

China's Strategies for the Cold War: The Third Front Construction

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Abstract: “The Third Front Construction” (TFC) is a national strategic layout adjustment carried out in 60s-70s of twentieth century. It was caused by the Cold War. Its international significance should be paid attention to in the field of history and international politics. Through historical analysis, it was not only a war preparation nor an economic activity, but also a strong support for China's foreign policy and a case study of China's thoughts in dealing with the Cold War.

1. Introduction

In the 1960s, the Cold War entered an incandescent stage. Forced by the severe international situation, China is determined to change the industrial layout which is seriously unbalanced in the region. Therefore, it has launched a national industrial strategic layout adjustment, with war preparation as the main purpose and with relocation and construction as the main method. This strategic adjustment is called “The Third Front Construction” (TFC) ^[1].

The academic research at home and abroad arose immediately at the end of the TFC, with the continuous opening of historical documents, increasingly active academic activities and a number of important research results ^[2]. Although these research results in regard to the Cold War as one of the motivations of the TFC, it is seldom paid attention to that the TFC is actually an interaction between China and the Cold War.

This paper systematically reviews the international environment faced by China in the period of the TFC, and explores the mutual support between internal affairs and diplomacy, in order to deepen the world's understanding of China's consistent path of peaceful development.

The TFC began and stopped both by the Cold War. Although the protagonists of the Cold War were the United States and the Soviet Union, there is no doubt that the confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union in Asia revolved around China and China's surrounding areas. “The Strategic triangle between China, the United States and the Soviet Union” formed during the Cold War influenced the direction of the Cold War. Meanwhile, the Cold War also deeply influenced the internal and foreign affairs of China and its relevant countries. Most of China's strategic decisions at that time were the results of the interaction between China, the United States and the Soviet Union. The rise and fall of the TFC is the reflection of the direct influence of the Cold War situation on China's internal affairs. Meanwhile, the strategic layout adjustment brought by the TFC has also become the strategic cornerstone for China to finally walk out of the Cold War.

2. Cold War Trends

The trend of the world is often dominated by the super powers, which must also respond to the development of the world situation. As the two most influential countries in the world after World War II, the United States and the Soviet Union launched the Cold War. New China, which had just been founded, could not stay out of it. After experiencing several stages of Sino-Soviet alliance, Sino-Soviet alliance against the United States, Sino-Soviet break-up, US-Soviet alliance against China, and Sino-US's rebuilding the balance of power together, China gradually showed its own attitude towards the Cold War. During this period, Sino-Soviet break-up and US-Soviet alliance

against China directly led to the start of the TFC, and the strategic strength brought by the TFC objectively contributed to the cooperation between China and the United States and reconstruction of the balance of super powers. Therefore, it is critical to clarify the influence of the Cold War on China in order to study the background of the TFC.

As the first major diplomatic action after the birth of the People's Republic of China, *the Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance between China and the Soviet Union* signed on February 14, 1950 officially announced to the world that China and the Soviet Union had established a military alliance. The treaty states that “in the event of a state of war between any of the Contracting States being invaded by Japan or by a State allied with Japan, the other Contracting State shall render military and other assistance with all its might”; “Neither party shall form any alliance against the other, nor shall it join in any group or any action or measure against the other”; “In the interest of consolidating peace and general security, the two sides will consult with each other on all major international issues concerning the common interests of the two countries.”^[3] The alliance between China and the Soviet Union, on one hand, signified China's “one-sided” entry into the socialist camp, on the other hand, signified China's entry into the Cold War battlefield^[4].

Eight months later, the United Nations captured Pyongyang, the capital of North Korea. The first four Chinese armies and three artillery divisions crossed the Yalu River that night and were deployed by the end of November, along with the Soviet air force and the Korean army. On the day President Harry S. Truman gave his press conference, MacArthur's army suffered one of the greatest defeats in the history. Over the next three years, 36,568 American soldiers died in North Korea^[5], whereas thousands of Chinese soldiers lost their lives in this war. The war brought great losses and incurable wounds to both sides, and relations between China and the United States sank to a freezing point. The Eisenhower administration refused to recognize the People's Republic of China but recognized the Republic of China. The three major China policies of not allowing the People's Republic of China into the United Nations have been unanimously endorsed by both the government and the Congress. This explicit anti-China policy led directly to the Taiwan Straits crises twice, and the hostility between China and the United States continued unabated for a long time to come. Sino-Soviet alliance against the United States became the most distinctive feature of China's diplomacy in the 1950s.

In the late 1950s, Sino-Soviet relations began to crack. The overbearing style of the Soviet Union and the rising national liberation movements in Asia, Africa and Latin America gradually led to differences and open debate between the two parties on issues such as ideology, relations within the socialist camp and the judgment of the world situation. Especially after the Soviet Communist Party 20th convention, China and the Soviet Union had a huge disagreement over how to evaluate Stalin. Subsequently, the Soviet Union's quest to build a long wave radio station and build a joint fleet in China led to the final break with China.

3. The TFC Supports China's Independent Foreign Policy

Independence is not only the national pursuit since modern China, but also the historical experience summarized by the CPC in the long-term revolutionary practice. For a party and a country to succeed, it must rely on its own strength, its own methods and its own will. No other individual, organization or state should or can interfere. What China has suffered since modern times are due to its inability to be independent, and all the struggles it has fought since modern times are for independence. The prerequisite of independence is self-reliance. In the Anti-Japanese War and the liberation war, MAO Zedong repeatedly clarified that the rely mainly on our own efforts is the dominant, the principle of foreign aid is complementary, and he points out that China's development is not isolated, because as long as it is against the imperialist countries and people around the world will be standing on a united front with us, but even so, we still need to emphasize on self-reliance, rely on our own strength to defeat the enemy. Since the founding of the People's Republic of China, China has pursued a “one-sided” policy in diplomacy. However, the so-called “lopsided” did not mean to completely fall to the Soviet Union, but on the basis of China's socialist belief, which means to be lopsided into the socialist camp. After the Soviet Union called for the

establishment of a long-wave radio station, the joint fleet, the withdrawal of Soviet experts, and the dismantling of the nuclear aid agreement, MAO Zedong pointed out that we should adhere to the principle of self-reliance and foreign aid as the auxiliary policy. In developing industry, agriculture, technology and culture, we should rely on our own strength, but at the same time we should learn from the experience of other countries. In socialist construction, the typical application of the dialectical relationship between internal and external causes is to adhere to the principle of self-reliance and foreign aid as a supplement. This policy not only promoted economic development, but also stimulated the struggle of the people in the third world countries for independence and liberation.

During the TFC period, when the Soviet Union was carrying out power politics, China resolutely carried out the policy of “independence” and safeguarded the national core interests. It even fought against the two superpowers with its only two fists. When Mao Zedong met with the Japanese Communist Party delegation in 1966, he said “Don't be afraid of isolation. Don't be afraid of war. If you're not ready to be isolated, when you are isolated, you panic. If you don't prepare for war, when war comes, there's nothing you can do. We are now ready for the Americans to fight against, for revisionism to fight against, for Us-Soviet cooperation to carve up China. We do this preparation so that when they punch in, we'll be ready. That's one possibility, and the other possibility is that they dare not come to bully us.”^[6] If independence is seen as a reflection of China's national temperament, then the TFC is undoubtedly a practice of this temperament. The TFC has not only strengthened China's national defense strength, but also greatly strengthened the confidence of China's diplomacy, and meanwhile enable China to show a flexible diplomatic attitude and a broader international vision^[7-10].

4. Conclusion

It can be said that the TFC is a great practice in which the Chinese people, especially the first generation of the CPC's leadership, organically combined Chinese traditional wisdom and Marxist theory, highly unified historical lessons and experience with China's actual geostrategy, and integrated the distribution of China's domestic productive forces with the world revolutionary ideal. The brewing and development of Chinese nationalism, the experience and lessons of China's revolutionary wars since modern times, the formation of China's concept of nation-state, the pursuit of China's dream of national modernization, all constitute the emergence of TFC decisions, rather than just for war preparation or economic reasons as understood by the outside world.

The Chinese people love peace and are not afraid of war. Even in the face of such a complex and severe situation as the Cold War, China's response posture is a defensive model based on the local, and combined with economic construction. The inherent logic of the TFC will become an indispensable part of the understanding of that period of history and the world's understanding of China.

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