also set the keynote for Beijing’s future foreign policy. His writings in 1949-1950 offered insight into why Zhou tried to pursue the national interest through diplomacy rather than a revolutionary means while China remained an isolated power in the 1950s.

On September 9, 1949, before the foundation of the People’s Republic of China, Zhou presided over the draft of “The Common Program.” This program provided that, first of all, any foreign government which sought to establish diplomatic relations with Beijing must sever its formal contacts with the KMT regime in Taiwan. Second, the new government in Beijing would join the socialist camp headed by the Soviet Union. Third, there would be no concessions to the West for the sake of quick and easy diplomatic recognition.

"The Common Program" then established the basis for Beijing’s foreign policy and its diplomatic goals. It remained ambiguous,

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46 The full name is "The Common Program of Chinese People’s Political Consultation." This document, adopted in 1949, defined the basis policies of the PRC in the political, economic, foreign affairs fields. Until 1954, "The Common Program" functioned as the provisional institution of China.

47 Han Nianlong, ed., Contemporary China’s Diplomacy, pp. 5-6.
however, on the specific approaches to the conduct of diplomacy in line with accepted international law and norms. At that time, the Chinese leadership was divided over its foreign policy, particularly among the party cadres and the non-party officials who participated in Beijing’s government headed by the Chinese Communist Party.

On November 8, 1949, Zhou as the premier of the new regime came out to answer the questions on Beijing’s foreign policy. He was invited to present the first, exhaustive lecture on "New China’s Diplomacy" at the inauguration of China’s Foreign Ministry. This speech, along with the two more essays written in 1950, constituted the core of Zhou’s thinking on world politics and the function of diplomacy.

From the beginning, Zhou interpreted international politics from the perspective of the Leninist theory of class struggle. He accepted that the world was divided into different camps because nation-states were governed by ruling classes which were possessed of political power based on their economic monopoly. Accordingly, there existed two political-ideological alignments in post-WWII world politics. One was the socialist camp headed by the Soviet Union; the other was the capitalist camp directed by the United States.\footnote{"Xinzhongguo waijiao," (New China’s Diplomacy) in Selected Works of Zhou Enlai on Diplomacy, pp. 1-2.} Within the Cold War environment, Zhou believed that it was imperative for the infant regime in Beijing to join the Soviet camp for the reasons of PRC’s security and legitimacy.
In terms of the nature of diplomacy, however, Zhou argued that "diplomacy should not be limited to the two camps." He defined "diplomacy" as the conduct of official relationships between the governments of independent nations. He explained that politically, China had joined the socialist camp. But the Chinese government did not discriminate against any capitalist country that was willing to develop diplomatic relations with the PRC on terms of equality and mutual respect for territory sovereignty. Zhou deemed that nations with different systems could coexist in a bipolar world. On the basis of Lenin's theory of imperialism, he added that imperialism (here meaning the United States) would have trouble launching a new world war for three reasons. First, it could not mobilize sufficient manpower to start a new world war; next, its allies, such as the NATO, would not accept the U.S. adventures; and third, a powerful Soviet camp was an inexorable force to deter any war attempt by imperialists. Therefore, Zhou stated that China would concentrate its resources on economic reconstruction and pursue its security and legitimacy through peaceful coexistence. "Toward this end," he argued, "diplomacy was the first and foremost task."

At the end of his lecture, Zhou expanded on diplomacy. He stated

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49 Ibid., pp. 2-3. For further details, see "Omen de waijiao fangzheng he renwu," (Our Foreign Policy and its Tasks), p. 48.

50 Ibid., pp. 2-4.

51 For further information, see "Zhongsu diyuhou de guojixingshi he waijiaorenwu," (The International Situation and Diplomatic Tasks after the Signing the Sino-Soviet Treaty), in Selected Works of Zhou Enlai on Diplomacy, p. 12.

52 Ibid., see "New China's Diplomacy," p. 2.

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that "diplomacy embraces both unity and struggle. Strategically, we side with the fraternal states of the socialist camp, but also admit to tactical differences between those states. We are opposed to the [Western] powers strategically, but tactical agreements with them are allowed, too."\(^{53}\) He regarded diplomacy as the continuation of war by other means. In his words, "Military and foreign affairs are two kinds of fights: the fight of swords and the one of words." Zhou concluded that "diplomacy falls within the fight of words as opposed to the fight of swords. To be successful, it must be backed up by military power."\(^{54}\) In addition, Zhou spoke on the importance of 'diplomatic dialogue', stressing that "diplomacy implies patient intellectual communications for mutual understanding among nations because they have deeply-rooted divergences considering the races, religions, languages, and social norms and ethics."\(^{55}\) In this analysis of diplomacy, Zhou sensibly prized the conventional axioms of modern diplomacy, "the means at the disposal of diplomacy are three: persuasion, compromise, and the use of force."\(^{56}\)

From Zhou's perception of world politics and diplomacy, one can see the profound legacy of the Western impact on China. He regarded world politics as the extension of domestic conflicts, but he also accepted western international law, diplomatic norms and rules as

\(^{53}\) Ibid.

\(^{54}\) Ibid., p. 7.

\(^{55}\) Ibid., p. 6.

efficient means of resolving international crises. The salient point is these two different Western ideologies (the liberal values and Marxist views) were accepted by the Chinese as intellectual sources of their analysis of world politics because they found the western theories helpful in achieving China's own legitimate interests. As Teng Ssuyu and John Fairbank observed, with the help of the Western liberalism, the Chinese intellectuals had torn down the traditional Chinese system; but now, in the process of the nation-rebuilding, they turned to invoke the Soviet Union and its communist ideology. Striving for an independent and strong China had been a goal to which Zhou's whole generation aspired. They learned the Western ideologies to serve their ends.

As the Premier of the People's Republic of China, Zhou Enlai personified the attempt to turn Western ideologies and diplomatic norms into a Chinese approach to diplomacy which would accomplish China's ends.

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57 Teng & Fairbank, China's Response to the West, p. 240.
Chapter II.
The Search for Security and Legitimacy through Diplomacy

Upon assuming power on October 1, 1949, the first diplomatic task of the Chinese communist regime in Beijing was "to acquire the recognition of foreign governments and to enter the international community." At that time, Mao and Zhou regarded diplomatic recognition from foreign governments as a preliminary step toward the establishment of diplomatic relations. In an ideologically divided world, recognition might lead to peaceful co-existence with states of different social systems. With this belief in mind, Mao expressed his anxiety on the eve of the founding of the PRC. Shi Zhe, an intimate aide of Mao, later recalled that "Chairman Mao implied in 1949 if no foreign government recognizes the new regime of China in a few days, that would matter severely."  

On October 1, 1949, Mao, as the first President, announced the birth of the PRC to the foreign governments of the world. In his statement, Mao appealed to the rest of the world, saying that the new regime in Beijing "is the sole legal government representing the entire [Chinese] nation. It is willing to establish diplomatic relations with the government of any country which is willing to abide by the principles of equality, mutual benefit, and mutual respect for territory sovereignty." On the same day, Zhou, in a

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58 Han Nianlong, ed., Contemporary China's Diplomacy, p. 7.
59 She Zhi, "Accompanying Chairman Mao to visit to Moscow", in The Winds and Clouds of New China's Diplomacy, ed., vol. 2. p. 34.
60 Han Nianlong, ed., Contemporary China's Diplomacy, p. 7.
letter of transmittal to foreign governments, stressed that the new
government of the PRC needed both diplomatic ties with other states
and admission to the United Nations.

At that time, the responses from the foreign governments to
Beijing's appeal varied in accordance with their alignments in the
Cold War and their attitudes toward the former KMT regime in exile
on Taiwan. Zhou insisted that China should be flexible in order to
obtain the basic essentials of statehood: diplomatic recognition,
bilateral trade, and membership in the international organization.

Considering the new regime of the PRC within the bipolar Cold
War, Zhou stated that the People's Republic of China aligned itself
with the Soviet camp in order to achieve its security and economic
needs. Hence, he accompanied Mao on a visit to Moscow in 1950 to
persuade Stalin to sign the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Alliance and
Friendship. The treaty was specifically directed against "the
revival of Japanese imperialism and the resumption of aggression on
the part of Japan or any other state that collaborates in any way
with Japan in acts of aggression." Regarding its power in 1950,
Beijing's request for an alliance with Moscow revealed the concerns
of Chinese leaders for security, their ideological affinity with
the USSR, and both Mao and Zhou's perception of world politics.

With regard to the war-torn Chinese economy and its uncertain

61 Ibid.

62 According to Shi Zhe, Mao was accorded a grand reception in
the Kremlin when he arrived in Moscow. see The Winds and Clouds of

63 Han Nianlong, ed., Contemporary China's Diplomacy, p. 25.
status in the world, Beijing stood to benefit considerably from its alliance with Moscow. As Harold Hinton wrote, "The CPR regarded the Sino-Soviet alliance as its main shield and potentially as its main sword as well, against the imperialist camp." Following Moscow’s lead, the Soviet camp from East Germany to North Korea extended recognition and aid to Beijing. On October 23 1951, Zhou viewed the friendship treaty of the Sino-Soviet as a shield behind which, as he admitted, "China was not isolated in the world affairs and would pursue its domestic reconstruction."

Gaining diplomatic recognition from the Soviet Union and its allies represented only one aspect of Zhou’s diplomacy. He also informed the Beijing Foreign Service that the PRC’s foreign policy had to follow three basic guidelines. First, China needed to join in solidarity with nations of the socialist camp. Second, it should empathize with and win over the non-aligned states of Asia and the Middle East. Last, but not least, it would seek an understanding with the people of "imperialist" countries, trying to prevent the outbreak of war by practicing peaceful co-existence with the people of the [Western] countries.

On March 20 1950, when he addressed a group of high-ranking diplomatic officials on foreign policy, Zhou once again stated the significance of an active and flexible diplomacy. He reiterated

64 Hinton, *Communist China in World Politics*, p. 122.

65 Han Nianlong, ed., *Contemporary China’s Diplomacy*, p. 27.

that diplomacy must not be restricted to the two camps, and that China should increase contacts with each foreign government by virtue of diplomatic recognition, economic trade and its rightful seat in the United Nations. He confirmed the new government in Beijing was willing to co-operate with all countries and welcomed foreign aid on the basis of diplomatic equality and economic reciprocity. Because of Zhou's realistic views and flexible effort, The PRC established normal diplomatic relationship with nearly two dozen states in the first year after its birth.

During this period of tumultuous change in China's politics, Beijing's relations with Washington were complicated. The Chinese Communist victory and, consequently, the establishment of the PRC in 1949 created such a chasm between the two powers that neither government was able to bridge the ideological and political gulf. On one hand, the CCP political elite supposed that Washington would initially propose a new, equal relationship with the new government in Beijing, since the United States had "wrongly" supported a "corrupted" regime during China's civil war. On the other hand, the majority of American politicians were not ready to acknowledge CCP power in Beijing. As historian W.W. Stueck observed, "the Cold War had so come to dominate American's mentality that common bargaining was unthinkable with a communist regime that repudiated widely accepted standards of international conduct and showed open

67 Ibid., p. 11.

68 These states included India, Burma, Pakistan, Indonesia, Sweden, Switzerland, Finland, Holland, Norway and all members of the Soviet camp.
allegiance to Moscow."\(^{69}\)

In September 1949, Washington decided to oppose seating Beijing in the United Nations, moved its embassy from Nanking to Taipei in May, and in April even rebuffed Huang Hua, an aide to Zhou, who sought to explore the opening of "personal" dialogues between Mao and Zhou and American officials in the White House.\(^{70}\) Accordingly, China came to regard the United States as an ideological adversary and potentially a strategic threat as well. Washington's intention was perceived ostensibly as blocking Beijing's efforts to achieve diplomatic recognition and to enter into the U.N., which were the primary concerns of the new leaders of the PRC. As historian Steven Goldstein later wrote, "[CCP] statements about the United States were almost uniformly hostile. The animosity they reflected was both strong and clear. Any suggestions of possible ties with the United States were vague in 1949."\(^{71}\)

From 1949 to June 1950, Beijing's open hostility toward the United States included the detention of its diplomats on espionage charges and the mistreatment of western missionaries remaining in China. Still, as Goldstein discussed, "Beijing's policy and its conduct were constrained in what it could do by the weight of past


\(^{70}\) The author of this paper interviewed Mr. Huang Hua on this matter in the Claremont Graduate School, California, November 1990.

policies and perceptions, the pressures of domestic public opinion and international commitments." All of these moves and counter-moves made rapprochement between Beijing and Washington unlikely.

Despite its militant rhetoric, however, the CCP leadership was ambivalent about policy toward America. According to Harry Harding, a political scientist, "Mao and Zhou wished to maintain relations with the United States and other Western countries, both to acquire a wider range of commercial ties and to maintain a diplomatic counterweight against the Soviet Union." Before the Korean War broke out in June 1950, Zhou proposed that Beijing and Washington sit down and talk with each other in order to solve outstanding issues between the two countries. At that time, his writings had reiterated the theme that the United States needed to withhold its recognition of the KMT regime on Taiwan and to accept admission of the PRC to the U.N..

Ideologically, Zhou regarded U.S. power as superficial due to its inevitable internal economic and social crises. On the basis of his assumption, he did not consider the U.S. an imminent threat to China, though an ideological adversary. On the contrary, Zhou had proposed to explore a diplomatic contact between the two powers in

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72 Ibid., p. 23.


74 Liu Sha, "Zhou Enlai yu huifu oguo zai lianheguo hefaxiwei de douzheng" (Zhou Enlai and China’s Struggle for the Restoration of its Legal Seat in the UN), in Studies on Zhou Enlai-Diplomatic Thought and Practice, p. 271.
order to "influence American people and find the common ground." The Korean War broke out on June 26, 1950 and smashed any hope that the passage of time would allow the two countries to find these common grounds. According to Harding’s recent studies, the Korean conflict did not result from decisions made in either Beijing or Washington. But strategic needs and ideological empathy with an ally inevitably committed the two powers to intervene in the Korean War. On the second day, President Truman ordered the Seventh fleet to patrol the Taiwan strait, justified this deployment as a military necessity imposed by the Korean conflict, and implied no intention as to the ultimate disposition of Taiwan. Beijing clearly saw it as confirming a long-standing U.S. policy of intervening China’s civil war on the side of the KMT. Consequently, on June 28, Zhou delivered a strongly-worded statement, condemning Truman’s order as "an open, armed invasion of Chinese territory in total violation of the U.N. Charter." As the diplomat-historian George Kennan wrote in 1950, "American policy toward the rival Chinese regime is one sure to strengthen Beijing-Moscow solidarity rather than weaken it."

On September 15, 1950, under the command of General MacArthur, U.S. amphibious landing at Inchon was surprisingly successful and

78 Kennan to Acheson, August 21, 1950, Foreign Relations of the United States, VII, p. 624.

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thenceforth U.N. troops drove straight north. Given the rapidly changing situation in Korea, on September 30, Zhou publicly warned: that "the Chinese people... will not supinely tolerate seeing their neighbors being savagely invaded by the imperialists." The next day (October 1), the South Korean army crossed the thirty-eighth parallel as General MacArthur delivered an ultimatum to Pyongyang "forthwith to lay down your arms and cease hostilities under such military supervision as I may direct." This move alarmed Beijing's leaders who regarded it as unacceptable.

On October 3, Zhou formally summoned K.M. Panikkar, the Indian ambassador to Beijing, to a dramatic midnight interview. In their talk, Zhou drily repeated the points of his early statements that Beijing would never sit idly watching North Korea being crushed by U.N. forces which were actually commanded by U.S. generals. He stated that China wished to solve the Korean crisis at the United Nations but was ready to intervene in the Korean War. During their talk, Zhou also hinted of a possible compromise whereby China would intervene only if American forces, as distinguished from South Korean troops, crossed the 38th parallel.

Ambassador Pannikar immediately sent a report of his meetings


81 "Meijun ruyuguo sanbaxian, omen yaoguan," (If the U.S. Forces Crossed the 38th Parallel, We will Intervene), in Selected Works of Zhou Enlai on Diplomacy, pp. 25-27.
with Zhou to New Delhi, whence it was relayed to London and then on to Washington. Meanwhile, Zhou's warning was passed on through the Chinese Foreign Service to the British minister, Sir John Hutchin-
son, in Beijing.  

Washington ignored Zhou's eleventh-hour diplomacy. Historian Richard Whelan later wrote: one official of U.S. State Department awakened Secretary of State Dean Acheson shortly after 5:30 a.m. on October 3 and gave him the message from New Delhi. But Acheson just dismissed the warning as "a sheer bluff". At that time, Acheson believed that "it would be a madness for the Chinese to enter the Korean War when their major concerns were with Soviet domination along their northern borders." Since the Korean War started in June, the U.S. image of Beijing's possible response had been based on the twin assumptions: the legitimate interests of Beijing's regime were in no way threatened by the U.S. action in Korea, and that the Chinese had given primacy to their domestic needs. In fact, it was easy for U.S. State Department to dismiss Pannikar's messages; he was regarded in Washington as highly sympathetic to the Chinese communists. At this crucial moment, historian Burton Kaufman has argued, the difficulties of communication on both sides and false calculations on the part of the White House complicated

82 Keith, The Diplomacy of Zhou Enlai, p. 47.


85 Ibid., p. 82.
the problems of information and whence resulted in a distorted and unrealistic image of Chinese intention towards U.S. action in Korea. 86

But, why did Zhou not publicly issue a formal ultimatum to the U.N. forces in the Korea? The answer is probably that Mao and Zhou would have reasoned that a private warning would enable the U.S. forces to halt at the 38th parallel without losing face. Given their military victory, "American and the U.N. forces could then claim that they had decided on the basis of their own sense of justice and superior morality that now that the original goal of repulsing the North Korean invasion was achieved, the killing should be stopped and peace restored at once." 87 If people accept that Zhou wrongly chose ambassador K.M. Panikkar as a messenger, it was because, at that time, India, both a neutral and Asian state, stood as a likely link between the East and West. 88 In addition, Beijing showed goodwill toward New Delhi because India's silence in the wake of Chinese "invasion of Tibet" justified Beijing's action in that disputed area. Therefore, Zhou believed India politically preferable to more traditional channels such as Danish, Swedish, or Swiss representatives.

In October 1950, the Chinese regular army engaged U.S. forces in Korea. On October 25, Zhou addressed the Chinese People's Political

87 Whelan, Drawing the Line, p. 228.
88 Whiting, China Crosses the Yalu, pp. 110-111.
Consultative Conference (CPPCC) saying, "China and North Korea are close neighbors.... If we do not resist U.S. armies in Korea, we might 'encourage' its further adventures. Conversely, if we hit it hard, U.S. troops will be bogged down in Korea." In later talks to his aides, Zhou explained the reasons for Chinese intervention in Korea saying, "it is necessary to patch an umbrella before it rains (wei yu chou mu)."

As a new power so poor in comparison to the United States, China dared to challenge the U.S. troops in Korea only because, as Allen Whiting observed, China was motivated overwhelmingly by concern for its own security and the legitimate interests. At the crucial moment during the Korean conflict, Zhou played an equally decisive role as Mao did in the policy-making. He assisted Mao in making the decision to send the Chinese troops to enter Korea and, subsequently, directed the actions and measures of Chinese delegation throughout the Korean truce negotiations.

During the Korean conflict, the two sides tested each other at the negotiating table as well as on the battleground. By April 1951, the military situation on the Korean peninsula stabilized basically along the lines that had existed before June 26 1950. On July 10, the two sides, while continuing their fighting in Korea, agreed to hold truce talks on the discussion of the following

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90 Ibid. Here, Zhou justified China's action in Korea because U.N. forces approached to the borders.

91 Whiting, China Crosses the Yalu, pp. 151-153.
issues: military demarcation, arrangement and supervision of the cease-fire, withdrawal of all foreign troops from Korea, and repatriation of POWs from the two parties.

Both sides readily reached agreements on the first two of the four issues. Even the withdrawal of all foreign troops from Korea was to be discussed at a later high-level political conference which was assumed to be held in October 1953. However, the issue of the repatriation of prisoners of war delayed the process of the cease-fire talks for two years. China and North Korea reiterated that, according to article 118 of the Geneva (POW) Convention of 1949, POWs should be "released and repatriated without delay after the cessation of active hostilities," and "failing such a provision in the armistice, each Detaining Power must establish and execute without delay a unilateral plan of repatriation." In contrast, the United States and its allies insisted on the voluntary repatriation of POWs, with respect for the individual right of each prisoner of war.

At that time, the Soviet leaders, the CCP leaders, and the North Korean leaders had different attitudes toward the POW issue. Joseph Stalin made it clear at his meeting with Zhou on August 21, 1952 that "it is right to press the United States to change its stand... [because] it is illegal for the Americans to refuse to repatriate POWs." On September 1, Stalin again pointed out that "there is no


need to accept the American proposal on the POW issue, because [it] concerns our principles. We may detain either less than or the same number of POWs held by the enemy."  

Among the CCP leaders, the differences on the POW issue became increasingly obvious. On February 23, 1953, Mao addressed the CPPCC and referred to the Chinese POWs captured in the Korean War. Zhou Qingwen, one of the highest-ranking officials who later defected to the West in 1959, recalled that Mao declared vehemently, raising his right hand high in the air, "Every Chinese officers and soldiers captured in the Korean War must be repatriated."  

Mao explained: "We will agree upon a cease-fire only when the political and military situations are favorable to us. To accept the enemy’s proposal under pressure means to sign a peace treaty under coercion (jie chengxia zhi meng) which is detrimental to us."  

But Zhou thought it necessary to achieve a cease-fire in Korea as long as the status quo was restored and maintained. Accordingly, he proposed a more flexible position on the POW issue. According to Xia Yan, who was one of Zhou’s intimate friend, Zhou told Li Kenong and Qiao Guanhua, two advisors to Chinese negotiators during the Panmunjon truce talks, that "while we honor our commitments to our ally, we should also know when and where to stop fighting our enemy

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94 Ibid.


96 Shuguang Zhang, In the Shadow of Mao, p. 358.
He added, "Resisting America and aiding [North] Korea is to defend Chinese security and to honor our commitments to our ally. However when enemy asks for peace and enters truce talks, we need to make the end of warfare work to our advantage." 

The talks on POW issue remained deadlocked until March 1953 when Zhou was finally able to break the log jam at Panmunjom. Stalin's death apparently removed a major roadblock on the POW issue and Mao began to turn his focus from the Korean War to the war-torn economy in China. After his trip to Moscow to attend Stalin's funeral, Zhou held out a compromise designed to renew the deadlocked armistice negotiations. In his statement of March 30, he proposed that "in accordance with each individual's will and right, the prisoners of war who insisted on returning to the original side must be repatriated immediately; and whereby the POWs who failed to declare themselves in favor of repatriation would be handed over to the supervisory commission of the neutral countries for the final determination of their status and definite whereabouts." 

In the context of the post-Stalin uncertainty in Moscow and, by then, Zhou's insistence on a compromising approach to the issue of POWs, the Korean armistice agreement was finally signed by both sides on July 27, 1953. Thence Zhou Enlai could shift his attention from the Korean War to the broader diplomatic activities.

Reviewing their behavior in foreign affairs from 1949 to 1953,

97 Studies on Zhou Enlai-Diplomatic Thought and Practice, p. 22.
98 Ibid., p. 22.
99 Han Nianlong, ed., Contemporary China's Diplomacy, p. 56.
the new governing elite of China pursued two goals of security and legitimacy through diplomacy backed by power. They perceived and evaluated the events - diplomatic recognition and the Korean War - in terms of international law, actually invoked international law, modified the accepted interpretations, and practiced what law preaches.\textsuperscript{100} They were also well aware that "diplomacy without force produces a farce, while force without diplomacy can yield a fiasco. Without both diplomacy and power, negotiation with its adversaries was unlikely or impossible."\textsuperscript{101} Yet, the Korean truce agreement did not end the stalemate between China and the United States; on the contrary, their stalemate expanded to three fronts: the Korean peninsula, the Taiwan strait, and Indochina. Moreover, Washington hardened its efforts to block Beijing's admission to the U.N.. The Chinese leaders felt the huge pressure of diplomatic isolation and military encirclement imposed by the United States. Zhou believed it necessary to circumvent this U.S. containment policy of China. The 1954 Geneva Conference offered him such an opportunity. Therefore, he made his diplomatic \textit{debut} on a much broader international platform.


\textsuperscript{101} Young, \textit{Negotiating with the Chinese Communists}, p. 371.
Chapter III
Going to Geneva

By 1954, China had emerged as a new force to be reckoned with in Asia. Its young air force was equipped with the first-line MIG jets second to none in Asia except that of the United States.\(^{102}\) As Doak Barnett, a specialist on China's foreign policy has put it, "[China] loomed as the colossus of the East in the eyes of many Asians.... Beijing's demonstrated power now convinced many Asians that neutralism and accommodation with Communist China were necessary and desirable."\(^{103}\)

In the eyes of the Americans, however, the regime in Beijing was not only lawless, it was also a war monster. As early as 1951, the United States began to design its overall strategy aimed at containing China through deploying its forces to the Asian-Pacific areas. The policy-planners in Washington regarded Beijing's support for the Vietminh Communists, its involvement in the Korean War, and its ties with the communist rebels in Southeast Asia as convincing evidence, in the words of Harry Harding, that "Beijing's ultimate goal was the communist seizure of power across Asia."\(^{104}\)

On March 24 1953, Secretary of State Dulles warned that "our Eastern friends, from Japan, Korea and Formosa to Indonesia and Malaya, faced a single hostile front - Communist China. The Korean

\(^{102}\) Whiting, China Crosses the Yalu, p. 167.


\(^{104}\) Harding, A Fragile Relationship, p. 28.
armistice, even if it would lead to a political settlement in Korea, would not have ended United States concern in the Western Pacific area.\textsuperscript{105} Months later, President Eisenhower spoke to the Americans saying, "we won an armistice on a single battleground, not a peace in the world. We may not now relax our guard nor cease our quest."\textsuperscript{106} As strategic deployments continued between 1953 and 1954, the United States succeeded in concluding a mutual defense treaty with Taiwan and forged military alliances with South Korea and Japan. The establishment of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) in 1954 was ostensibly to contain PRC's influence and isolate Beijing in Asia. As historian John L. Gaddis stated: President Eisenhower and Secretary Dulles emphasized the deterrent power of alliances. Their aspiration was to encircle China with a ring of states aligned with the United States either by the collective security treaty - SEATO or bilateral pacts with South Korea and Taiwan... [with] the hope that a U.S. security "umbrella" over them would discourage Chinese attacks.\textsuperscript{107}

Under these circumstances, Beijing's strategy encompassed two aspects. First, China urgently needed to develop an ability to deter American attack or threat of attack. In an effort to achieve that end, Zhou tried to manipulate the Sino-Soviet alliance to the

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Chinese advantage. From 1950 on, Mao and Zhou looked to the Soviet Union for more advanced weaponry, including new missiles. Moreover, Zhou sensibly turned to Moscow for helping create an "environment" where China-U.S. contact would be made possible. According to Shi Zhe, "Since 1953, Zhou asked Molotov to help extricate China from the isolation imposed upon it by the United States. Molotov in turn promised that the Soviet Union was willing to make every effort to help China return to the world theater." In the 1950s, China needed an influential ally, like the Soviet Union, to endorse its claims to the legitimate interests in the world affairs.

Secondly, Zhou adopted a conciliatory approach toward the West and the other Asian and Middle Eastern nations in order to expand diplomatic and economic ties. On June 5 1953, he asserted: "The major contradiction in today's world is that of peace and war. We advocated the resolution of all international disputes through peaceful negotiations. We dare to practice peaceful coexistence and peaceful competition with different systems in the world at large; it is now the focus of our foreign policy." In October, Zhou declared that an armistice of the Korean War type would be possible in Indochina. Afterward, the Chinese newspapers began to reiterate the theme that "there is no international dispute that can not be settled through peaceful talks." On December 31, Zhou referred

108 Shi Zhe, "Random Recollection," p. 34.
110 Han Nianlong, ed., Contemporary China's Diplomacy, p. 54.
to the five principles of peaceful coexistence during meetings with the Indian delegation. He told his guests, "So long as the five principles are adhered to, any outstanding issue between states can be discussed on the table." Obviously, since the end of the Korean War, Zhou was eager to show the world that the watchword of Beijing's diplomacy was "peaceful coexistence" as mandatory to achieve its goal of security and legitimacy.\textsuperscript{112}

In an effort to realize Beijing's diplomatic goals, Zhou defined a series of specific measures after consulating with the Politburo of the CCP. First, he managed to maintain the status quo in Korea if not to solve all the outstanding issues through the political conference, which was scheduled to convene in October 1953. Next, Zhou insisted on the restoration of peace and stability in Indo-China through diplomacy instead of war. Last, he directed the communist forces of China to use military pressure against the offshore islands held by KMT troops. In December 1953, Chinese communist forces twice launched military attacks on the KMT-held islands. Zhou's goals were obviously to disrupt the growing strategic links between the United States and Taiwan and to force diplomatic dialogue between Beijing and Washington.\textsuperscript{113}

By combining power and diplomacy, Zhou's strategy eventually led to an expected result. In 1954, the world at large felt uneasy

\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., p. 63.


\textsuperscript{113} Wang Bingnan, Nine Years of Sino-U.S. Talks, p. 8.
about the confrontation between the wealthiest power in the world and the most populous nation on the earth. Some of the statesmen of the West and East proposed to convene an international conference, including the PRC and the USA, to solve the crises in the Far East. As Kenneth Young later wrote, the pressures and dangers felt all over the world in the mid-1950s, born of the uneasy Korean truce, the critical Indochina war, and the persisting clashes in the Taiwan area were the prime factors in bringing the Chinese and American to the negotiation table at Geneva.\textsuperscript{114}

On January 25 1954, as had previously been arranged, the Foreign Ministers of the "Big Four" (the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain, and France) met in Berlin to discuss the issues of peace and security of the world and the German question. At that time, the U.S.-China stalemate in Asia and in particular the Indochina war became the focus of the East-West conflict. Considering these dangers, the Soviet Foreign Minister, Vyacheslav Molotov, formally proposed to the Foreign Ministers of the United States, Britain, and France that a five-power conference including the People's Republic of China be held "to seek measures for reducing tension in international relations."\textsuperscript{115}

Not surprisingly, Secretary Dulles rejected Molotov's proposal and insisted on the United States would not agree to discuss the general issue of world peace at a five-power conference with the

\textsuperscript{114} Young, \textit{Negotiating with the Chinese Communists}, p. 23.

presence of the Chinese communist aggressors. He lashed out at Beijing’s foreign policy, arguing that "nothing that has happened up to date enables us to say that [Communist] China is willing to collaborate in effort to bring about a solution on an acceptable basis of Korean and Indochina issues." Yet, Molotov’s proposal was accepted by the British and French Foreign Ministers, who had considered that "a settlement in Asia occupied a higher place in their [strategic] interests."

At the Berlin conference of 1954, the British Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden, capitalized on Molotov’s proposal as a chance to seek to relax the tensions in Asia, especially the increasingly critical and dangerous Indochina war. In a letter to Winston Churchill from Berlin, Eden wrote, "[Americans] are at present strongly opposed to the idea of a five-power conference with China, mainly because they are not prepared to admit the right of Communist China to be one of the great powers in dealing with world problems.... their objection might be less if the conference were specifically limited to the Far East." Eden continued, "Mr. Dulles admits that non-recognition is no obstacle to meeting the Chinese and, in fact, the Americans are meeting them in Panmunjom." Therefore, Eden urged the Prime Minister and the Cabinet to favorably reflect upon the possibility of a five-power conference on the Far Eastern problems, if the Americans could be brought to consider it.

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116 Han Nianlong, Contemporary China's Diplomacy, p. 61.


118 Eden, Full Circle, p. 98.
At the beginning of 1954, it was clear that French efforts to crush the Vietminh insurrection were destined to early failure. Quai d'Orsay had disclosed to the British and the U.S. embassies in Paris that no French government could refuse a five-power conference which would offer an honorable means of bringing the war in Indochina to an end.\textsuperscript{119} Georges Bidault, the Foreign Minister, though urgent for truce negotiations, was tempted by his dream of making China cease helping the Vietminh as the price of her own participation in the Geneva Conference.\textsuperscript{120} Then, he accepted the view that it would be inexpedient to resist a proposal for a five-power conference confined to Far Eastern issues beginning with Korea. In view of great U.S. role in the world affairs, Bidault explained to Dulles with the persuasive argument: "China, as the real power behind the Vietminh, could no longer be ignored."\textsuperscript{121} Accordingly, Dulles conceded to Bidault the principle of adding Indochina on the agenda of a five-power conference at Geneva.

Under the pressure of U.S. allies and the critical situation in Indochina, Dulles modified his early rejection of the proposal by Molotov. In a private talk with Bidault and Eden on January 26, he told them that while he remained firmly opposed to a five-power conference, including Communist China, with a worldwide agenda, he had no objection to discussing appropriate issues with China. Afterward, Dulles indicated to the press that negotiations with

\textsuperscript{119} Cable, \textit{The Geneva Conference of 1954 on Indochina}, p. 43.

\textsuperscript{120} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{121} Gurtov, \textit{The First Vietnam Crisis}, p. 72.
Communist China were unavoidable because of French insistence.\textsuperscript{122} As a response to the modified stand of Dulles, Molotov, an veteran Soviet diplomat, also compromised by relating the Geneva conference only to the issues of East Asia.\textsuperscript{123}

After three weeks hard bargaining, the four Ministers came to an agreement first on admitting the PRC to the Geneva Conference. On February 18, the Berlin four-power conference issued a communique formally stating "that the problems of restoring peace in Indochina will also be discussed at the forthcoming Geneva Conference on the Korean question, to which representatives of the United States, France, the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union, the Chinese People's Republic and other interested states will be invited."

The Geneva Conference became a reality; it was to assemble on April 26. Beijing was invited to Geneva as a major power. But this historical event should be considered from two perspectives. First of all, China emerged as a new power in Asia, and had considerable influence in both Korea and Indochina historically and geographically. In 1954, although Dulles refused to admit the right of China to be one of the major powers in dealing with a worldwide agenda, America's allies, i.e. Britain and France, were ready to accept China's status in dealing with Asian questions. Thus, the British and the French persuaded Dulles to modify his earlier stand against inviting China to be invited to Geneva. Also important, perhaps

\textsuperscript{122} Ibid., p. 73.
\textsuperscript{123} Young, \textit{Negotiating with the Chinese Communists}, p. 35.
\textsuperscript{124} Cable, \textit{The Geneva Conference of 1954}, p. 43.
more important, was that from the start Beijing received Molotov's firm support for a five-power conference including China as a full member. At that time, Molotov adhered to his tactics of insisting on obtaining the convening power status and full parity for Beijing with the Big Four in the Geneva Conference of 1954. As Kenneth Young later put it, "Molotov had won a place for Beijing in the world's top councils for the first time in the short life of the Chinese People's Republic."

Because the Geneva Conference was the first international conference at which the PRC was invited as a "Major power," Mao and Zhou attached great importance to this opportunity. In March 1954, with Mao's approval, Zhou accepted the invitation and began to supervise the drafting of the key document "Our Estimation of the Geneva Conference and Preliminary Instructions on Our Preparation." This draft paper specified the strategies and ends that should be achieved at the Geneva Conference. It pointed out that "the United States, France and Britain disagree with each other, especially on the Indochina issue, and they have great difficulty in reconciling their views; the internal conflicts of the Western bloc could be further exploited to our advantage."

Based on this line of reasoning, Zhou directed his aides that "our delegation at Geneva should take all possible initiatives and seize every chance to contact the British, the French, and the representatives from the neutral countries.... [so as] to achieve

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126 Han Nianlong, *Contemporary China's Diplomacy*, p. 65.
at least a tentative agreement with them. We must try not to let the [Geneva] conference end without any result."127 He also stressed that everyone, no matter what his position, "must be well-informed and observe the discipline of the delegation in any way."128

As for the goals of the two communist powers at Geneva in 1954, Moscow and Beijing agreed on high-level principles, but each side had a different emphasis. However, their different emphases were not what as K.C. Chen's analysis showed in 1969. According to Chen, "To Moscow, China's participation in the conference was necessary for the settlement of international problems; whether or not China was a major power, was secondary. To Beijing, [it] was necessary because China’s power deserved such participation; whether international issues could be settled, was not primary."129 In fact, Chen misjudged both Beijing’s and Moscow’s chief concerns at the Geneva Conference. To Moscow, the need to assert the great power status of its Chinese ally, was then more important than its own agenda.130 To Beijing, the new governing elite felt proud to attend the Geneva Conference as a newly-recognized force. Yet, that was not their most pressing concern. As Qu Xing put it, Beijing hoped that the Geneva Conference would enhance the international status of the

127 Ibid.

128 Wang Bingnan, Nine Years of Sino-U.S. Talks, p. 5.


PRC, but the security of China continued to be a primary focus. In view of U.S. policy of aiding resistance to communism in Indochina and building a broad collective security alliance in Southeast Asia since the end of the Korean War, Zhou was primarily concerned that foreign military bases would not be allowed in Indochina and that military alliances of each Indochinese state with foreign power(s) had to be proscribed. As he later told the Geneva Conference on May 12, Chinese efforts were to prevent the formation of a U.S.-dominated alliance in Indochina and also the establishment of U.S. bases there.\textsuperscript{131}

Zhou was anxious to achieve substantive results at Geneva. In early April he made a special trip to Moscow to consult with the Soviet leaders on the upcoming conference at Geneva. According to Shi Zhe, an aide to Zhou, both Khrushchev and Molotov expressed low expectations on the Geneva Conference. Zhou, however, argued differently, saying "That China, [North] Korea, and Vietnam can jointly participate in the international conference, as the Geneva Conference is itself an unexpected event and is one of our [diplomatic] victories. It will be a bigger success if we can take explanations on some issues so as to resolve some disputes."\textsuperscript{132} Since it was the first time that Beijing had taken part in such an international conference, Zhou asked that "the Chinese and Soviet delegates must keep close contact, so as to exchange opinions and

\textsuperscript{131} "Guanyu yinduzhina wenti de fayan," (Address on Indochina Issue), see Selected Works of Zhou Enlai on Diplomacy, pp. 68-71.

\textsuperscript{132} Shi Zhe, "Random Recollection," p. 34.

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information, rectify different stands, and support each other's actions."\(^{133}\) The Soviet side accepted his request. As Khrushchev wrote in his memoir, "we all consider Zhou a bright, flexible, and up-to-date man, with whom we could talk sensibly."\(^{134}\)

During his stay in Moscow, Zhou continued to confer with Molotov and his advisors on foreign policy in general, on American motives and on the position that they might adopt at the Geneva Conference. Still as Shi Zhe recalled, "Premier Zhou carefully listened to the Soviets' views because at that time they had more reliable methods to acquire information on US foreign policy and had more experience in dealing with Americans."\(^{135}\) To show his sincerity, Zhou asked Molotov to teach the Chinese diplomats "how to act appropriately on diplomatic occasions" before they went to Geneva.

Zhou returned to Beijing on April 12 and reported to Mao on his conversations with the Soviet Union leaders in Moscow. With Mao's approval, Zhou proceeded to make final preparations including determining the composition and size of the Chinese delegation for the Geneva Conference. He also agreed to send a huge delegation to Geneva for the purposes of "expanding the Chinese diplomats' vision and increasing their experience in international struggles; and demonstrating New China's strength in foreign affairs."\(^{136}\) In view of the possible difficulties at the Geneva Conference, the Soviet

\(^{133}\) Ibid.


\(^{135}\) Shi Zhe, "Random Recollections," p. 32.

Union, China, and the Vietminh decided to meet in Moscow to confer with each other on the specific steps at the upcoming conference before they went to Geneva. On April 20, the Chinese delegation headed by Zhou left Beijing for Geneva via Moscow on a special plane. In Moscow, the Foreign Ministers of the three countries agreed to seek in every way to realize a cease-fire and define the partition line acceptable to the two contending sides, to take advantage of differences among the western powers, and to persuade France to accept the peace terms through diplomatic means backed up by military pressure. After this final pre-conference meeting, the Chinese delegation headed by Zhou and the Soviet delegation led by Molotov arrived in Geneva in succession on April 24. Since it was the first large delegation sent by Beijing after the new regime was founded, it was all the more conspicuous. Zhou Enlai, along with the other foreign dignitaries, became the central figure in the reports of the Western press.

Chapter IV
Zhou Enlai’s Diplomacy at Geneva

Geneva is a frequent site for international conferences, and the conference of 1954 was benefitted by both the United Nations Organization and Swiss hospitality. The Geneva Conference opened on April 26 and was equally concerned with Korea and Indochina.

For two centuries, Europe had been the center of world diplomacy. This was where the great powers conducted classical diplomacy, dominated Europe, and later influenced the whole world. Since China, an old, oriental empire, was forced to join the European international system in the mid-19th century, its status had been dictated by the European powers. At the 1919 Paris Conference in particular, China’s fate was at the mercy of the great powers. To Zhou, a college student then, the most unacceptable fact was that China had been aligned with the Allies during the WWI, yet it was forced to concede territory to its wartime ally, Japan, at the end of the war. Zhou’s lingering resentment was expressed at times during his talks with foreign visitors after becoming the Premier of the PRC.\(^{138}\) What did the Geneva Conference now mean to Zhou as the Premier of the world’s most populous nation? Did he come to Geneva, as Time described, "by standing before the world as the face and voice of a giant determined to shut the U.S. out of Asia, ... ambitious to build itself from poverty to power, whatever the cost in blood or sweat"?\(^{139}\) That judgment seems too extreme to be

\(^{138}\) Roots, Chou-An Informal Biography, p. 158.

\(^{139}\) Time, May 10, 1954, p. 29.
credible. Rather, Zhou came to Geneva in 1954 to declare that:

"The international status and rights of the People's Republic of China have been subjected to impermissible discrimination. The peaceful development and security of China are being constantly threatened.... It is clear that this situation should not prevail any longer. Our conference should mark the beginning of the change in this situation."\(^{140}\)

At the Geneva Conference of 1954, Zhou aimed to pursue what the PRC saw as its legitimate interests; in particular, its security and status.

The Geneva Conference was divided into two phases. One was the Korean phase of the conference from April 26 to June 15; the other was the Indochina phase from May 8 to July 21. The Korean phase officially convened on April 26 and included delegations from the Big Four, the PRC, North and South Korea, and twelve other states that had fought in Korea under the aegis of the United Nations.\(^{141}\)

By that time, the Korean issue, which had ended at Panmunjom, characterized the diplomacy of stalemate of the Cold War in Asia. According to Article IV and Paragraph 60 of the Korean Armistice Agreement of 1953, both belligerent sides agreed to hold a political conference on October 26 1953 to "settle through negotiations the questions of the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Korea, the peaceful unification of Korea."\(^{142}\)

But tensions permeated the negotiations at Panmunjom when the political

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141 Australia, Belgium, Canada, Colombia, Ethiopia, Greece, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, New Zealand, the Philippines, Thailand, and Turkey.

142 Young, Negotiating with the Chinese Communists, p. 24.
conference began. There was no exchange of greetings and amenities at any meeting. By December 12, nearly fifty meetings had been held with no agreement being reached. Since then, neither side ever resumed or settled arrangements for a subsequent political conference on Korea.

Moving to Geneva, the Korean issue entered an impasse soon after both sides began to discuss the role of the United Nations and the procedures in the political settlement of the conflict. The U.S. and the South Korean delegates, with the support of the Western delegates, were determined to see that the elections were observed and controlled by the United Nations, but the delegates from North Korea, backed by the Soviet Union and China, refused to accept this proposal. The North Korean rhetoric reflected its bitterness toward the U.N. which had condemned the North Korea as the aggressor in the Korean War. Nam Il, the Foreign Minister of the North Korea, insisted that a national election in Korea should be conducted by an all-Korean electoral commission, and that this commission be composed of equal numbers of members from North and South Korea in the important task of drafting an election law and implementing election.143 However, during the Korean phase of the Geneva Conference, various East-West proposals for a peaceful settlement in Korea failed to bring about the merger of the Communist and non-communist parts of a divided Korea.

Neither the positions of North and South Korea nor their allies' agendas changed appreciably throughout May. By then, Eden, Bidault,

and Paul Spaak, Belgium's Foreign Minister, underscored the need for U.N. supervision of an all-Korean election, which would have to take into account the distribution of population in both North and South Korea. Zhou argued that the U.N. had deprived itself of the right to supervise elections by virtue of its "illegal" intervention in the Korean War. He insisted that the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Korea was the precondition for the Korean people freely expressing their will in elections without external interference. Meanwhile, Zhou added that "China would not oppose international supervision of all-Korean general elections, provided that international supervision was implemented by neutral states, rather than the United Nations."145

According to Handle, Zhou’s bitterness toward the U.N. was caused in part by the ends to which the United Nations lent itself in the Korean War, and in part by Beijing’s exclusion from U.N. membership due to the American manipulation.146 While maintaining his opposition to U.N. supervision of all-Korean elections, Zhou nevertheless suggested on May 12 that the participants ought not let the conference remain at an impasse for any length of time over the question of the U.N. role in the settlement. He argued that the representatives should be aware that this conference was held for the purpose of finding other ways to achieve a reasonable solution of the Korean issue. But due to the uncompromising positions of the

144 Ibid.

145 Han Nianlong, ed., Contemporary China’s Diplomacy, p. 52.

146 Randle, Geneva 1954, p. 166.
two sides on the role of the U.N. in all-Korean elections, the discussion made no progress until May 14 when the formal Korean session was recessed.

Plenary sessions on Korea were resumed on May 22, and continued on until June 15. Yet there was no sign of an immediate reconciliation of views on either side. On June 15, the last discussion on the Korean issue once again revealed the impossibility of reaching an agreement on the authority of the U.N. and the principles of free elections in the whole Korea. Even when there was hardly any chance for an agreement on Korea, however, Zhou proposed that "the participants agree to continue the efforts toward achieving a peaceful settlement in Korea and consider resuming possible negotiations at appropriate time and place." But Bedell Smith, the U.S. chief deputy, stressed that "the Korean armistice agreement (paragraph 62), which had been approved by the U.N. on August 28, 1953 contained more formal and exact terms for the maintenance of peace in Korea than did anyone's proposal." In rebuttal, Zhou argued that only the two contending sides were bound by the truce agreement and that because this Conference had been convened on a broader basis, it must, therefore, have its own agreement. He added that "if this international conference failed to conclude a basic, peaceful accord on the basis of consultation and reconciliation, it would look bad in the eyes of the international community."

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147 Han Nianlong, ed., Contemporary China's Diplomacy, p. 54.
149 Han Nianlong, ed., Contemporary China's Diplomacy, p. 54.
Sir Anthony Eden, who chaired the last session, mediated by suggesting that all the proposals made on that day, together with the interpretive and critical statements, be made a part of the conference record. There seemed to be no objections to his suggestion, and he brought the meeting to a close. Therefore, the Korea phase of the Geneva conference, for all practical purposes, ended in failure. A witness to the events later recalled that Zhou revealed regret over the rejection of his proposal relating to future efforts by the participants of the conference toward unifying Korea. He complained that "there was no express provision that recorded the desire of the United States as a big power to achieve a peaceful settlement in Korea. That would have helped the world be aware how it [the U.S.] tries to sabotage reaching a peaceful resolution at the Geneva Conference."150

It is certain that Zhou was dissatisfied with the result of the Korean session of the Geneva Conference. In later talks with his intimate aides, Zhou complained that both Dulles and Molotov were too stubborn to make any compromise on the Korean issue.151 Yet Zhou also believed that the Korean armistice agreement, which had been approved by the United Nations, had international legal validity. In order to prevent the Geneva Conference from ending without any result, Zhou pressed for continued discussion. He stated that the PRC delegation had brought with it the spirit of negotiation and reconciliation to participate for the first time in

150 Ibid., p. 54.
151 Studies on Zhou Enlai-Diplomatic Thought & Practice, p. 22.
this international conference. To that end, Zhou proposed to the Conference "Taking those views that were shared in common as a positive basis for moving forward in the talks and, meanwhile, in the areas where disagreements existed, seeking a method for their solution." Once the stalemated Korean Conference came to an end on June 15, Zhou now was able to concentrate on the Indochina issue, which was his primary concern at Geneva.

While the Korean sessions were bogged down in debate, Eden, the British Foreign Secretary and one of the co-chairmen of the conference, proposed to prepare for the Indochina discussions. In early May, Eden first persuaded Bidault to agree to start discussing the Indochina issue on May 8, cleared this with Bedell Smith, and then obtained Molotov's concurrence. As a result, the Indochina session was scheduled to begin on May 8 in the Palais des Nations. The participants included the delegations of the five major powers, North and South Vietnam, and the Laotian and the Cambodian royal governments.

At the time the Geneva Conference started, the fighting between the French and the Vietminh had been going on for almost eight years. By 1954, the military situation in Indochina was detrimental to the French and its allies. Both the French and the Vietminh, having different motives, agreed to stop fighting. To the French, it was clear that their military efforts to crush the Vietminh had become impossible. In addition, French public opinion pressed hard on the French government to withdraw from Indochina on any terms

that could be negotiated with the Vietminh. But the French government hoped to avoid entering into bilateral talks from a position of weakness. The Vietminh, however, had confidence in the strength of their hand: in the field or at the table. In 1954, while his guerrilla forces intensified their fighting, Ho Chi Minh offered through the Swedish diplomats to negotiate a truce with the French.

Moving to Geneva, the nature and extent of the truce terms proposed by the two sides were too divergent for an immediate agreement to be reached. The news of the fall of Dien Bien Phu came to Geneva just before the Indochina conference finally started on May 8. No doubt this news, so shattering to the French delegation, greatly encouraged the Vietminh deputies. The early differences loomed larger than before on such issues as the cessation of hostilities between the French and the Vietminh, the partition line in Vietnam, the neutralization of Laos and Cambodia, and the membership of the international supervisory commission. During the conference, Pham Van Dong, the head of the Vietminh delegation, became more inflexible on the terms. The Indochina talks from May 8 to June 15 moved very slowly, except that the military staffs of the two sides met on May 19 to discuss the evacuation of the sick and wounded prisoners from the fighting areas.154

When the news of the Vietminh’s victory at Dien Bien Phu reached Geneva on May 7, Zhou was enthusiastic. He calculated that after

154 Ibid., p. 87.
such a defeat, the French would no longer hesitate to accept a solution to the Indochina problem, and that the British would certainly lend their support to the French. Without British and French cooperation, the U.S. would have to accept a peaceful settlement in Indochina. At the same time Zhou was also aware that the Vietminh had become uncompromising on the truce terms since the Dien Bien Phu campaign. The Vietminh were concerned with their growing military might and determined to drive the French out of Indochina. Ho Chi Minh even called on his army and people to fight for a "final victory" in Vietnam.

Now that the Vietminh had changed their promise to reach a truce with the French as early as possible, Zhou had to deal with the thorny problem of how to persuade his ally to accept a resolution to which both sides could agree upon. Considering the possibility of U.S. intervention in Indochina since May, he insisted on the cessation of hostilities throughout Indochina and resumption of an immediate negotiations between the French the Vietminh. In an effort to accomplish his ends, he had to persuade the two parties, especially the Vietminh, to make the necessary compromises on terms during the Indochina session.

According to Chinese diplomatic journals, before leaving for Geneva in April, Zhou agreed to help win a substantial victory on the Vietnamese battleground before the Geneva Conference formally

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155 Zhang Shuguang, In the Shadow of Mao, p. 360.
began. Thus, he instructed Chinese Military Advisors Group (CMAG) in Vietnam: "In order to achieve a victory in the diplomatic field, you may need to consider if you could follow our experiences on the eve of the Korean armistice to win several battles in Vietnam." In May, Chinese artillery units and military advisors became involved in the Dien Bien Phu campaign. At that time, Zhou had plan to force the French to sit down and hold the truce talks with the Vietminh. This way, the latter could bargain with their adversary from a position of strength. Contemporary United States documents describe the Vietminh victory as "a major political victory to influence public opinion in France,.... designed to afford the Communists a position of strength from which to negotiate at Geneva." 

The Dien Bien Phu campaign realized Zhou's end in terms of the French position. After May 8, the French became more anxious to end the conflict, provided the Vietminh withdrew its "invading forces" from Laos and Cambodia simultaneously. Thus, the French offered a mutually acceptable partition proposal. However, the Vietminh became inflexible on two questions. First, they still refused to admit that there were several Vietminh battalions in Laos and Cambodia. They also insisted on the 16th parallel as the one and only partition line. Under such circumstances, Zhou needed to persuade his ally to make concessions on the partition line and on

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the withdrawal of Vietminh forces from Laos and Cambodia.

On May 12, the third plenary session on Indochina was held. Zhou told the conference that "the deputies assembled in Geneva should discuss the ways of ending the conflict and of restoring peace in Indochina as effectively as possible." Toward that end, he also proposed, "it is essential on the basis of recognizing the national rights of Indochina people to seek terms that will be considered honorable, fair, and reasonable by the various sides concerned, and to take effective measures so as to achieve at an early date an armistice in Indochina and to restore peace in that area." Zhou continued, "Beijing's position on the Indochina issue is that peoples in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia have the full right to achieve peace, independence, unity, and democracy and to live in peace in their respective Fatherlands."

Zhou's address clearly indicated to both the Vietminh and the French delegates that Beijing's position at Geneva were by no means identical with that of the Vietminh's on every issue. Although China gave full support to the Vietminh's anti-colonial struggle for independence, it did not accept their claims to Cambodia and Laos. If necessary, Beijing would further persuade the Vietminh to agree to withdraw their military personnel from the two royal states and to make compromises on the partition line. The Chinese

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162 Selected Works of Zhou Enlai on Diplomacy, p. 64.
concern came from superior French air power in Indochina and in particular from a warning Dulles had issued in a speech to the House of Representatives on May 20. "Continued Chinese help to the Vietminh," Dulles said, "might call for retaliation... [and] atomic weapons will be used whenever it is to our military advantage."^  

Since May 12, however, the discussion on Indochina brought no progress due to the disagreement over the withdrawal of Vietminh soldiers from Laos and Cambodia and the drawing of the partition line. An equally controversial issue was how the implementation of the eventual agreement(s) should be supervised. According to James Cable, a British diplomat at Geneva, Eden agreed upon the principle of a simultaneous cease-fire throughout Indochina. He insisted, however, that the principle of partition should not apply to Laos and Cambodia from which Vietminh forces had to withdraw immediately and unconditionally. Eden's objective was to persuade the conferees that "the problem of Laos and Cambodia differed fundamentally from those of Vietnam and could be simply solved by the withdrawal of Vietminh forces and their indigenous supporters." In addition, as for the composition of the supervisory commission, Eden and his allies accepted the idea that "no Communist could ever be neutral, but some non-Communist could." He accordingly proposed that five Colombo powers - India, Indonesia, Pakistan, Burma, and Ceylon - an uneven number of neutral and Asian states, should provide the

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164 Ibid., p. 83.
165 Ibid., p. 85.
members of the supervisory commission.

At the sessions from May 12 to June 9, Zhou agreed to Eden's proposal that the independence and sovereignty of Laos and Cambodia should be respected and guaranteed by the international community. But he challenged Eden's notion that a neutral state must be a non-Communist state, and he insisted on the stipulation that the supervisory commission should operate on the principle of unanimity. On June 9, Zhou argued that "a neutral nation was one which had not taken part in the fighting and the Korean precedent offered no grounds for objecting to the idea that a commission composed of two communists and two non-communists should take only unanimous decisions." He also dismissed the proposal of U.N. supervision, saying that "[The] United Nations is not suitable to perform the function of supervising the implementation of the armistice in Indochina."

Because neither side showed willingness to compromise on the he withdrawal of Vietminh forces from Cambodia and Laos, the question of troops dispositions and regroupment in Vietnam or in the three states, and the composition and the principles of the international commission for supervision and control, the repeated discussions on Indochina limped along for weeks until June 16. During this period, even private contacts offered no hope of escape from the impasse.

By June 10, there was greater cause for concern at Geneva. Jean

\[166\] Randle, Geneva 1954, p. 271.


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Chauvel, a French diplomat, complained that the Vietminh military representatives were spinning out talks and playing for time, while the Chinese and Russians were now unhelpful. Facing this dilemma, Eden had to tell the Conference on June 10 that divergences were wide and deep on the two sides. "We have no choice but to resolve them or admit our failure."

But Zhou was determined to move toward a substantive agreement on the Indochina question. Considering the complex situation in Indochina and the staggering negotiations at Geneva, what Zhou needed was to devise a compromise program which no side would reject and which no side would be absolutely satisfied. He was well aware that the French and the Vietminh were the major players, but Laos and Cambodia were by no means impotent pawns on the chessboard. If the Vietminh continued to refuse to withdraw their armed personnel from Laos and Cambodia, the latter would request a western power, i.e. the United States, to provide various military assistance for security reasons. At Geneva, the two small states insisted on their legal right to accept the military assistance from the West when they were menaced. In order to prevent this from happening, Zhou proposed an early start to implement a simultaneous cease-fire in Indochina, and he also promised Eden to persuade the Vietminh to withdraw their forces from Cambodia and Laos. Zhou’s proposal aimed to expose no plausible reason for a

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171 Ibid., p. 266.
foreign power to intervene in Indochina. His promise would ease both Cambodian and Laotian concerns about their national security and sovereignty.

On June 15, Zhou, Molotov, and Pham Van Dong met each other in Geneva to discuss how to make progress on the Indochina issues. At the meeting, Zhou stated that it was necessary for the Vietminh to acknowledge their military personnel in Laos and Cambodia. In order to make the Vietminh accept his proposal, Zhou suggested that at the upcoming sessions, Pham Van Dong should admit the presence of Vietminh soldiers in Laos and Cambodia, but also claim Vietminh armed personnel were "volunteers" who entered Laos and Cambodia during the early years of the war. The Vietminh would withdraw those armed personnel from the two states according to the principle that all foreign troops would withdraw from Laos and Cambodia.172 According to Qu Xing, Molotov on the spot endorsed this proposal; and Zhou, Molotov, and Pham finally agreed that Zhou would put forward his proposal at the session tomorrow.

The breakthrough came the next day. In the restricted session on June 16 Zhou conceded that "the situation was not the same in all three states of Indochina [and] the question of the withdrawal of foreign troops was the one to be considered.173 He even envisaged the right of Laos and Cambodia to import arms, provided that foreign bases in the two royal states were forbidden.174 After some

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172 Ibid., p. 257.
174 Ibid.
polemics, Pham Van Dong acquiesced to Zhou’s proposals, which were subsequently endorsed by Molotov and welcomed by Chauvel, a French diplomat; and Bedell Smith, a U.S. diplomat.

On the same day, Zhou requested a visit with Eden to expand on his ideas. Both men agreed to use all available means to end the tragic Indochina war, so long as a simultaneous execution of cease-fire took place and Vietminh forces withdrew out of Laos and Cambodia. According to Eden, Zhou went so far as to say that the Vietminh should respect the unity and independence of Laos and Cambodia. He thought he could persuade the Vietminh to withdraw from the two states, and that China would recognize their royal governments, which might be members of the French Union, provided that there were no American bases in the territory.  

Eden said that he welcomed Zhou’s frankness and seriousness and his wish to convey his remarks to Bidault, to which Zhou agreed. Eden later wrote that "I received a strong impression that Zhou wanted a settlement in Indochina and I accordingly urged Georges Bidault to have a talk with [Zhou] and to discuss this new offer. I told Bidault of my conviction that there might be a chance of a settlement as the outcome of this talk, and I begged him to go into it with the utmost seriousness and determination."  

On June 17, Zhou met Bidault and they exchanged views on matters of general principle relating to Indochina and the foreign policy of their own governments. Because that was his last day as French

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175 Eden, Full Circle, p. 145.
176 Ibid.
Foreign Minister, they talked only briefly. But Bidault’s talks with Zhou convinced him that the Chinese were anxious to reach agreement on Indochina; and even Jean Chauvel began to work at drafting a proposal which would set in motion two further sets of military staff talks on Cambodia and Laos. If that were accepted, this would result in armistice talks throughout Indochina.\footnote{Ibid., p. 99.} During their meetings, Zhou did not make concessions to Bidault detrimental to the interests of Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, as Hanoi would later complain in 1980.\footnote{Cable, The Geneva Conference of 1954, p. 98.} In fact, because of the fall of his government on June 17, Bidault was unable to accept any proposal by Zhou on the key matters.

On June 19, Eden and Zhou met once again and talked in an easy and relaxed fashion that was due to the trust they had in each other. Eden urged Zhou not to expect greater concessions from the new French government than they would have demanded of its predecessor. He also asked Zhou to restrain the Vietminh from launching any military attacks in Indochina and, in particular, stressed the importance of separate treatment for Laos and Cambodia.\footnote{Ibid. p. 100.} Zhou said that he agreed with Eden’s view and that mutual concessions were necessary. According to Andrew Stark, Eden’s assistant to foreign affairs, Eden admitted, "Zhou was a large animal."\footnote{Ibid., p. 86.}

Since his successful interviews with Eden and Bidault, Zhou
pushed his personal diplomacy further by flying to Berne on June 23, the Capital of Switzerland, to meet Pierre Mendes-France, the new French Premier. The meeting was arranged at the French embassy in Berne, and the Premiers "exchanged views covered the topics vital to an Indochina settlement." Because this was the first summit meeting between China and France since 1949, it would provide a new incentive for further negotiations at Geneva. As Cable later wrote that the conversation lasted two hours and was cordial, though Mendes-France admitted that Zhou was more relaxed than he was: [l'homme etait impressionant]. The two leaders gained a better understanding of each other's foreign policy.

During the two-hour meeting, Zhou said what was essential was an armistice in all three states of Indochina, followed by elections in Vietnam for the reunification of that country under a single government. Mendes-France agreed to all-Vietnamese elections, but he argued these could not be held immediately. He also told Zhou that the Vietminh were seeking a partition line unreasonably too far to the South. Zhou then expressed a desire to see the two Vietnamese delegations establish contact. Mendes-France merely noted that formidable political and psychological obstacles prevented the nationalist Vietnamese from taking such a step. On the matter of a settlement in Laos and Cambodia, Zhou again showed a willingness to have the hostilities in those two states disjoined.

181 Zhang Shuguang, In the Shadow of Mao, p. 361.
from the issues in Vietnam. He further offered to recognize the royal governments of Laos and Cambodia and adhered to a policy of nonintervention in the internal affairs of the two royal states. But he conditioned his demand upon a guarantee that would prevent other power from establishing military bases in the two states.\(^{184}\) Mendens-France assured Zhou that he would promote direct Franco-Vietminh talks and that there should be no American bases in Laos and Cambodia.\(^{185}\) At the end of the talk, Zhou agreed, at his French host’s request, to persuade the Vietminh to concede on the partition line, but he also stressed that the concession should be made on the term of reciprocity.

At Geneva, Zhou’s personal diplomacy was not limited to the "big powers" game. He also paid considerable attention to the feelings of the Laotians and the Cambodians. On June 20, Zhou had talks with Phoui Sasanikone, the head of the Laotian delegation; and Tep Phan, the Cambodian Foreign Secretary. The representatives of the two small countries expressed their demands for an end to insurgent activities within their territories, and also said that if Vietminh forces withdrew from Laos and Cambodia, they would maintain neutral in the Cold War. Their positions clearly conformed with one of Zhou’s ends at Geneva: to prevent foreign power's military bases from the two states.\(^{186}\) Zhou reiterated his pledge to Tep Phan and Phoui Sasanikone that after an armistice was signed, the Vietminh

\(^{184}\) Ibid., p. 305.

\(^{185}\) Ibid. and Cable, p. 105.

\(^{186}\) Han Nianlong, ed., Contemporary China’s Diplomacy, p. 68.
who presently were on their territories would be withdrawn. The next day, Zhou put the Cambodians and Laotians in touch with the Vietminh delegation in his villa at Le Grand Mont-Fleuri.\textsuperscript{187}

Zhou's role now appeared salient on the part of the Vietminh. He himself was well aware that the final effort was to persuade his communist ally, the Vietminh, to accept the partition line proposed by the French and to withdraw its military "volunteers" from Laos and Cambodia. In view of Pham's wavering character, Zhou decided to approach Ho Chi Minh, the supreme leader of the Vietminh.

To persuade the Vietminh to make necessary concessions on truce terms, Zhou could play upon the influence which China had exerted on the Vietnamese historically, culturally, and geographically. In 1954, however, it was by no means an easy game that anyone could play well. If anyone could play it, it was Zhou whom James Cable described as "an extremely adroit negotiator with an astonishing capacity for work."\textsuperscript{188}

Over the centuries, the Chinese had influenced the Vietnamese culturally; but at times, they also used force against their small neighbor. Sino-Vietnamese relations were characterized by a mixture of friendship, suspicion, and hostility. In modern times, China had retained much of its traditional attitude toward the Vietnamese, which asserted that Vietnam should follow China's lead in foreign affairs. At the same time, however, it had to consider Vietnamese nationalism. As Hinton put it, "the attitude of the Vietnamese

\textsuperscript{187} Qu Xing, "Zhou Enlai's Diplomacy at Geneva," p. 265.

toward the Chinese was a mixture of admiration, envy, resentment, and fear." In 1954, the interaction between China and North Vietnam at Geneva again reflected their traditional relations.

On July 3-5, Zhou met Ho Chi Minh and Vo Nguyen Giap, the Commander in Chief, PAVN, in a Chinese border city, Liuzhou. They discussed the Indochina war and its prospects. Chinese documents revealed that Zhou explained to both Vietminh leaders that the Vietminh was now at the crossroads of either continuing to fight or accepting peace immediately, with an option of resuming the fight later. "It would be wise," he stressed, "for the Vietminh to cease hostilities with the French and consolidate power in the Vietminh-controlled areas, and look for other opportunities at a later date." As to the French policy, Zhou said to Ho and Giap, "We should do our best to support the Mendes-France Government, so that we can prevent the war-like elements in France from sabotaging [it]. This would be certainly beneficial to both of us." In term of Laos and Cambodia, he tried to convince Ho and Giap that "only through peaceful means, would we win over those two small countries on our side; the military pressure certainly push them to look to the United States. If that occurred, the war would be escalated in

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190 Han Nianlong, ed., *Contemporary China's Diplomacy*, p. 67.

191 Ibid., p. 68.

Indochina. Ho himself took Zhou's advice and agreed to accept the partition line proposed by the French and to withdraw Vietminh troops from Laos and Cambodia. Both sides worked to conclude a document, called the "July 5 document", which stipulated that "the guidelines adopted at the Geneva Conference should be active and flexible; and they are (1) to continue proposing the partition line at the 16th parallel on the part of the Vietminh. If the French insisted on their claim at the 18th parallel, the Vietminh would consider to retreat to the 17th parallel; and (2) to accept the French proposal, i.e. to have the questions in Laos and Cambodia disjoined from the issue in Vietnam."  

During his talks with Ho and Giap, Zhou gave his opinion, saying that "the victory at the Dien Bien Phu campaign did not mean a sign that the Vietminh could control the military situation in Vietnam. In fact, the French still occupied vital strategic and urban areas including Hanoi and Haipong." Zhou believed that the U.S. had been seeking any opportunity to intervene in Indochina. An unending war would be detrimental to the new Vietminh regime. Considering the complex and uncertain situation, the most favorable and attainable plan was to realize the cessation of hostilities on terms acceptable to both sides. The French forces would retreat to the south of the partition line, and the Vietminh would move to the north and consolidate its power base in the areas adjoining to

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193 Ibid.
194 Ibid., p. 257.
195 Ibid.
China’s border. In Zhou’s view, “when the French troops were no longer in Vietnam, the Vietminh would be able to unify the whole nation.” As a return to Ho’s compromise, Zhou once again made the pledge, “China will be a reliable rear for the Vietminh in its future struggle for national independence and unification.”

During this meeting, Zhou used persuasion and compromise with his Vietnamese comrades. As Harold Hinton put it, Zhou obtained Ho Chi Minh’s agreement to go along with the general peace plan at Geneva. For his satisfaction, a feeling of irritation and frustration on the part of the Vietminh was not too high a price to pay. The Vietminh could be squared with economic and military assistance.

On July 10, Zhou returned to Geneva via Moscow, where he had talks with the Soviet leaders. The latter said that Mendes-France’s difficulties were not only with Dulles but even with the French integrationist, such as Robert Schuman, an influential French politicians, who bitterly opposed Mendes-France and his government. Moreover, in early July, Dulles condemned the French and British “for efforts to conclude peace at any price.” All this had put Mendes-France in an awkward position. The Soviet leaders clearly endorsed Zhou’s plan to end the war in Indochina and to have the Vietminh concede on peace terms.

196 Ibid.

197 Selected Works of Zhou Enlai on Diplomacy, p. 46.


Considering the uncertainty of the French politics, Zhou flew back to Geneva from Moscow, and had a long, frank, and patient talk with Pham Van Dong on the night of July 12. At the outset, he was undecided and even suspicious at Zhou's analysis and explanations. Zhou had to show him the "July 5 document" and, as the spokesman of the CPSU, CCP, and VCP, insisted that Pham follow the official line written in the "July 5 document". At last, Pham agreed to talk Mendes-France the next day and to discuss the new offer that the Vietminh would accept the partition line and withdraw its remaining "voluntary personnel" from both Cambodia and Laos. Pham's final concession on the issues ushered in the hope that the discussion on Indochina would possibly reach agreement on the four fundamentally controversial questions. By now, all the contending sides agreed to cease fighting and moved to each other's regrouping areas, as the agreement stipulated.

By July 18, however, the Indochina Conference had not reached a resolution on the composition of the international supervisory commission. As mentioned early, the Western powers and its allies insisted that a neutral nation should be a non-communist; while China and the Vietminh supported by the Soviet Union rejected the Western opinion. On the afternoon of the 18th, Zhou proposed to Eden that India, Canada, and Poland should provide the members of the supervisory commissions in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. This combination of one neutral, one western, and one communist state seemed as clearly responsive to each one's requirements as it was

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altogether unexpected. As Eden later wrote that, "from that moment, the tangled ends of the discussion [at Geneva] began to sort themselves out." Zhou's suggestion brought him the great honor and respect at Geneva so that he was considered as a man of considerable intelligence, imagination and initiative.

After seven weeks of negotiations, the Indochina Conference finally produced the result that Zhou desired: the termination of the war in Indochina and the exclusion of the Americans from that area. In retrospect it was true that Zhou made considerable contributions to the settlement of the Indochina issues at the Geneva Conference. Among the issues discussed, i.e. the cessation of hostilities; the partition line in Vietnam; the neutralization of Laos and Cambodia; and the composition of the international supervisory commission, he intervened with direct efforts to solve all of them, i.e. to persuade Ho Chi Minh to make compromise on the partition line, to have the Vietminh withdraw its forces from Laos and Cambodia, to obtain the guarantee from Laos and Cambodia of their neutralization, and to settle the tangled question of the supervisory commission by imaginatively initiating a tripartite membership for international supervision and control. In making this proposal, Zhou acted in the spirit of compromise. That was obviously Zhou's approach at Geneva, which he strongly urged other participants to share.


At three o’clock that afternoon of July 21, after frantic activities at all levels, the Geneva Conference started its last plenary session. The heads of five delegations met in the meeting hall: Eden, Molotov, Zhou Enlai, Mendes-France, and Pham Van Dong (Bedell Smith and Tran Van Do, the deputy from South Vietnam were absent). At that moment, the Geneva Indochina Conference, after many compromises and complicated negotiations, finally produced the three agreements on cessation of hostilities in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. These three agreements and the "Final Declaration of the Conference" together formed the "Geneva Accords," as they were later called. The "Final Declaration" was signed by the most of the states which participated the Conference. But the United States did not sign on the accords. On July 23, Secretary Dulles stated that "the United States ... did not become a party to the conference results. But in accordance with the U.N. Charter, the United States would not use force to overthrow the settlements."204 The "Final Declaration" committed all concerned "to respect the sovereignty, the independence, the unity and the territorial integrity of Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam" and "to refrain from interference in their internal affairs"; it outlined the basis of an eventual political settlement, stipulating that the people of Indochina were expected to hold national free elections within a specified period of time to achieve democracy and freedom inside each other homelands.205 To the Chinese, the importance of the "Geneva Accords" lies in that

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"the three states of Indochina were prohibited from entering into alliances, establishing foreign military bases and building up unqualified military defense." These documents concluded at the Geneva Conference seemed the only way to meet conflicting political requirements, to end hostilities in Indochina and to preserve the peace of the world by saving face. Accordingly, the first Indochina war, which had lasted eight years and which was the focus of the East-West relations in 1954, at last ended with the international accords.

In retrospect, the Geneva Conference and its accords as well scored some results, despite their weaknesses. As Lord Avon, a British diplomat, later wrote, "The Geneva Conference fell short but not by so wide a margin." As they were defined, the Geneva Accords actually ended hostilities, underwrote the independence and neutrality of Cambodia and Laos, and created a temporary political equilibrium in a partitioned Vietnam which facilitated the French withdrawal. This conclusion resulted in nearly one million refugees being able to return to their homeland(s).

Faith in the applicability of the Geneva Agreements, however, was from the outset challenged by the attitude of the Americans. Then U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower referred to the Vietnamese cease-fire agreement as that "terrible agreement at Geneva." He

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206 Ibid., p. 8.
noted the "element of tragedy in an agreement put great number of people under Communist domination."²⁰⁹ But Bedell Smith, a U.S. general and diplomat who attended the Geneva Conference, repeated an expression which Eden had used at the conclusion of the Geneva Conference: The cease-fire agreements were "the best we could have possibly obtained under the circumstances, in which the French wanted to pull out of Indochina at almost any price. It is well to remember that diplomacy has rarely been able to gain at the table what cannot be gained or held on the battlefield."²¹⁰ On July 22, the French National Assembly favorably voted to support Mendes-France's policy and the settlements on Indochina by a significant majority: 462 votes for and 13 votes against.²¹¹

Reactions from the three Communist countries - North Vietnam, China and the Soviet Union - were favorable and enthusiastic. On July 22, Ho Chi Minh issued an appeal to his people and forces, emphasizing "the great diplomatic victory at Geneva."²¹² Moscow reiterated its peaceful intentions in foreign affairs; and Pravda's editorial expressed the view that "the political importance of the participation of the PRC in the solving of urgent international problems has become clear at present as never before."²¹³

²¹¹ Ibid., p. 355.
²¹³ Ibid., p. 325.
tone was laid upon the success of peaceful negotiations and the "major power" status of China at the Geneva Conference.

It was understandable that Beijing was pleased with the result of the settlement in Indochina, because the area of Vietnam above the 17th parallel was now under the communist control, no foreign military bases would be allowed in Indochina and Laos and Cambodia were guaranteed their neutral status in foreign affairs by the Geneva accords. With the end of the Korean War in 1953 and the settlement of the Indochina war in 1954, China obtained a peaceful environment and began its large-scale domestic reconstruction. On the part of Beijing's diplomacy, Zhou then urged to adopt the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence as the foundation for China's foreign policy. He noted, "International disputes could be resolved through negotiations, provided nations at large were sincerely anxious for peace."²¹⁴

Zhou himself was pleased with the result. He attained his basic objectives at the Geneva Conference: to terminate Indochina war near the China's border and to prevent foreign bases and forces from being established in Indochina. On July 22, Zhou gave a dinner to Pham Van Dong and the representatives of South Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos at his villa. This was one of the occasions for which food was flown in from China. At the dinner table, Zhou toasted to each delegation present. His toast unexpectedly made friends with Laotian, Cambodian, and even South Vietnam, but dismayed his ally, North Vietnam. On the way back to Beijing, his aides asked the

²¹⁴ Selected Works of Zhou Enlai on Diplomacy, p. 66.
premier to reflect on his Geneva experience. Zhou commented as follows:

(1). The solution of all international disputes can always be based on negotiations. As long as both sides have good will and understand each other, no matter how complicated the issue is, there will be a path toward its solution.
(2). After a formal meeting, activities including private contacts provide an opportunity for participants to have a frank exchange of views, probe into each other’s intentions, negotiate and reach detailed agreements. There are the practical and fine methods used to resolve problems. 
(3). To find effective solutions always requires mutual understanding, accommodating each other’s needs, yielding to the other’s reasonable demands, and showing consideration for each other’s interests, so as to seek a common ground for an agreement. If neither side can agree on certain issues, they ought to be shelved for the time being. This is what compromise is all about....
(4). When we deal with small and weak nations we must pay special attention to their face [mián zi]; in other words, we must never hurt their national pride. As a big power, we could understand this without difficulties.215

At the 1954 Geneva Conference, his proposals and his approach to international issues demonstrated that Zhou pursued PRC’s security and legitimacy through diplomacy. Even in the mid-1950s, when Beijing felt isolated and contained due to the United States non-recognition policy, Zhou still insisted on achieving legitimate interests of China in a manner consistent with accepted standards of international rules and norms. In this sense, Zhou made his debut in international theater of diplomacy and scored a personal triumph by impressing most of the diplomats whom he met at Geneva. The Soviet leaders, including V.M. Molotov, considered Zhou a bright, flexible diplomat with a balanced judgment. James Cable, a British diplomat, later recalled that "Zhou had great charm and

vitality and was always completely at ease." Jean Chauvel, a French diplomat at Geneva, commended on "Zhou's intelligence, education, incisiveness and good manners." Humphrey Trevelvan, the British Charge d' affaires in Beijing, thought that "by any standards, Zhou was a remarkable man [and an] extremely adroit negotiator with immense energy."\(^{216}\) Anthony Eden admitted that "Zhou was poised and firm in negotiation and worked for the fine point."\(^{217}\) Even Dean Acheson was reported to speak Zhou as "the ablest diplomat in the world, not excepting Mr. Churchill."\(^{218}\)

Apart from this high praise from world-level diplomats, it has to be admitted that Chinese official tributes to Zhou and his diplomacy are voluminous as well as sometimes irrelevant. Given these eulogistic words about Zhou Enlai, people might have to question what the attributes of Zhou's diplomacy remain at Geneva, and how we should assess his diplomacy objectively?

\(^{216}\) These quotations were cited from *The Geneva Conference of 1954 on Indochina* by James Cable, p. 86.


\(^{218}\) Wilson, *Zhou Enlai*, p. 194.
Chapter IV.
An Assessment of Zhou Enlai's Diplomacy

Based on the materials we have at present, we can assess Zhou Enlai's diplomacy at Geneva. Yet, it is not easy to make a balanced assessment for several elements. Two of them, however, seem more obvious. First of all, it is still too early to expect a definitive account of Zhou's diplomacy; i.e. to assign his true significance to the Geneva Conference of 1954 because of the restricted access to the Vietnamese, Russian, and even Chinese documents. Much of the evidence needed is still not available. It will take a long time before the surviving documents from Vietnam, the former USSR, and China would be available to fill the gaps in our knowledge of the motives and the conduct of the principal participants including Zhou himself.

The second factor is related to the numerous books, journals, and articles about Zhou's diplomacy. These writings have provided both laymen and scholars of history with useful information. On the one hand, there is certain amount of credibility in most of the writings, although they contain various controversial interpretations. But on the other hand, there are instances where an author misinterpreted the evidence to substantiate his subjective ideas. Interpretations of the available documents are always needed, yet the drawing of conclusions will demand particular objectivity. For example, since the legacies of the Cold War waned, controversies have arisen from the different interpretations of the former allies. In the late 1970s, Vietnamese papers, both by scholars and
officials, charged that Zhou betrayed the revolutionary struggle of the peoples of Indochina and sacrificed their legitimate interests when he agreed to the neutrality of Laos and Cambodia and the cease-fire areas in Vietnam in a "secret deal" with Bidault at the 1954 Geneva Conference. Historically speaking, this is inaccurate. As a matter of fact, on June 17, 1954, Zhou's first approach was made to Sir Anthony Eden, not to Georges Bidault, the Foreign Minister of the politically paralysed France. When he saw Bidault on that day, Zhou did not, as seen from Hanoi, concede a point on the matters discussed. At that time, Bidault would in any case have been personally unwilling to accept Zhou's proposal and, because of the fall of his government, he was unable to.

Despite these problems, there are still notable academic efforts made by scholars, both Chinese and non-Chinese. Based on the historical materials and theoretical approach(es), these scholars have worked on the analyses of Zhou's diplomacy from his style to his influence at the Geneva Conference. For example, historian Melvin Gurtov wrote that Zhou was good at combining the conduct of diplomacy with the use of force in world politics. He accepted that the Korean conflict was paralleled by the Panmunjom armistice, the Indochina war by the Geneva Accords, and the subsequent Taiwan Strait crisis by Sino-American talks. "By making use of the

220 Ibid., p. 98.
221 Gurtov, The First Vietnam Crisis, p. 163. The U.S.-China Talks started at Geneva in 1955, moved to Warsaw in 1957, and ended in 1970. Ambassador Kenneth Young called it "the longest establish-
negotiation table," Gurtov argued, "as an extension of the battle front and of diplomacy as the handmaiden of protracted duel, Zhou accelerated the trend toward neutrality in Asia. His flexible diplomacy at Geneva echoed a general satisfaction and, to some extent, pro-Chinese sentiments among the Asian states..."\(^{222}\)

Harold Hinton, a scholar of foreign affairs, has argued that whereas the settlement in Indochina was his preferred goal, Zhou performed very ably and effectively. But he would have made no measurable progress in Indochina if he had not been supported by the Russians.\(^{223}\) Hinton believed that "there was no assurance that Beijing would be invited to future conferences like the 1954 Geneva Conference, in spite of its insistence that it should have a say in the settlement of all major international issues."\(^{224}\)

However, Robert Randle, who has written the most comprehensive book on the Geneva Conference, disagrees with Hinton's analysis. He has argued that "Premier Zhou played an important, even a crucial role in the negotiations at Geneva. The People's Republic of China, in appearance as well as in fact, was a great power and a peacemaker in Asia."\(^{225}\) He adds that there was no evidence that Zhou sought to do more than very effectively demonstrate China's role as

\(^{222}\) Ibid.

\(^{223}\) Hinton, *Communist China in World Politics*, p. 254.

\(^{224}\) Ibid.

a great power and the need for consultations with Beijing in the settlement of any East Asian problems. Finally, Randle concludes that "Zhou and [his] delegation’s participation, performance, and achievements constituted a gain of a very high order at the Geneva Conference of 1954."²²⁶

K.C. Chen, a scholar on 1954 Indochina War, placed his analysis on the style of Zhou’s diplomacy at Geneva. He argued that Zhou’s style was not that of senseless resistance toward opponents’ views. Even if he did not say "yes", he never ran the risk of losing any chance to find the common ground. In fact, Zhou expressed a strong sense of the need for compromise and reconciliation which he had urged other participants to share [at Geneva].²²⁷

Ronald Keith, a Canadian scholar of Zhou’s diplomacy, wrote in 1989 that in the Cold War context of 1954, Zhou scored notable points against Dulles’s diplomacy at Geneva and his peaceful co-existence offensive gained momentum after the Geneva Conference. But ultimately Zhou could not arrest the United States move toward collective defence in [Southeast] Asia.²²⁸

Recently, a few Chinese scholars who completed their doctoral studies in the United States, have made notable contributions to the research on Zhou’s diplomacy. For example, the scholar of political science Shao Guokang considered that the qualities of balanced, pragmatism, and skilful articulation of means and ends

²²⁶ Ibid., p. 551.
²²⁸ Keith, The Diplomacy of Zhou Enlai, p. 80.
invariably characterized Zhou’s approach to international disputes. He argued that Zhou’s sense of moderation and pragmatic attitude made it possible for him to work with the Geneva major powers to reconcile their policy differences in 1954, i.e. the application of the principle of peaceful settlement in Indochina was to lay a basis upon which a more grand structure of an "area of peace" in Southeast Asia would be built.\textsuperscript{229} Zhai Qiang, a historian, thought that Zhou was a shrewd practitioner of diplomacy of the possible at Geneva and he excelled in playing British and French realism off against the rigidity and inflexibility of Dulles’s Cold War diplomacy through uniting with all possible forces to isolate China’s most dangerous adversary.\textsuperscript{230}

Even though there are various weaknesses in these scholars' arguments, their efforts are helpful in understanding Zhou and his diplomacy at Geneva. Yet, this thesis asserts that the assessment ought to start with an analysis of Zhou’s perception and approach prior to and during the Geneva Conference.

First of all, Zhou, remarking on the political and ideological differences between states, perceived the world as an international system with various possibilities and conflicts. Based on his view on world politics, he endorsed the idea that China should align with the Soviet camp within the Cold War context, because they shared the similar ideology and system of government. But, at the

\textsuperscript{229} Shao Guokang, "Zhou’s Diplomacy," p. 502, CQ., no. 107, (September 1986).

same time, he stressed that China should through diplomacy obtain its own security and legitimate interests according to the doctrine of "peaceful coexistence". Because of his faith in diplomacy, since 1953, Zhou echoed the theme that the use of force to settle international disputes was fruitless and that the age of the settlement of international disputes by negotiations was definitely here to stay. Shortly thereafter he hardened his efforts to conclude a peaceful resolution on Indochina. During the Geneva Conference, he was realistic and flexible in approaching to the British, French, and Vietminh delegates. Zhou persuaded the Vietminh to accept the demarcation line proposed by the French, while at the same time trying to advising the French to make a relevant concession. As he said to Mendes-France: "Each side would need to step towards the other .... which is not to say that each has an equal number of steps to make." This case was a fine example of reciprocity. The French took the advantage of saving face because the Vietminh would have to accept French proposal. On the part of Ho and Pham, their concessions allowed the Vietminh to have the French troops withdraw from North Vietnam, to obtain Beijing's, even Moscow's, military and economic assistance, and to gain a kind of legitimacy from the neutral states in Asia. Thus, Zhou's debut at Geneva confirmed that he conformed himself to the standard norms and principles of modern diplomacy: persuasion and reciprocity.

Secondly, Zhou recommended a compromise approach of "seeking


222 Wilson, Zhou Enlai - A Biography, p. 196.
common ground while reserving differences" (qiutong cunyi). From May 14 to July 18, the discussions on the role and membership of the international supervisory commission remained a thorny problem. Molotov proposed four neutral nations as members - Czechoslovakia, Poland, India, and Pakistan. But the non-communist states were opposed to it. Eden proposed five Colombo nations, which Molotov rejected. South Vietnam suggested the United Nations, from which China was excluded at American insistence, but Zhou dismissed this idea. The two sides eloquently but stubbornly disagreed with each other and no agreement was reached until July 18. A solution seemed unlikely. But on that afternoon, Zhou suddenly proposed to his allies and opponents to find the common ground. He recommended India, Canada, and Poland as the members of the international commission for supervision. His proposal was accepted unanimously and he too received great credit. James Cable, a British diplomat, went so far to say "When Eden went bumbling on about the Colombo Powers, he was rescued by Zhou Enlai." Zhou's approach made it possible for him to work with Britain and France, which disagreed with the U.S. on Indochina, to reconcile their policy differences and to work out an mutually accepted result. In addition, during the Geneva Conference, Zhou's personal diplomacy covered his sixty-two talks, in both plenary sessions and private contacts, with the heads of the delegations. He even made effort to approach to John Dulles, the head of U.S. delegation. In this sense, Zhou appeared a revolutionary devoted to Chinese independence and a realistic

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diplomat committed to international law and the standard norms of diplomacy.

Thirdly, Zhou was poised and firm in dealing with the problem of balancing national interest and ideological affinity. In reality, ideology and national interests can, and do, go hand in hand and are generally inextricably intertwined. As Vidya Dutt, an Indian scholar of foreign affairs, put it, "Ideology can not function in a vacuum and national interests are not totally unrelated to the ideology one profess. Ideology by itself does not provide any cut and dried answer." During the mid-1950s, Zhou spent little time making ideological statements. He expected to create a working atmosphere when negotiating with the western diplomats. At that time, his statements always aimed at generating expectations of future co-operation, i.e. according to his terminology, "finding the common ground and reserving the differences." In pursuit of China's security and legitimate interests, he insisted that most conflicts of interest between nation-states could be settled by negotiations, reconciliation and peaceful solution. All of this revealed that Zhou sensibly had a vision to recognize the realistic relations between diplomacy and force, alliance and independence, and international legitimacy and revolution.

At the Geneva Conference, Zhou advised the Vietminh to settle the conflict through negotiations with the French as well as with

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235 Selected Works of Zhou Enlai on Diplomacy, p. 68.
Laos and Cambodia. On June 27, Zhou asserted that "revolution can not be exported, and at the same time outside interference with the expressed will of the people should not be permitted." He added that people of any state had the right to select their system of government without interference from the outside. His statement had special meaning regarding Beijing's policy toward Indochina and the Southeast Asian states at large. Considering the three political forces in world politics - the Western allies, the Eastern camp, and the neutral, non-aligned states, Zhou urged the peaceful co-existence as the basis of state-to-state relations. With the faith in "peace diplomacy," he worked hard to persuade the Vietminh to go along with the general peace plan concluded at Geneva. As Wang Bing-nan, then a senior aide to Zhou, told the French on May 18: "We are not here to sustain the point of view of the Vietminh, we are here to exert all efforts towards the re-establishment of peace."  

From the analysis of Zhou's diplomatic debut at Geneva, it is not exaggerating to say that he was well aware of the core tenets of diplomacy: persuasion, compromise, reciprocity and, when necessary, the use of force in order to achieve diplomatic goals. He successfully impressed the world-level diplomats at Geneva and played an important, in some cases, even a crucial role in the final settlement of the Indochina issue.

236 Qu Xing, "Zhou Enlai's Diplomacy at Geneva," p. 266.
237 Wang Bingnan, Nine Years of Sino-U.S. Talks, p. 22.
Epilogue

As Mao's most influential and most brilliant advisor on foreign affairs, Zhou retained his authority and exerted huge impact on Beijing's foreign relations until his death in 1976. During his tenure in this capacity, which lasted for a quarter of a century, Zhou logged more air miles than any other single Asian diplomat, visiting most capitals on all continents except Latin and North America, spending more time in Africa than any other ranking world statesmen, and surviving many a diplomatic duel.238 During his longtime state activities, Zhou impressed people at all levels. His approach to international diplomacy was diligent, subtle, flexible, and persuasive. However, Zhou's diplomatic debut at Geneva, for the reasons relating to China's strength, its domestic power structure, and Zhou's intellectual concept, should not be overestimated.

First, considering China's limited power at that time, it was impossible for Zhou to play a dominant role during the Geneva Conference. Actually, both Britain and the Soviet Union, though pursuing different ends, played undisputed role in the convening the Geneva Conference of 1954 in order to relax the crises in Asia. Without their efforts, the Geneva Conference would never have been held, much less permitted to end with even the limited measure of agreement actually achieved. As ambassador Young later wrote that "the British and Soviet heads of the delegations [at Geneva] served as alternating co-chairmen who mediated the critical disputes to produce the final compromises. Without them the conference would

238 Young, Negotiating with the Communist China, p. 470.
have collapsed."239

Second, given the power structure or power division, Zhou never had full freedom to assert his diplomacy. Although he was the leading spokesman of Beijing’s foreign policy, Zhou needed to consult with his colleagues, especially Mao, on the key foreign policies. In 1954, Beijing’s policy toward Indochina was the result of the collective decision of the CCP. True, Mao and Zhou were the most influential personalities in handling all foreign policies. But when the big two clashed each other on the major decisions, Zhou had no option but followed Mao’s lead through modifying his own departures at his most effort. As Wang Bingnan recalled that Zhou’s approach to the West and his proposal at Geneva had obtained Mao’s full support and trust.240

Third, Zhou Enlai was an astute and well-travelled diplomat. He developed many qualities of his diplomacy with practice and the greatest part of the necessary knowledge were acquired from his whole career as a Chinese revolutionary striving for China’s safety and independence. But Zhou’s knowledge of world affairs and his theoretical basis of diplomacy in particular should be viewed appropriately. He prized the principles of international relations – national self-determination, sovereign rights, reciprocity and equality among nations. As the principles of international actions, these ideas are the end result of the modern history of diplomacy


240 Wang Bingnan, Nine Years of Sino-U.S. Talks, p. 10.
as developed in the Western world; and they are as honored in the West as they are by the Chinese. Clearly, these Western principles could serve Zhou’s goal of promoting China’s big power status and protecting its weakness at that time. But Zhou’s views on world politics revealed that he was a pointedly Marxist-Leninist and he was greatly influenced by Leninist doctrine on diplomacy. He paid little attention to the Western liberal theories on international relations, such as the roles of the international organization(s), foreign trade, public opinion and etc. He also appeared extremely sensitive to unequal and nonreciprocal treatment when negotiating the foreign diplomats of both East and West. Such a sense had nothing to do with peaceful coexistence which he endorsed.

Nevertheless, it is by no means my intention to minimize Zhou’s influential impact on China’s diplomacy by exposing his weaknesses. We can inherit a great legacy from Zhou’s diplomacy in both theory and practice. True, he was well aware of the classical simplicity of bilateral negotiations which remained the core of diplomacy and he keenly grasped the balance of power diplomacy when negotiating the foreign diplomats. But simply repeating what he said and what he did will be not only sluggish but also risky in our reflection upon our foreign policy. True, many of the weaknesses of Zhou’s diplomacy arose from the historical context in which he developed his intellectual concept on world politics. Yet, these "objective conditions" should not prevent us from calling into question the wisdom of certain aspects of his diplomacy. George Kennan wrote, "A nation which excuses its own failure by the sacred untouchableness
of its own habits can excuse itself into complete disaster." If we excuse Zhou's "class struggle" perception and his weakness of the theories of diplomacy, which certainly resulted from the "Cold War" context, for the sake of his political holiness, it supposes that we will excuse ourselves for not making novel, creative and imaginative progress in the future. China, the young Chinese in general, can not rest on the laurels with which he was crowned by the diplomatic elite of the world. In the rapidly changing world, communications, technology, trade, and the influence of Western ideas have welded the entire world into the proximity that would normally contribute to the formation of a global village. Under such new circumstances, any stagnation in thinking or action will inevitably result in retrogression, ignorance, and possible fiascos in the future.

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