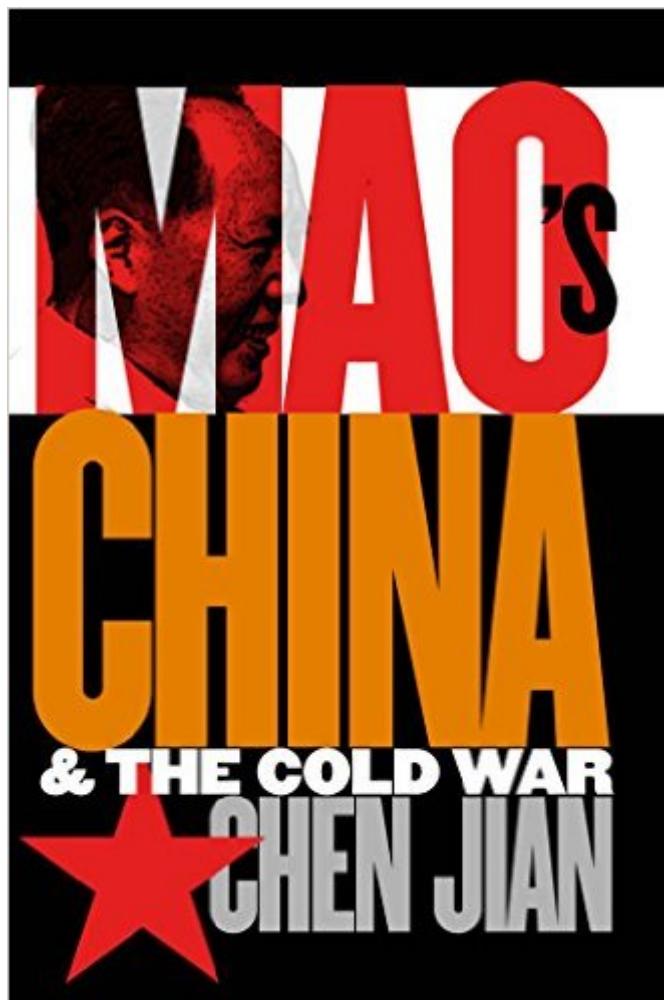


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Mao's China And The Cold War (The New Cold War History)



Synopsis

This comprehensive study of China's Cold War experience reveals the crucial role Beijing played in shaping the orientation of the global Cold War and the confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union. The success of China's Communist revolution in 1949 set the stage, Chen says. The Korean War, the Taiwan Strait crises, and the Vietnam War--all of which involved China as a central actor--represented the only major "hot" conflicts during the Cold War period, making East Asia the main battlefield of the Cold War, while creating conditions to prevent the two superpowers from engaging in a direct military showdown. Beijing's split with Moscow and rapprochement with Washington fundamentally transformed the international balance of power, argues Chen, eventually leading to the end of the Cold War with the collapse of the Soviet Empire and the decline of international communism. Based on sources that include recently declassified Chinese documents, the book offers pathbreaking insights into the course and outcome of the Cold War.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Chen Jian's works on China's rise to international power are groundbreaking books exploiting Chinese (and Soviet too) source materials and interviews. This book follows along the same pattern established in his 1994 book, "China's Road to the Korean War," which argues that Mao's ideological commitment to the social and political revolution forecasted, even guaranteed, a shooting conflict with the United States. In Mao's China and the Cold War, Chen goes further in his

analysis, demonstrating that it was Mao's worldview and determination to make China the central figure in the international Communist movement that was the driving force behind China's many foreign entanglements: Korea, First and Second Indo-China Wars, Taiwan Strait Crisis, the sundering of the brotherly alliance between Beijing and Hanoi, and the nearly fatal rift between Mao and Moscow. Chen deftly describes Mao's concern for "continuous revolution," and the fear that reactionary movements abroad would influence the Chinese population at home. Of equal concern to Mao was the effort to harness the people's enthusiasm for ultimately disasterous endeavors, such as the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution. Chen shows that Mao accomplished these "mobilizations" and maintained his grip on power by demonizing first the United States, then the Soviet Union. This form of politics served Mao well, allowing him to keep his supporters in check (even if he ended up purging them in the end) and his opponents disoriented. It even allowed him the freedom to make the compromise most surprising of all -- normalization of relations with the United States in the early '70s. Chen points out that even with this act, Mao was pursuing his goal of radicalizing his own movement, particularly vis-a-vis the Soviets.

Chen Jian has written an insightful history of the role China played in the Cold War from the time of Mao Zedong's rise to power and the Communist victory in 1949 to the resumption of cordial relations with the United States in 1969-72. Chen argues that Chinese foreign policy during the Maoist Era was driven by Mao's ideology of "continuous revolution," and that Mao cultivated, and then exploited, a "victim mentality" in the populace in order to mobilize his people whenever necessary. This continuous revolution included an ongoing push for an international proletarian movement and called for the eventual establishment of China's centrality to the movement. In addition, Mao believed that the eventual triumph of his Marxist revolution would garner China a place of prestige in the international community. By focusing on nine transnational events, Chen shows how China's foreign policy was informed by this Maoist doctrine and how Mao would redefine terms, when necessary, to keep his revolution relevant to the current state of world affairs. The nine events that Chen analyzes are the Chinese Civil War, the dissolution of U.S.-Sino diplomatic channels, the deterioration of the Sino-Soviet alliance, China's role in the Korean, the first Indochina, and the Vietnam War; the Polish and Hungarian crises, the Taiwan Strait crises, and the Sino-American rapprochement. Chen weaves the theme of Mao's continuous revolution throughout the book and supports his thesis with an impressive amount of source material. In fact, there are nearly one hundred pages of sources and citations, some of which are recently declassified Chinese documents as well as Soviet documents made available after the collapse of the Soviet

Union.

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