

Odd Arne Westad: *Cold War & Revolution: Soviet-American Rivalry and the Origins of the Chinese Civil War, 1944-1946*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1993. 260 pp.

This book is about the interaction between the emergence of the Cold War and the outbreak of the Chinese Civil War, which lasted until 1949 and ended in the victory of Mao and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Methodologically it is informed by a "four-cornered pattern of analysis," which intends to give "equal importance to explaining the perceptions and actions" of each of the parties involved - the CCP, the Guomindang (GMD), the United States, and the Soviet Union.

The analysis is based on recently available materials from Chinese and American archives. Concerning the Chinese material there is a useful appendix, "A Word on Chinese Archives and Materials," which indicates that the best and most useful holdings of materials are located in Taiwan.

Although Westad's book would like to give equal attention to all the major players involved in the outbreak of the Chinese Civil War, his main emphasis is really on the Chinese actors' perception of the super-powers and their emerging conflict. From early on Mao was convinced that the CCP would not stand a chance against a Guomindang backed by both the United States and the Soviet Union, and that it therefore was of the utmost importance to prevent civil war in China. However, from early 1946 it was clear that relations between Stalin and Chiang Kai-shek were worsening and Mao

became less hesitant to engage the Guomindang militarily. For their part, Chiang Kai-shek and the GMD were equally convinced that the CCP could be held in check as long as the two super-powers recognized the GMD government in Nanjing. Chiang Kai-shek's attempt to maintain relations with both super-powers clearly paid off, and, as Westad notes, in 1945 Chiang was closer to unifying China than he had ever been before. However, the emerging cold war forced a reluctant Chiang to choose sides thereby weakening his position. Chiang chose to respond by moving his troops into the Northeast and by embarking on a military campaign he lost in the end.

It could be argued that exclusive focus on external factors such as super-power rivalry in explaining the origins of the Chinese civil war precludes other equally important factors such as the struggle between lines or factions within the Party. However, apparently Mao was in full control of the CCP during these years, and therefore Mao did not need to frame his policy in light of internal factors. This may very well be the case, although it appears problematic to assume that a CCP decision to resist the GMD was exclusively based on the perceived strength and role of the super-powers. A consideration of the internal strength and position of the Chinese players must have played a role.

Westad has impressive control over the Chinese source material. However, the book is not only for China specialists. In a broad sense it deals with the globalization of the Soviet-American conflict and how the overarching conflict influences and shapes local conflicts. In this way it becomes essential reading for people interested in other third world wars during the years in question.

15 years ago Scandinavian studies of Modern and Contemporary Chinese affairs were largely absent. The few studies, which came out, were almost entirely in Scandinavian languages and therefore did not have a wider impact outside the Nordic area. Westad's book is a beautiful example of how this deplorable situation has changed to the better and how solid work of international quality now is being produced by Scandinavian scholars.

Kjeld Erik Brødsgaard  
University of Copenhagen