

CHINA AND INDOCHINA (1949–1954): HISTORICAL PATHWAYS OF REVOLUTION AND DIPLOMACY

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Abstract

On October 1, 1949, the Chinese Communist Party established the People's Republic of China amid escalating Cold War tensions. To ensure national security, prevent further US intervention in Indochina, and stemming from factors such as ideological similarities and close ties between Chinese and Vietnamese leaders, China provided aid to the resistance against the French in Indochina. This support played a crucial role in the rapid development of the revolutionary movements in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. However, alongside these positive impacts, China's policies also imposed certain limitations and consequences on the three Indochina countries. By employing a historical approach to analyze the relationship between China and the three Indochina countries in the context of the Cold War, combined with a logical method to clarify the characteristics of China's policy towards the region during the 1949–1954 period, this article aims to assess the impact of China on China itself and the revolutionary movement in Indochina. This research not only clarifies an important period in the history of international relations in the region, but also has contemporary historical significance for the peoples of the three Indochina countries. By drawing out key historical lessons, it contributes to the formulation of appropriate strategies toward China while reinforcing solidarity among the peoples of Indochina.

Keywords: *Policy; Indochina; Cambodia; Laos; Vietnam*

1. INTRODUCTION

The proclamation of the People's Republic of China (PRC) on October 1, 1949, represented not merely the conclusion of a century marked by fragmentation, foreign domination, and civil strife, but also the emergence of a new geopolitical actor whose influence would reverberate far beyond its borders. For the first time in modern history, the Chinese people consolidated political authority under a revolutionary government, dismantling the remnants of feudalism, militarism, and colonial subjugation. This transformation was more than domestic; it signaled a profound reconfiguration of the global order in the early Cold War era.

The establishment of the PRC coincided with the intensification of ideological polarization between capitalist and socialist blocs. China's transition from a semi-feudal, semi-colonial society into a socialist state became a powerful symbol for oppressed nations worldwide, inspiring anti-colonial struggles and revolutionary movements across Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Within this context, the Indochina region—comprising Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia—emerged as a critical arena where China's policies and support intersected with local aspirations for independence.

China's assistance to the revolutionary forces in Indochina was multifaceted: material aid, military training, political recognition, and ideological encouragement. These contributions provided strategic depth to the anti-colonial resistance, enabling the movements to withstand the encirclement of

imperialist powers. Yet, this support was not without complexity. While it accelerated the revolutionary momentum, it also introduced constraints, dependencies, and long-term consequences that shaped the trajectory of each nation's struggle. Thus, the period 1949–1954 stands as a historically significant juncture, where China's policies simultaneously empowered and limited the revolutionary endeavors of the three Indochina countries.

By situating China's role within the broader historical and ideological currents of the Cold War, this study seeks to illuminate the dual nature of Chinese influence—both as a catalyst for liberation and as a source of structural challenges. The analysis underscores the enduring historical significance of this relationship, offering lessons that remain relevant for contemporary regional dynamics and strategies toward China.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This article employs a multi-layered methodological framework to examine China's relationship with Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia during the formative years of the Cold War (1949–1954). At its core, the study adopts a historical approach, reconstructing the evolution of Sino-Indochina relations by situating policies, events, and diplomatic exchanges within their specific temporal and geopolitical contexts. This method allows for a nuanced understanding of how China's domestic transformation and international positioning shaped its engagement with the region.

Complementing the historical lens, a logical-analytical approach is applied to interpret the underlying characteristics of Chinese diplomatic tradition. By examining ideological foundations, strategic imperatives, and cultural-political continuities, the study identifies the factors that influenced China's policy orientation toward Indochina. This approach highlights the interplay between pragmatic security concerns—such as countering U.S. intervention—and ideological solidarity with revolutionary movements.

Furthermore, the research integrates policy analysis, focusing on three dimensions:

International context: the global Cold War environment, the rise of socialist solidarity, and the strategic calculations of major powers.

Domestic situation in China: the consolidation of the new regime, economic reconstruction, and the need to secure borders and legitimacy.

Strategic goals: China's pursuit of regional influence, its effort to establish itself as a leader of anti-colonial struggles, and its balancing act between support and control.

By synthesizing these approaches, the study provides a comprehensive assessment of the impact of China's policies on the revolutionary movements in Indochina. It evaluates not only the immediate military and political outcomes but also the broader socio-political consequences that shaped the trajectories of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. This methodological design ensures that the analysis captures both the historical specificity of the 1949–1954 period and its enduring significance in the study of international relations and regional history.

3. RESEARCH RESULTS

Following the founding of the People's Republic of China on December 5, 1949, President Ho Chi Minh sent a congratulatory telegram to Chairman Mao Zedong, affirming: *"The Vietnamese and Chinese peoples have a fraternal relationship spanning thousands of years of history. From now on, this relationship will become even closer to develop the freedom and happiness of our two peoples and to protect world democracy and lasting peace."* (Ho Chi Minh Complete Works.1995.Volume 5. P. 717). On January 14, 1950, President Ho Chi Minh declared: *"The Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam is the only legitimate Government of the entire Vietnamese people... The Democratic Republic Government is ready to establish diplomatic relations with any government that respects the equal rights, territorial sovereignty, and national*

sovereignty of Vietnam, in order to protect peace and build democracy in the world jointly." (Ho Chi Minh Complete Works.1995. Volume 6. P. 7-8). The following day, January 15, 1950, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, Hoang Minh Giam, sent a message to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of China, Zhou Enlai, recognizing the People's Republic of China and announcing the decision to establish official diplomatic relations. Three days later, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China sent a reply to the Vietnamese Government's message of January 15, stating: *"The Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China recognizes that the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam is the legitimate Government representing the will of the Vietnamese people. The Central Government of the People's Republic of China is willing to establish diplomatic relations with the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and exchange ambassadors to strengthen relations between the two countries and enhance friendly cooperation between the two countries"* (Xiao, X . 2014).

The establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries also had immense material significance because, from this point on, the Vietnamese people's resistance would receive practical assistance from the Chinese Government and people, and China would also serve as a bridge for assistance from other socialist countries to Vietnam.

Immediately after establishing diplomatic relations, President Ho Chi Minh secretly traveled to China to discuss with Chinese leaders the issue of assisting Vietnam in its resistance war. China became the first country to assist Vietnam. The Vietnamese people's resistance war against the French ultimately achieved victory, thanks in no small part to this assistance. However, China's assistance was not limited to Vietnam but also included Laos and Cambodia. Indochina was a unified battlefield, with Vietnam playing a central role. China's aid to Vietnam was direct, while that to Laos and Cambodia was indirect. China provided comprehensive assistance to the three Indochina countries, encompassing weapons, ammunition, food, education, training, and advice. China's assistance was both supportive and binding, reflected in its positive and limiting aspects.

3.1. Positive impacts on China

China's policy toward the three Indochina countries: Ensuring the security of China's southern region.

When analyzing the reasons why China actively supported the revolutionary movements in the three Indochina countries during the period 1949–1954, several prominent factors can be identified, such as: the ideological relationship between the socialist countries; the division of roles between China and the Soviet Union in the world proletarian revolutionary movement; and the personal relationships between leaders such as Mao Zedong, Ho Chi Minh, and Stalin.

However, the most fundamental and strategically significant motivation driving China's intervention and aid to the Indochina revolution was the need to ensure national security on its southern border. China consistently recognized national security as its fundamental and paramount interest – a prerequisite for the country's survival and development. In the context of the expanding Cold War, China viewed the three strategic hotspots of Korea, Taiwan, and Indochina as "encirclement fronts" used by the United States to contain and isolate China from three directions: the East, the South, and the Southeast. Therefore, supporting Vietnam and the resistance movement in Indochina was not only an international responsibility but also part of China's strategy for defending its southern border. Chinese documents from that period show that China viewed assistance to Vietnam not merely as an international obligation, but also as essential to its own security interests. As one Chinese source noted, "If France conquered Vietnam, would our borders remain secure? If France had conquered Vietnam, it would have directly threatened us. Therefore, aid to Vietnam is an international obligation and also serves to consolidate our victory" (Ly Kien. 2002. P. 67). This perspective was clearly manifested in China's approach to the 1954 Geneva Conference. Aiming to prevent the risk of deep American intervention in Indochina – as had happened in the Korean Peninsula – China chose a path of strategic compromise with Western countries.

As a donor to the revolutionary movements in the three Indochina countries, China became an ally of Vietnam at the Geneva Accords. This Conference brought China many important benefits. First, China eliminated the risk of Western intervention, especially in the United States, in Indochina, thereby avoiding confrontation with the US and ensuring the security of its southern border. The division of Vietnam – with the North becoming an ally of China and the South under Western influence – also created a safe "buffer zone" for China.

For Laos and Cambodia, the two governments pledged not to allow foreign military bases on their territory unless another country threatened their security. Laos, however, allowed France to maintain two bases in Seno and the Mekong River valley, meaning it continued to rely on France instead of the United States for defense. The agreements also imposed arms restrictions on the three Indochina countries by prohibiting North and South Vietnam from importing additional military equipment to enhance their capabilities. In contrast, Laos and Cambodia were only allowed to import weapons necessary for territorial defense. Furthermore, Vietnam was not allowed to call upon additional foreign military advisors. At the same time, the agreements allowed Laos to keep 1,500 French officers and non-commissioned officers for army training. They allowed Cambodia to invite the military advisors necessary for its defense (Joyaux, F.1981. P. 315).

These terms, from a strategic perspective, were all aimed at preventing American military involvement in the Indochina Peninsula – both directly (through the establishment of bases) and indirectly (through the deployment of military advisors or the provision of arms aid).

Beyond security considerations, the Geneva Conference also offered China a strategic opportunity to enhance its international standing.

In a context where it was not yet widely recognized, particularly not yet a full member of the United Nations, participating in negotiations on an equal footing with major powers such as Britain, France, the United States, and the Soviet Union marked a significant breakthrough in China's diplomacy. As the largest aid provider to the people of Indochina during the resistance against French colonialism, China was invited to participate in the Geneva Conference as one of the key countries, which helped Beijing partially break the isolation imposed by the US embargo after the Korean War.

Their pride and confidence were most clearly expressed in the editorial published in the People's Daily on July 22, 1954:

The editorial published in *People's Daily* on July 22, 1954, most clearly conveyed China's pride and confidence: "For the first time, the People's Republic of China participated in negotiations on major international issues alongside other great powers as one of the major powers. China made its own contributions to these negotiations, and world public opinion widely welcomed them" (Qiang Zhai. 1994. P. 152).

This statement reflects a significant shift for the People's Republic of China (PRC) on the international stage. China's first-ever participation in negotiations as a major power demonstrates widespread recognition of its growing standing within the international community.

Improving Relations with the West: Immediately after the Geneva Conference, relations between China and Western countries showed clear signs of improvement.

China's unwavering stance against imperialism, its commitment to peace, and its peaceful foreign policy left a deep impression on Western public opinion. China befriended many countries through this Conference, leading to improved Sino-British relations and the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries at the chargé d'affaires level (June 17, 1954). This also demonstrated the failure of the US's attempts to boycott China's participation in major international events (Pan Yining. 2011. P. 46).

In fact, the Geneva Conference was a good opportunity for China to engage with and improve relations with Western countries. During the Geneva Conference, China had numerous contacts with representatives from the United States, the United Kingdom, and France.

Besides the issues of North Korea and Vietnam, we also need to prepare documents and opinions on other issues related to China, security, and peace issues in the Far East and Asia. In particular, we need to develop the economy and trade, transportation, and commerce between countries, ease international tensions, and gradually and effectively break down the US embargo. In addition to the Conference, we also need to conduct contacts and exchanges between China and the UK, France, and Canada. We must carefully prepare for all these issues (Qian, J. 2005. P. 157).

The exchanges between Prime Minister Zhou Enlai and British Foreign Secretary Eden evidenced this:

On May 30, Zhou Enlai received former British Trade Minister Wilson and Conservative MP John Brow from the UK. Both sides agreed to promote trade relations and establish trade offices in each country. During this meeting,

Zhou Enlai also spoke about China's representation at the United Nations, suggesting that Britain had some influence on this matter. Zhou Enlai hoped that Britain could clearly communicate its differing views to the world, thereby potentially influencing the US (Qian, J. 2005. P. 272).

At the meeting between Zhou Enlai and Eden on the evening of June 1, 1954, the two sides discussed Sino-British relations, and the foreign ministers of both countries reached a verbal agreement to establish representative offices in the capitals of both countries.

On June 3, the British Foreign Office announced that China had agreed to allow British traders greater freedom of movement, sent a diplomatic delegation to London, reviewed cases involving detained British citizens, and would facilitate the departure of British traders from China (Nguyen Thi Phuong Hoa. 2011. P. 72)

Following the Geneva Conference, trade between China and Western European countries increased significantly. Within two years, the trade turnover between China and Western Europe doubled, from \$173.4 million in 1954 to \$226.2 million in 1955 and \$326 million in 1956 (Joyaux, F. 1981. P. 255).

After more than a year of hard work following the Geneva Conference, friendly relations and cooperation among China, India, and other Southeast Asian countries developed remarkably, and the surrounding environment improved significantly. China's friendly relations and cooperation with India, Myanmar, Indonesia, and others have served as an example of peaceful coexistence among nations with different social systems worldwide. The idea of maintaining neutrality and avoiding participation in military blocs or alliances was widely supported in many Asian countries. It became an important trend in international political life at the time. The US plot to encircle China with "Asians fighting Asians" was completely thwarted.

China's actions perfectly illustrate the observation: *"China cannot help but take advantage of the Geneva Conference to try to loosen its grip"* (Joyaux, F. 1981. P. 237).

3.2 . Negative impacts on China from its policy of involvement in Indochina

Although China actively provided aid to Vietnam and was deeply involved in resolving the Indochina issue, this policy also brought many negative consequences for China, both in foreign and domestic affairs.

Firstly, it resulted in the loss of the opportunity to establish diplomatic relations with France.

As early as the end of 1949, with the Chinese People's Liberation Army approaching the Sino-Vietnamese border, the French colonial Government in Indochina took steps to compromise in order to limit China's influence in the region. Specifically, when approximately 30,000 remnants of the Chinese Nationalist army fled to northern Vietnam, Prime Minister Zhou Enlai sent an ultimatum on

November 29, 1949, warning that if the French Government accepted these forces, they would bear the full consequences. In response, the French High Envoy to Indochina, Leon Pignon, pledged to refuse to accept them and was ready to expel all foreign troops illegally stationed in Vietnam. In diplomatic statements, the French Government signaled its readiness to establish diplomatic relations with the newly established People's Republic of China, while hinting at a reassessment of its policy towards China based on strategic interests in Indochina. This was seen as an "olive branch" offered by France to Beijing, at a time when China was eager for international recognition and seeking channels to expand economic and trade relations with the West, especially in Europe. However, faced with the need to ensure border security in the South and its international obligations to the revolutionary movement in Vietnam – a socialist country in the midst of a fierce resistance war – China was forced to abandon the opportunity to establish diplomatic relations with France. This reflects a conflict of interest between the desire for international integration and regional security strategy, forcing China to accept sacrificing potential diplomatic relations to maintain its influence in Indochina.

Secondly, there was the economic pressure from aid to the Indochina War.

Besides Indochina, China also suffered heavily from the Korean War (1950–1953), a war that was extremely costly in terms of workforce, resources, and finances:

infantry divisions, along with 16 artillery divisions, 10 armored divisions, 12 air force divisions, and 10 tank regiments, totaled 2.4 million troops participating in the war. Of these, the Chinese army suffered 114,000 casualties and 21,600 deaths due to severe injuries; the total expenditure of war supplies was 5.6 million tons, including 250,000 tons of ammunition (Qian, J. 2005. P. 22).

As a newly established nation after the revolution, China's economy was weak, its agricultural and industrial infrastructure was backward, and its military logistics were inadequate. The losses from the Korean War clearly revealed the limitations in its defense and economic capabilities when directly confronting imperialist powers, especially the United States.

Due to China's involvement in the Korean War, China became even more isolated from the West, particularly the United States. For the first time in history, the Chinese and Americans confronted each other on the battlefield. This military confrontation with the United States prevented China from trading with major Western nations. (Li, H. 2006. P. 31)

Therefore, the Chinese leadership realized that it was impossible to sustain a prolonged war on multiple fronts and that it was necessary to shift the strategic focus to building the country in peace. China's policy towards the three Indochina countries during the period 1949–1954, although strategic and actively supporting the national liberation movements, still had many limitations, both internally and in its foreign relations.

Third, China's policy of aligning with the Soviet Union and its decision to support the revolutions in Indochina placed it in confrontation with the United States and the Western bloc.

Becoming a "pillar of anti-imperialism" in Asia led to China's diplomatic, economic, and scientific-technological isolation. The US embargo and isolation, coupled with Western European suspicions, severely limited its access to Western capital, technology, and markets – crucial elements for the post-war recovery and development of the Chinese economy. The most obvious consequence was China's continued exclusion from the United Nations, particularly the continued holding of the Republic of China's (Taiwan) seat on the Security Council. Beijing's attempts to assert its international role were hampered, and this only began to change somewhat after the Geneva Conference, when China sought to break the encirclement through diplomatic engagement with Western countries such as the UK and France.

3.3 Impacts of China's policies on the three Indochina countries

3.3.1 Positive impacts of China's policies on the three Indochina countries

Commenting on the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, General Vo Nguyen Giap stated:

The year 1949 witnessed the glorious victory of the Chinese Revolution and the birth of the People's Republic of China. This great historical event, which changed the course of events in Asia and the world, had a significant impact on the Vietnamese people's war of liberation. Vietnam, no longer surrounded by enemies, was thereafter geographically linked to the Socialist Bloc (Vo Nguyen Giap. 1962. P. 22).

The establishment of the People's Republic of China had a profound impact on the three Indochina countries across military, political, economic, and diplomatic spheres.

Material and technical aid from China played a particularly important role, significantly contributing to enhancing the combat strength of the main forces.

According to statistics, in 1950, Vietnam received a total of 3,983 tons of aid from China. Specifically, this included: 1,020 tons of weapons and ammunition, including weapons brought back by Vietnamese units after training in China; 161 tons of military equipment; 71 tons of military supplies; 20 tons of medicine and medical supplies; 2,634 tons of rice; 30 Molotov trucks; and 120 tons of gasoline, oil, and auto parts (Nguyen Huy Toan. 1996. P. 21).

Although it accounted for only about 18.5% of the total volume of supplies used by the Vietnamese army in 1950, the quality of this aid was particularly high (Nguyen Thi Phuong Hoa. 2011. P. 100).

Thanks to modern weapons, advanced equipment, and timely logistics, the combat capabilities of the main units on the Northern battlefield were significantly enhanced, creating favorable conditions for the Vietnamese army to shift from a defensive to an offensive strategic posture. Notably:

From the beginning of 1950, in the context of newly liberated China, where the lives of the people, especially in the South China region, were still fraught with difficulties, our friendly country prioritized providing aid to Vietnam :

2,634 tons of rice. From the end of 1950 to 1954, although China was participating in the anti-American and anti-Korean resistance, the amount of rice supplied to Vietnam was maintained. In 1951, it was 4,210 tons; in 1952, 150 tons; and in 1953, 1,810 tons (State Planning Committee, National Archives III, HS 1743).

Chinese aid was not only the largest source of supplies but also the most effective support for the entire Border Campaign. As General Vo Nguyen Giap noted: "*Chinese aid was the most important and effective source of supply for the campaign*" (Vo Nguyen Giap. 2001. *The Road to Dien Bien Phu*. P. 102).

Although the quantity was not large compared to the total need, food aid from China, in the context of both countries being at war, demonstrated Beijing's deep commitment to Vietnam and helped Vietnamese troops maintain the initiative in major campaigns.

This support not only contributed significantly to the gradual victories of the resistance against the French but also provided impetus for the steady development of the national liberation movements in Laos and Cambodia. This has been confirmed:

The Vietnamese people, starting from a point where they had no guns in their hands, built small guerrilla units, gradually developing them into a heroic people's army of several hundred thousand, along with strong local and guerrilla forces throughout the country. The people of Cambodia and Laos consolidated their armed forces quite strongly (Party Documents. 2011.Vol. 12. P. 8).

The maturation of the revolutions in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia was a result of many factors, but China's support cannot be denied. Particularly in Vietnam, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam was established in 1945, but no country in the world recognized it until 1950. Therefore, China's recognition and establishment of diplomatic relations with Vietnam changed Vietnam's position.

With China's support, the Soviet Union and other socialist countries successively recognized Vietnam, officially placing it in the family of socialist countries.

China's recognition of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, led by the Socialist bloc, secured Vietnam's position on the international stage. This was an extremely important event in the Vietnamese people's struggle for independence. Therefore, we have designated January 18 each year as "the day of diplomatic victory" (Hoang Van Hoan. 1986. P. 338).

China's support for Vietnam was significant not only in material terms but also in moral terms. The Chinese Government once declared: "Seven hundred million Chinese people are the strong backing of the Vietnamese people; the vast land of China is the solid rear base of Vietnam" (Hoang Van Hoan, 1986, p. 340). In terms of material aid, *China* resolved the difficulties of shortages of weapons, food, and supplies. In terms of morale, China consistently expressed its support for the national liberation struggles of the people of the three Indochina countries. China's assistance caused great anxiety among the French colonialists.

With the support of the Soviet Union and China, the revolutionary movements in the three Indochina countries achieved solidarity and close ties with the region and the international community, guided by the correct policies of the Communist International and the Indochina Communist Party. This was demonstrated, culminating in the victory at Dien Bien Phu, forcing France to sit down at the negotiating table at the Geneva Conference in 1954. The Geneva Conference, attended by a large number of international journalists, provided the world with an opportunity to understand the struggle of the Vietnamese people, in particular, and the Indochina people in general, thereby supporting their struggle. Furthermore, through this Conference, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam gained a clearer understanding of other countries' positions and countered the United States' intentions. This Conference also marked the first time that all major powers recognized the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the three Indochina countries. Clearly, this was a great victory and entirely consistent with the national interests and principles of the people of the three Indochina countries: sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity.

For Vietnam, the Geneva Conference also created a legal basis for the subsequent struggle, especially in negotiations with the United States at the Paris Conference on Vietnam.

With China's policies regarding ethnic Chinese resulting in a relatively moderate Chinese population during this period, and Vietnam also implementing policies to facilitate Chinese business and living in Vietnam, these factors served as catalysts for improving Vietnam-China relations during this time.

During this period, the relationship between China and the three Indochina countries was primarily focused on Vietnam. Regarding Laos and Cambodia, since China had not yet established diplomatic relations with either, and their relations were mainly with the resistance governments, China's influence was more pronounced in Vietnam. This relationship with Laos and Cambodia became more evident in later stages.

3.3.2 Negative impacts on the three Indochina countries

Behind China's immense contributions to the people of the three Indochina countries lie complex implications, not only for international relations but also for the bonds between the Vietnamese, Laotian, and Cambodian peoples in the post-colonial era. China's extensive involvement in the Indochina War, as well as its role at the 1954 Geneva Conference, helped shape the regional political landscape for decades afterward. However, this event also left many complex repercussions in relations between China and the Vietnamese revolutionary Government, as well as within the international diplomatic process in which China participated. According to Western journalists, Zhou Enlai – a central figure in the Chinese negotiating team at Geneva – later expressed deep regret over the outcomes of the Geneva Conference. In an interview with journalist James Reston (*The New York Times*) in August 1971, when asked whether China wanted to mediate between the United States and

North Vietnam in the ongoing war, Zhou bluntly replied: *"We do not want to mediate in any way."* *"We were terribly deceived at the first Geneva Conference"* (Qiang Zhai. 2000. P. 143). On another occasion, he affirmed to Harrison Salisbury that he would *"never again"* pressure Hanoi to accept an international solution to the war based on the Geneva model (Qiang Zhai. 2000. P. 143). These statements not only reflected Zhou Enlai's personal frustration but also indirectly acknowledged the unintended consequences of China's concessions at Geneva. Specifically, forcing Vietnam to accept the temporary partition of the country at the 17th parallel, or stripping the Laotian and Cambodian resistance forces of their representative role, were considered short-term strategic concessions in exchange for the long-term goal of "neutralizing" the region and avoiding direct American intervention on China's southern border. However, as history has proven, the war did not end. The Geneva Accords marked a new, more intense phase with the extensive American presence in South Vietnam and Southeast Asia. From that point on, mistrust grew between Vietnam and China, laying the groundwork for deeper rifts later.

Furthermore, in Vietnam, the land reform of 1953-1956, although achieving its main goals of restructuring land ownership, increasing rice production, and breaking the control wealthy farmers and landlords exerted over the rural population, also created significant chaos and instability. The disruption and instability caused by the land reform demonstrated the error of applying the extreme Maoist formula of class struggle to a small and fragile rural society, where many landlords and wealthy farmers sympathized with the Communist Party in its resistance against the French.

Looking back at the period 1949–1954, it is clear that China's policy towards the three Indochina countries was a combination of revolutionary ideals and geopolitical calculations. While China's contributions to this period are undeniable, the limitations of its "compromise for stability" approach have left significant marks on the region's history – and even on the perceptions of those who designed that policy.

3.4 Impact on the national liberation movements in Southeast Asia

The victory of the resistance movement in Indochina, with China's support, created a powerful ripple effect on national liberation movements in Southeast Asia, especially after the victory at Dien Bien Phu, which strongly encouraged the national liberation movement in Southeast Asia and around the world.

Dien Bien Phu was not merely a military victory. This battle was symbolic. It was the "Valmy" of colonized peoples. It was the affirmation of Asians and Africans against Europeans... (Goscha, Christopher E. 2022. P. 3)

Many political forces in Indonesia, Malaya, and Thailand closely monitored developments in Indochina, viewing them as proof of the possibility of defeating colonialism.

However, this impact was not uniform. While some left-wing movements were encouraged, many newly independent governments in Southeast Asia chose a strongly anti-communist path to avoid a protracted conflict scenario like that in Indochina. This contributed to a clear divergence in political orientation within the region.

China's policy toward Indochina contributed to transforming Southeast Asia from a post-colonial region into a space of strategic competition between great powers. The confrontation between China and the United States, indirectly through conflicts in Indochina, laid the groundwork for the long-term involvement of great powers in the region.

The impacts of the 1949–1954 period did not end after the Geneva Conference but continued to shape Southeast Asia for many decades to come. Indochina became the focal point of conflicts throughout the Cold War, while Southeast Asia sought to balance the great powers and protect its strategic autonomy.

China's policy toward the three Indochina countries during 1949–1954 had profound, multifaceted impacts on Southeast Asia. Through its support and guidance of the resistance movements in Indochina, China not only played a decisive role in shaping the course of the Indochina War but also altered the balance of power, fostered the spread of national liberation movements linked to communism, and accelerated the internationalization and militarization of Southeast Asia within the context of the Cold War.

4. CONCLUSION

The founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 ended more than a century of national division, war, foreign invasion, and civil conflict. For the first time, the Chinese people gained control of their own country under a revolutionary regime, putting an end to the rule of feudal, militaristic, and colonial powers. This marked the first time that working people played a central role in political, economic, and social life, an event of immense historical significance not only for the Chinese people but also for the entire international landscape, especially for the socialist bloc. China became a strategic ally of the Soviet Union, contributing to a shift in the international balance of power during the early stages of the Cold War. Simultaneously, it encouraged national liberation movements in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The successful rise of a semi-feudal colonial country to build a socialist state has become a powerful model of inspiration for anti-colonial and anti-imperialist revolutionary movements around the world.

Furthermore, China's assistance provided a strategic foothold for the anti-colonial resistance movement of the people of the three Indochina countries, breaking the encirclement of the revolutionary movement in Indochina by imperialist powers. In particular, for the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, which was in the midst of its resistance against France, having a large neighboring country with a socialist regime created a solid rear base both geographically and politically. China became the first socialist country to recognize the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (January 1950), paving the way for other socialist countries such as the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries to follow suit and provide aid. Besides diplomatic support, China also provided material aid, military training, and advisors, making a significant contribution to the victory in the Border Campaign (1950) and subsequent campaigns. China's recognition and support for the resistance forces in Indochina elevated the conflict from a single colonial issue to an international one within the Cold War context. This compelled major powers to take notice and participate in resolving the issue through forums such as the 1954 Geneva Conference. China not only provided aid but also disseminated its revolutionary model, from political and military organization to methods of struggle. This directly impacted the operation of the resistance apparatus and later the new states in all three Indochina countries. However, this influence also challenged the independence of the Indochina nations in their revolutionary and foreign policy paths. With China's active participation, the three Indochina countries coordinated more closely in their national liberation struggles, contributing to the formation of a regional alliance within the trajectory of the socialist revolution. The relationship between Vietnam, China, Laos, and Cambodia during this period developed based on a shared goal of fighting colonialism and imperialism. However, China's assistance to the three Indochina countries was also double-edged. Amid economic, military, and diplomatic difficulties, the Indochina revolutionary forces were forced to rely on aid from China. This somewhat diminished their independence in formulating resistance strategies, especially for the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

China's intervention also set a precedent for hierarchical relations within the regional socialist bloc: China considered itself the center of revolution in Asia and assumed the role of "big brother," creating a sense of superiority in its relations with the three Indochina countries. This led to an imbalance in

bilateral relations, easily causing tension, suspicion, and difficulty in maintaining equal relations, especially after the revolutionary movements in Indochina achieved victory. This placed the three Indochina countries in confrontation with the West sooner than expected.

The open alliance with China and other socialist countries made the three Indochina countries targets of encirclement and intervention strategies from the US and the West—this increased military and diplomatic pressure over a long period. The quality of Chinese aid and geostrategic calculations were driven by self-interest: Although Chinese aid was significant, many assistance decisions were influenced more by China's security calculations and geopolitical influence than by the pure interests of the Indochina revolution. Some policies aimed at controlling the strategic buffer zone in the South, rather than the stated goals of proletarian internationalism.

From China's policy towards the three Indochina countries, it can be said that although ideology was an important factor in the Cold War, national interest was the primary factor influencing China's actions towards these countries. In the modern era, with the establishment of the People's Republic of China, although there was shared sympathy for and influence of Western colonialism, the relationship between China and the people of the three Indochina countries remained essentially that of a large country versus a small one. The three Indochina countries still served as "subordinates" or "protective bulwarks" of China. Therefore, the people of the three Indochina countries must always correctly understand this issue in their relations with China. This applies not only to the past but also to the present, enabling them to respond skillfully and appropriately to China. Lessons should be learned not only in relations with China but also in relations among the Indochina countries themselves. During the war, the three Indochina countries united and fought together as a single front, a single battlefield, and this strengthened their power. Therefore, in the current period, all three countries need to strengthen further their solidarity and cooperation to develop their economies jointly, stabilize their political systems, and address traditional and non-traditional security issues, as well as global challenges. The relationship among the three Indochina countries is strategic and historical, and it exists within specific circumstances. When conditions and circumstances change, the content and form of the relationship must be adjusted accordingly, based on the principle of correctly resolving each nation's interests in conjunction with the common interests of the three countries, in line with the general trends of the times.

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