



**UNIVERSITY  
OF TURKU**

## **Shaping the New China**

The International Propaganda of the People's Republic of China during the Korean War,  
1950-1953

Center for East Asian Studies  
Master's thesis

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### **Abstract**

This thesis delves into the international propaganda efforts of the People's Republic of China (PRC) during the Korean War, delineating the evolution of its strategies from 1950 to 1953. By scrutinizing war-related content in *People's China*, the PRC's primary English language magazine, this study unveils the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) deliberate efforts to craft diverse portrayals of the PRC for global audiences. The depiction of the PRC in *People's China* exhibits fluidity, adapting to shifts in the Korean War dynamics and global contexts. Additionally, the CCP's propaganda tactics exhibit flexibility, tailoring discourses in *People's China* to resonate with Southeast Asian readers through references to Pan-Asianism and anti-colonial sentiments. Furthermore, the CCP adeptly manipulates World War II memories and propagates conspiracy theories to stoke anti-American sentiments, a strategy evident in the contemporary "Wolf Warrior Diplomacy" and foreign propaganda of the PRC. This thesis not only contributes to the research of the early Cold War but also offers historical insights crucial for comprehending the PRC's contemporary overseas propaganda and diplomatic approaches.

**Keywords:** international propaganda, diplomacy, the Korean War, the Chinese Communist Party, the People's Republic of China, Cultural Cold War.

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# 1 Introduction

Following the end of World War II, European and Japanese colonies in East Asia were granted liberation and independence. However, as the Cold War dawned, several newly independent nations were swiftly divided into two separate entities. One such example is the Korean Peninsula, where in 1948 the Republic of Korea (ROK, South Korea) was established under the rule of capitalism, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK, North Korea) was established under the rule of communism. Similarly, in 1949, China was split into the People's Republic of China (中华人民共和国, PRC), governed by the Chinese Communist Party (中国共产党, CCP), and the Republic of China (中华民国, ROC/Taiwan), ruled by the Kuomintang (中国国民党, KMT). Both Mao Zedong, the leader of China, and Kim Il-sung, the leader of the DPRK, were keen to reunite their nations in the second quarter of 1949. Kim desired to reunite Korea, whereas Mao intended to conquer Tibet and Taiwan. They contended for Moscow's assistance to accomplish these goals. The start of the Korean War proved that, in the end, Moscow preferred North Korea over China on this matter.<sup>1</sup>

Although Mao Zedong was dissatisfied with the war that Kim Il-sung and Stalin were determined to start, he still offered his unwavering support and advocated for China's early intervention to bring an end to the war once it had erupted. It was only after the UN forces had begun advancing north of the 38th parallel that Stalin approached China to join the fight. According to Shen Zhihua, Mao made the decision to send troops to Korea in order to solidify the Sino-Soviet alliance, establish a strong foundation for the new regime, and protect Kim Il-sung to assume Mao's responsibility as the leader of the Asian communist revolution, despite the Soviet Union's initial refusal to send its air force.<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, consolidating its new-birth regime both domestically and abroad has been an essential concern for China in intervening in the Korean War. When the Korean War broke out in 1950, it was the second year of the establishment of the PRC. At that time, there were numerous counterrevolutionaries in mainland China who attempted to destroy the CCP's authority at the grassroots level and disseminated rumors that KMT would recover mainland China with the support of the U.S. after the outbreak of the Korean War.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, dealing

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<sup>1</sup> Zhihua Shen and Yafeng Xia, *A Misunderstood Friendship: Mao Zedong, Kim Il-Sung, and Sino-North Korean Relations, 1949-1976* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 27.

<sup>2</sup> Zhihua Shen 沈志華, *最後的天朝：毛澤東、金日成與中朝關係* *The Last "Celestial Empire": Mao Zedong, Kim Il Sung and Sino-North Korean Relations* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2017), 189.

<sup>3</sup> Masuda Hajimu, *Cold War Crucible* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 121-125 and 157-169.

with the Korean War was not merely a diplomatic issue for the PRC, but also crucial to consolidating its regime and maintaining its power.

As Liu Hailong points out, to achieve national interests, soft power is often used in conjunction with hard power, especially when hard power is implemented, soft power justifies hard power from the sidelines.<sup>4</sup> In the Korean War's case, at one hand China sent the Chinese People's Volunteer Army (中国人民志愿军, CPVA) to fight in the Korean War, which is referred to as the "Resist America and Aid Korea War/Campaign" (RAAK, 抗美援朝战争/运动) by China, at the other hand, China actively launched different propaganda campaigns to justify its intervention and legitimacy of its regime. This research aims to explore how China utilized propaganda to shape a favorable international image of China with the developments of the situation of the Korean War.

## 1.1 Literature Review

Political scientist Harold D. Lasswell, a pioneer in the study of propaganda, contends that propaganda has evolved into a crucial instrument for mass mobilization because it is less expensive than using force, bribery, and other methods. The most fundamental tool for social control in contemporary industrial society is propaganda, and totalitarian nations are better able to handle it than democracies.<sup>5</sup> According to Lasswell, totalitarian Communist regimes are veterans of propaganda. Peter Kenez first refers to the Soviet Union as the "Propaganda State" for the incredibly important role propaganda plays in creating the state and implementing policy and thinks its indoctrination was vital to its victory in its first decade.<sup>6</sup>

As Immanuel C. Y. Hsu points out, modern China encountered the Western world in two main directions: Russia from the north, and Britain and America from the south.<sup>7</sup> Liu Hailong refers to the two different types of propaganda represented by Russia and America as "Total Propaganda" and "Scientific Propaganda" respectively.<sup>8</sup> The "Total Propaganda" uses mass communication, education, social organization, political movements, culture, and art to create a relatively closed virtual environment and "force" a particular ideology into the minds

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<sup>4</sup> Hailong Liu 刘海龙, 宣传: 观念、话语及其正当化 *Propaganda: Ideas, Discourses, and Its Legitimation* (Beijing: Encyclopedia of China Publishing House, 2013), 314-317.

<sup>5</sup> Harold D. Lasswell, "Propaganda" in *Propaganda*, ed. Robert Jackall (New York: New York University Press, 1995), 17.

<sup>6</sup> Peter Kenez, *The Birth of the Propaganda State: Soviet Methods of Mass Mobilization, 1917-1929* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 1-8.

<sup>7</sup> Immanuel C. Y. Hsu 徐中约, 中国近代史 *The Rising of China*, trans. Ji Qiufeng (Beijing: Beijing World Publishing Cooperation, 2008), 85.

<sup>8</sup> Hailong Liu 刘海龙, 宣传: 观念、话语及其正当化 *Propaganda: Ideas, Discourses, and Its Legitimation*, 23.

of the populace by seizing control of the entire society's information system. The most typical state utilizing "Total Propaganda" is the USSR.<sup>9</sup> "Scientific Propaganda" is chosen with consideration for the audience's right to free will, the study of the audience's psychological characteristics, and the laws of communication, to influence the public to take the action that the propagandists want them to. The United States is a classic example of a country that uses this propaganda approach.<sup>10</sup>

Even though both propaganda models influenced China's society profoundly during the Republican China (1911-1949) period, the USSR's propaganda model had a deeper impact on Chinese main political parties. Just like the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the CCP actively implemented propaganda works after it was formed. Moreover, the CCP made propaganda one of its priorities from the very beginning of its founding due to the influence of Soviet Russia, and the Soviet-Russian propaganda idea was further strengthened in China with the CCP's triumph in the Civil War.<sup>11</sup> After the CCP came to power, it made the most of these propaganda resources. Hung Chang-Tai defines the PRC established by the CCP as the "Propaganda State" as well and argues that propaganda is a tool used by Communist governments to motivate the populace for political purposes as well as to convince and coerce them.<sup>12</sup> Liu Hailong also views that in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, China, characterized by "Total Propaganda" was a modern "Propaganda State": The state monopolized all information channels, and in the process of political socialization, propaganda permeated all aspects of daily life, including culture, art, education, and sports, creating a vast propaganda system.<sup>13</sup>

Moreover, Liu discovers that the political propaganda system created by the CCP since the Yan'an period, which was patterned on that of the Soviet Union and continues to influence mass communications today, contains several features: First, it has established the idea of "communication as propaganda" (传播即宣传). CCP regards all behaviors involving symbolic communication as integral parts of propaganda and requires them to convey a unified and one-voice message. It is also vital to restrict and censor outside information to establish a homogeneous symbolic environment. Second is the monolithic propaganda management system, where the "party principle" (党性原则) has been made the defining characteristic of

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 496.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 495.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 5.

<sup>12</sup> Chang-tai Hung, *Mao's New World: Political Culture in the Early People's Republic* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2010), 5 and 18.

<sup>13</sup> Hailong Liu 刘海龙, 宣传: 观念、话语及其正当化 *Propaganda: Ideas, Discourses, and Its Legitimation*, 5.

party periodicals and even all media, highlighting that the media must unconditionally follow the party's leadership and forbidding any semblance of independence. The third is the formation of a propaganda tradition via political campaigns.<sup>14</sup> This study would investigate the application of these propaganda doctrines by the CCP and the manner in which they were implemented.

Many scholars have discussed the strong presence and impact of the Soviet Union in China's internal propaganda work in the early years of the PRC. At the beginning of the PRC, China was highly economically and politically dependent on the USSR. USSR had been a model for China to imitate and learn in the early 1950s and extensive official effort was made to introduce Soviet culture to China, through which China was simultaneously culturally Russianized.<sup>15</sup> Chang Julian has made a comparative analysis of the Soviet Union and the PRC's propaganda machinery. Chang concludes that the earlier divisions of propaganda analysis do not offer a suitable framework for China's propaganda, which blends numerous traditions and is intentionally instructional and educational. The working mechanisms of CCP's propaganda in China throughout the 1950s were successful in many cases, including the propagation of highly regulated information, the invention of myths, and the construction of enduring conceptions of the Soviet Union.<sup>16</sup> According to Liu Hailong, "Total Propaganda" aims to shape the ideal individual.<sup>17</sup> Believing that the nature of human beings could be changed, both USSR and PRC launched many political campaigns to shape the ideal citizen, so-called the "Socialist New Man". Yu Minling examines how the USSR's propaganda experiences impacted the CCP's concrete propaganda work and the differences in the propaganda between the USSR and China in the case of the "Shaping the New Man" campaign. Yu argues that the fundamental underlying values of propaganda for "Socialism New Man" are the same for both parties, but the content of propaganda in China and the Soviet Union differ due to cultural variances, disparities in national development, and differences in the preferences and perceptions of the leaders.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Hailong Liu 劉海龍, "全球語境下中國宣傳模式嬗變及其邏輯 The Evolution of the Chinese Propaganda Model and Its Logic in the Global Context", *Twenty-First Century* 二十一世紀 no.182(2020): 24-25.

<sup>15</sup> Yan Li, *China's Soviet Dream: Propaganda, Culture, and Popular Imagination* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 1.

<sup>16</sup> Julian Chang, "Propaganda and perceptions: The selling of the Soviet Union in the People's Republic of China, 1950-1965", Ph.D. dissertation (Boston: Harvard University, 1995), 1.

<sup>17</sup> Hailong Liu 劉海龍, 宣传: 观念、话语及其正当化 *Propaganda: Ideas, Discourses, and Its Legitimation*, 495.

<sup>18</sup> Minling Yu 余敏玲, 形塑新人: 中共宣傳與蘇聯經驗 *Shaping the "New Man": CCP Propaganda and Soviet Experiences* (Taipei: Institute of Modern History Academia Sinica, 2015), 343-344.

Apart from its significant influence on China's propaganda, the USSR played an important role in China's early foreign affairs as well. The first larger cooperation of China and the USSR in international issues during the Cold War was the Korean War. Meanwhile, the war, the first chance for the PRC to engage in international affairs after it was formed, is an appropriate time and case to examine China's early international propaganda. The propaganda during the RAAK period has drawn much Chinese scholarly attention. Plenty of Chinese scholars discuss the CCP's domestic propaganda from the following aspects: First, they study the operations and the part performed by the organizations in influencing public opinion from propaganda networks (宣传网) like the General Association of Anti-American Aid (抗美援朝总会).<sup>19</sup> Second, they examine the traits of numerous propaganda techniques used in swaying public opinion as well as their effects, starting with the various propaganda mediums used during the RAAK era.<sup>20</sup> Third, they analyze the propaganda tactics for various audience groups beginning with domestic propaganda, global public opinion, and military propaganda.<sup>21</sup> However, most of these articles focus on internal propaganda and some articles are short and full of ideological dichotomy, which fails to examine the propaganda work of the CCP during the Korean War comprehensively and detailedly.

Apart from the propaganda organizations and their works, arts and literature were utilized by the CCP as an instrument of propaganda as well. Sun Hailong examines the RAAK literature in China and discovers that RAAK literature underlined the significance of aiding North Korea by emphasizing the intimate ties between China and North Korea, which was described as "lips and teeth" (唇亡齿寒). Additionally, a narrative pitting North Koreans and their society against South Koreans and their society used the binary opposition strategy to alter Chinese perceptions of the Korean peninsula during the RAAK period. In his research, Sun finds that CCP launched the RAAK literature production campaign in two ways: One was to send the selected writers to North Korea, but only to the safe zones of North Korea not the

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<sup>19</sup> Yan Wang 王炎, "新中国历史上的宣传网制度 The propaganda network system in the history of the New China", *CCP History Material* 中共党史资料, no.3(2007): 117-128.

<sup>20</sup> Songtao Hou 侯松涛, "漫画与政治: 抗美援朝中的漫画——以人民日报为中心的考察 Cartoon and Politics: Cartoons during the Campaign of Resisting the United States and Aiding North Korea——A Focus on the People's Daily", *Journal of East China Normal University(Philosophy and Social Sciences)* 华东师范大学学报(哲学社会科学版), no.1(2012):39-45.

<sup>21</sup> Daiqiang Wei 魏代强, "抗美援朝战争政治动员探要 Exploring the political mobilization of the RAAK War", *Journal of PLA Nanjing Institute of Politics* 南京政治学院学报, no.1(2018), 83-86. Yao Yao 姚遥, "抗美援朝战争前后的对外宣传 Foreign propaganda before and after the RAAK War", *International Communications* 对外传播, no.5(2011): 18-19. Chuazhou Guo 郭传洲, "Foreign propaganda of our army during the period of RAAK", *Military Historical Research* 军事历史研究, no.3(2012):187-188.

frontiers of the battlefield; the other was to motivate the domestic writers to write the stories of the kinship between China and North Korea. Furthermore, Sun reveals that the kinship constructed between China and North Korea in the RAAK literature was totally imagined by the Chinese writers,<sup>22</sup> which provides an important clue to explore the propaganda tactics of the CCP.

Moreover, some scholars emphasize the importance of the memories of the Second World War in the formation of people's perceptions of the Korean War and the Cold War. Masuda Hajimu argues that numerous societies, including those in the US, China, Japan, and other countries, were still dealing with the legacy of World War II and viewed current affairs, such as the Korean War, through a specific lens. This contributed to the rise in anxiety about World War III, which in turn strengthened the idea of an imagined Cold War era. Furthermore, he contends that in this initial post-war time, the Cold War "reality" reached the greatest degree of authenticity in Europe, East Asia, and the United States—that is, in the regions that were heavily engaged in World War II, while in Africa, India and Latin America, which were not major battlefields of the World War II, the Cold War "reality" was not verisimilitude. This was due to the fact that plenty of individuals in these (post)colonial cultures were still dealing with the impacts of colonialism and had a distinct perspective on the postwar period.<sup>23</sup> Different perceptions from different regions of the Korean War were a clear reflection of this viewpoint. Many Americans believed that the Korean War marked the start of World War III.<sup>24</sup> Chinese people perceived it as a prelude to America's invasion of China just like Japan did it before.<sup>25</sup> Indian public opinions regarding the Korean War as a civil war that an internally Korean people matter to solve.<sup>26</sup>

Similarly, according to Sei Jeong Chin, the CCP wisely adopted war memories and integrated the public expression and dissemination of the pain caused by the Second World War and the horrible acts committed by the United States and Japan. This allowed the CCP to justify the propagation of anti-American sentiment and the portrayal of opposing viewpoints as being associated with China's fatal enemies such as America and the KMT.<sup>27</sup> From Masuda Hajimu and Sei Jeong Chin's viewpoints, given that the war memories were closely linked with

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<sup>22</sup> Hailong Sun, "The Chinese Portrayal of the Korean Peninsula in the Resisting America and Assisting Korea Literature of the 1950s", *Sungkyun Journal of East Asian Studies* Vol.15 No.2(Oct 2015), 239-262.

<sup>23</sup> Masuda Hajimu, *Cold War Crucible*, 5.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, 61.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, 152.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, 71.

<sup>27</sup> Sei Jeong Chin, "The Korean War, Anti-US Propaganda, and the Marginalization of Dissent in China, 1950–1953," *Twentieth-Century China* 48, no. 1 (2023): 23–47, <https://doi.org/10.1353/tcc.2023.0002>.

people's perception of the Cold War, there were numerous potential audiences of China's international propaganda in the colonial countries, who participated in World War II and gained independence from imperialism influence after World War II, such as India. This research will examine how CCP designed its propaganda content for its potential audiences.

As for the image of China in other countries, Necati Demircan investigates how the image of the PRC and communism in Türkiye was shaped by the press and ideological climate during the Korean War and Türkiye's procedure of joining NATO. The public impression of China and communism in Türkiye started to shift disadvantageously during the Korean War due to the ideological climate. NATO enforced the idea that communism is anti- Türkiye and anti-Islam, intrusive, and an adversary to persuade the Turkish public opinion towards the Korean War. NATO funded Islamic and Turkic anti-communist groups during this time, and the Uyghur issue was fabricated to portray China negatively.<sup>28</sup>

Several scholars discuss China's propaganda on Germ Warfare during the Korean War as well. After February 1952, there were reports in the Chinese media of U.S. warplanes dropping germs and conducting "germ warfare" in Korea and other areas of northeast China and Qingdao.<sup>29</sup> Yang Nianqun explores how China's leadership handled the threat of bioterrorism. He makes the point that the Chinese military and government initially used epidemic prevention as a purely military policy, but they soon understood the problem with this approach: it either caused social panic or was not taken seriously. As a result, the administration immediately modified its approach and started to see this as a chance to encourage nationalism and social mobilization. Through social mobilization or the patriotic health movement, the CCP successfully promoted popular patriotism while also advancing the further creation of contemporary health system in Chinese society.<sup>30</sup> Andrew Kuech argues that Chinese policymakers developed the idea of an American bacterial attack to instruct the populace in scientific concepts and warn them about the dangers posed by pathogens and diseases. A fanatical anti-Americanism was ingrained into the mundane constructs of daily life as a result of the population being motivated to face imagined American disease invasions in

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<sup>28</sup> Necati Demircan, "The Communism and China Perception Created in Turkey during the Korean War," *International Journal of Political Studies* 6, no. 3 (2020): 29–39.

<sup>29</sup> Nianqun Yang, "Disease Prevention, Social Mobilization and Spatial Politics: The Anti Germ-Warfare Incident of 1952 and the 'Patriotic Health Campaign,'" *The Chinese Historical Review* 11, no. 2 (September 1, 2004): 155–82, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1547402X.2004.11827202>.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

this merger of state propaganda and education.<sup>31</sup> The representation of the germ warfare in China's external propaganda is studied in detail in chapter 4.

Daniel Lynch claims that politics and ideology were the main concerns of the CCP's foreign propaganda during the whole Cold War, and China was always portrayed as a warrior and a revolutionary by the CCP at this time.<sup>32</sup> Opposed to Lynch's argument, Leonard Lazarick thinks China intended to shape a friendly image of China to the world. Lazarick examined the main English-language propaganda magazines published by the PRC in the 1950s, *People's China*, which was replaced by *Peking Review* later, *China Pictorial* and *China Reconstructs*, and argues that *People's China* and *Peking Review* were deliberately created with the intention of presenting the joyful, smiling face of a greater, new China.<sup>33</sup> Based on interviews with the staff of propaganda magazines and other archives, Lazarick outlines the organizational structure of the publications clearly. Significant staff members were heightened in his research, which is a point always ignored by the scholarships.

Some scholars also conduct longitudinal studies of the international propaganda of the PRC within a 30-year or even 100-year time frame. Cagdas Ungor's research examines the administration, personnel, beliefs, substance, distribution, and readership of the PRC's global propaganda activity from 1949 to 1976. Ungor attaches importance to both the text materials published by The Foreign Languages Press and the radio forecasted by Radio Peking. These two institutions are examined as two important material producers within the PRC's greater international propaganda system in China. Moreover, his analysis casts doubt on the former depiction of China's external propaganda machinery as an extremely effective agency with enormous financial resources and people based on the lately disclosed archives and secondary sources.<sup>34</sup> Mareike Ohlberg discusses China's foreign propaganda work from the late Qing Dynasty to the 21st century from a political history perspective. Based on the fact that the propaganda apparatus of modern China was originally modeled on the Soviet example, which relied on the Party's capacity to control the information flows, she explores how and to what degree the international propaganda system of PRC has been adjusted in response to the present worldwide media landscape, which is characterized by highly permeable country boundaries

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<sup>31</sup> Andrew Kuech, "Cultivating, Cleansing, and Performing the American Germ Invasion: The Anatomy of a Chinese Korean War Propaganda Campaign," *Modern China* 46, no. 6 (November 1, 2020): 612–41, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0097700419869603>.

<sup>32</sup> Daniel C. Lynch, *After the Propaganda State: Media, Politics, and "Thought Work" in Reformed China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

<sup>33</sup> Leonard W. Lazarick, "China's Smiling face to the World: Beijing's English-Language Magazines in the First Decade of The People's Republic" (MA thesis, University of Maryland, 2005), 167.

<sup>34</sup> Cagdas Ungor, "Reaching the Distant Comrade: Chinese Communist Propaganda Abroad (1949- 1976)," (PhD dissertation, Binghamton University, State University New York, 2009).

and rapid data flows across the world.<sup>35</sup> These longitudinal studies offer a macro perspective for us to observe the Chinese international propaganda history and present the developments and changes in China's external propaganda clearly. However, focusing on the period of 30 years or 100 years will easily ignore the details of history. For example, the different propaganda contexts of the major political movements of the history of the PRC are overlooked to a large extent. This research will reveal the dynamic shifts in tone and thematic focus within the discourse of PRC's international propaganda, particularly in response to the evolving dynamics of the Korean War battlefield and broader international circumstances. Such nuanced adaptations have been relatively understudied within existing longitudinal analyses.

Building upon existing scholarship, this thesis aims to engage with the arguments articulated in prior literature. This research firstly seeks to respond to the debate between Daniel Lynch and Leonard Lazarick, who respectively argue that the CCP intended to shape China as a revolutionary and friendly image.<sup>36</sup> Central to this inquiry is the exploration of the image that the CCP intended to project to international audiences regarding the PRC. Secondly, this research would contest Liu Hailong's discussion on CCP's propaganda principles. Liu Hailong lists three principles of CCP's propaganda since the Yan'an period (1935-1948) and believes that these principles have had a great impact on the PRC's propaganda work, this research will examine whether these principles were implemented and how CCP practices these principles in their daily international works during the Korean War and explore if the new propaganda principles or traditions were created during the Korean War. Thirdly, anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism have been the slogan of China since the founding of the PRC. Following Masuda Hajimu's research, I discovered that there were numerous potential audiences for China's propaganda in newly independent colonial countries. This research will explore how China responded to the potential audiences in its anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism companions. Fourthly, Ohlberg in her research argues that the international propaganda of the PRC had a double mission, one for diplomacy, one for revolution, and the purpose of the PRC's international propaganda was to facilitate China's diplomatic relations at the state-to-state level. Hence, to convey China's message abroad without causing offense to specific governments, it was rather important to make a compromise between them.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Mareike Svea Ohlberg, "Creating a Favorable International Public Opinion Environment: External Propaganda As a Global Concept with Chinese Characteristics" (Ph.D. dissertation, Heidelberg University, 2013).

<sup>36</sup> Daniel C. Lynch, *After the Propaganda State: Media, Politics, and "Thought Work" in Reformed China*; Leonard W. Lazarick, "China's Smiling Face to the World: Beijing's English-Language Magazines in the First Decade of The People's Republic".

<sup>37</sup> Mareike Svea Ohlberg, "Creating a Favorable International Public Opinion Environment: External Propaganda As a Global Concept with Chinese Characteristics", 125.

Following Ohlberg's argument, this thesis will discuss how the CCP found a balance between the diplomatic mission and the revolutionary mission of its foreign propaganda work.

## 1.2 The CCP's Early International Propaganda and *People's China*

Since the Yan'an period<sup>38</sup>, the CCP has demonstrated a notable emphasis on international propaganda efforts, particularly amidst the propaganda competition with the KMT during the Second Sino-Japanese War. Although the overt conflict between the KMT and the CCP was initially subdued in the war's early stages, a clandestine struggle for the allegiance of foreign journalists ensued. The KMT government sought to diminish the CCP's influence by restricting foreign journalists from accessing Communist strongholds and censoring news pertaining to CCP activities to prevent their dissemination. However, the conservative powers in the KMT government held a skeptical attitude toward international journalists. Paradoxically, this mistrust of foreign journalists by the KMT inadvertently attracted more attention from the international press towards the CCP. Notably, an influential American journalist Edgar Snow encountered numerous obstacles in his attempts to interview Chiang Kai-shek, finally gaining access to Yan'an only after persistent efforts.<sup>39</sup>

In contrast to the KMT's antagonistic stance towards international journalists, the CCP adopted a markedly welcoming approach, exemplified by Liu Shaoqi, then secretary of the Northern Bureau of the CCP, personally facilitating Snow's visits to various CCP bases. The CCP's international propaganda strategy was centered on disseminating frontline narratives among foreign journalists, exemplified by the invitation extended to another American journalist Agnes Smedley to report on guerrilla warfare in northern China and to amplify the CCP's resolute stance against Japanese aggression. Concurrently, Zhou Enlai covertly cultivated relationships with sympathetic journalists, such as Anna Louise Strong, briefing them on the escalating tensions between the KMT and the CCP and encouraging proactive dissemination of CCP perspectives, as illustrated by Strong's potential role in briefing the United States on KMT's suppression of the CCP. Following the South Anhui Incident<sup>40</sup>, the

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<sup>38</sup> The Yan'an period denotes the span from 1935 to 1947 during which Yan'an served as the focal point and headquarters of the Chinese Communist Revolution.

<sup>39</sup> Shuge Wei, *News under Fire: China's Propaganda against Japan in the English-Language Press, 1928–1941*, 1st ed. (Hong Kong University Press, 2017), 245-247, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1n7qm31>

<sup>40</sup> The South Anhui Incident, commonly referred to as the New Fourth Army Incident, occurred in 1941 when the New Fourth Army, under the leadership of the CCP, clashed with the Nationalist Army, led by the KMT, in southern Anhui province. Following this event, both the KMT and the CCP sought to assign blame for the conflict to each other and garner support from the international community.

CCP swiftly provided a comprehensive explanation to the international press, leveraging its longstanding rapport with leftist Western journalists.<sup>41</sup>

Prior to the establishment of the PRC, the CCP placed considerable emphasis on fostering connections with international reporters and dignitaries, exemplified by initiatives such as the Dixie Mission<sup>42</sup>. Subsequent to the CCP's victory in the Chinese Civil War and assumption of power in 1949, the CCP successfully transformed China into a "Propaganda State", establishing robust institutional frameworks dedicated to disseminating its messages globally. This transition enabled the CCP to wield considerable resources in crafting and projecting its narrative directly to the world. In August of 1949, the CCP began to prepare for the foundation of the China Information Bureau (CIB, 国际新闻局, 1949-1952) which was responsible for the international propaganda of the future Republic. When the PRC was formally established in October 1949, the CIB also started to operate.<sup>43</sup> One of the most important tasks of the bureau in 1949 was to prepare for the publication of the first English language magazine of the PRC, *People's China* (人民中国).<sup>44</sup> The director of the CIB was Qiao Guanhua (乔冠华), who was also the chief editor of *People's China* and became the Foreign Minister of the PRC in the 1970s.

*People's China* was a bimonthly magazine, and the first issue was published in January of 1950 in the name of the Foreign Language Press (外文出版社), through which the CCP could build the connection with the worldwide bookstores and distribute its propaganda materials globally. One of the forerunners of *People's China* was the first foreign-language periodical of the CCP, *Xinhua Zhoukan* (新华周刊), which was released by the CCP delegation headed by Zhou Enlai in Shanghai in May 1946, during the Chongqing Negotiations.<sup>45</sup> The other predecessor of *People's China* was *China Digest* (中国文摘) in Hong Kong. After the launch of *People's China*, *China Digest* ceased publication and *People's China* took over its original subscribers. *People's China* was aimed at progressive ordinary people all over the world and catered to the special needs of the people of Southeast Asia. The primary goals of *People's China* were to: first, to consolidate and develop friendship and solidarity between

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 245-249.

<sup>42</sup> The Dixie Mission, alternatively referred to as the United States Army Observation Group, conducted visits to the Communist regime's headquarters in Yan'an from 1944 to 1947. This initiative marked the initial endeavor by the American government to formalize diplomatic relations with the CCP.

<sup>43</sup> Foreign Language Press 中国外文局, *A Chronology of the Foreign Languages Press 中国外文局五十年大事记* (Beijing: Xinxing Press, 1999), 1.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Xianfeng Gan 甘险峰, *A History of Chinese Foreign News Communication 中国新闻对外传播史* [History of Chinese news and external communication] (Fuzhou: Fujian People's Press), 148.

China and the world peace camp, especially between China and the Soviet Union; second, to counter the reactionary propaganda of the imperialist countries and to support the liberation struggles of the colonial, semi-colonial and especially the Southeast Asian people; third, to introduce China's successful experience on revolution; and fourth, to report on the achievements of the PRC in all aspects.<sup>46</sup>

The strategic objectives of *People's China* were closely aligned with the diplomatic direction of the PRC. In July 1949, Stalin and Mao Zedong reached a pivotal understanding, concerning their roles in advancing the global communist revolution, which delineated that the PRC would take on a more significant role in addressing issues in colonial and semi-colonial nations across Asia, while the Soviet Union concentrated its efforts on Eastern Europe.<sup>47</sup> Meanwhile, Mao displayed a strong interest in establishing an Asian Cominform as well. Consequently, the CCP initiated preparations for the cultivation of communist leaders from various Asian countries after the Soviet Union approved the PRC's leadership role in the Asian revolution.<sup>48</sup> Within the context of the Asian Cominform and the broader goal of exporting the global communist revolution, the newly independent countries in Southeast Asia naturally became an important area for the PRC to disseminate its revolutionary ideals. This emphasis endured until the mid-1950s when the PRC started to perceive other countries outside of the socialist camp in Asia, such as Indonesia, as possible partners.<sup>49</sup> Notably, Southeast Asia housed a significant overseas Chinese population, making it particularly reasonable for *People's China* to customize its content to resonate with the preferences and aspirations of its Southeast Asian readership.

Nonetheless, as the targeted readers of *People's China* were the worldwide progressive ordinary people, it indeed had the potential to influence people globally as the document of Foreign Language Press revealed that when the news of the publication of its first issue was broadcast, a bookstore in the UK called to order 500 copies on the same day.<sup>50</sup> Meanwhile, in addition to the progressive individuals, in the eyes of editors of *People's China* and as well as

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<sup>46</sup> Foreign Language Press 中国外文局, *A Chronology of the Foreign Languages Press* 中国外文局五十年大事记, 3. The Chongqing Negotiations refers to a series of discussions between the KMT and the CCP in 1945, primarily conducted in Chongqing, aimed at establishing a coalition government.

<sup>47</sup> Zhe Shi 师哲, *Standing beside a historical giant: memoirs of Shi Zhe* 在历史巨人的身边: 师哲回忆录 (Beijing: Central Party Literature Publishing House, 1991), 421.

<sup>48</sup> Zhihua Shen and Yafeng Xia, "Leadership Transfer in the Asian Revolution: Mao Zedong and the Asian Cominform," *Cold War History* 14, no. 2 (April 3, 2014): 195, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14682745.2013.803471>.

<sup>49</sup> Taomo Zhou, *Migration in the Time of Revolution* (Cornell University Press, 2019), 53, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctvcf51sh>.

<sup>50</sup> Foreign Language Press 中国外文局, *Chronology of the Foreign Languages Press* 中国外文局五十年大事记, 4.

their higher-ranking government officials such as the Premier of PRC Zhou Enlai, foreign politicians, intellectuals, and journalists made up another important readership.<sup>51</sup> Interestingly, even though the ideal audience of *People's China* was English-speaking foreigners, the mainland China market occupied 1/3 of the whole sales business of *People's China* in 1950.<sup>52</sup>

Following the policy of the Central Propaganda Department of the CCP which stipulated that all the CCP editorials and newspapers should adopt the attitude and tone of suggestion and negotiation rather than the instruction,<sup>53</sup> the editors of *People's China* took the tone of discussion in writing articles.<sup>54</sup> The most editorial staff of *People's China* were educated in Western countries and could write articles in English fluently. More importantly, some of them even were veteran journalists, for example, Jack Chen (陈依范) and Israel Epstein, who were responsible for reviewing the articles, were specialists with rich experience in Western journalism, which rendered *People's China* very popular with readers in Western countries.<sup>55</sup> However, the conversational tone of *People's China* occasionally switched to a holistically ideological tone<sup>56</sup>, resulted from the conflicts between Soviet specialists and the English specialists in the editorial department. The Soviet specialists demanded to conclude every article with a political and ideological slogan, while the English specialists, on the contrary, emphasized facts, which caused the style of *People's China* became unstable.<sup>57</sup> Nonetheless, *People's China* was regarded as the most authoritative and credible medium for understanding the PRC in the early 1950s.<sup>58</sup>

Apart from *People's China*, the CIB also started to publish other foreign language magazines and newspapers in 1950. In May of 1950, the Bureau launched the first English-language newspaper *Shanghai News* (上海新闻) which was regarded as having played a unique role in PRC's international propaganda for ideological battle in the early Cold War

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<sup>51</sup> Leonard Lazarick, "China's Smiling Face to the World: Beijing's English-Language Magazines in the First Decade of the People's Republic" (Master's Thesis, University of Maryland, 2005), 14.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>53</sup> "Instructions from the Central Propaganda Department and the Xinhua News Agency on precautions to be taken in the propaganda work after the establishment of the Central People's Government" 中央宣传部和新华社关于中央人民政府成立后宣传工作中应注意事项的指示 in *Selections from the Party's propaganda documentary work: 1949-1956* 党的宣传文件工作选编 1949-1956, e.d. Central Propaganda Department of the Chinese Communist Party 中央宣传部办公厅 (Beijing: Xuexi Press, 1996), 10.

<sup>54</sup> Leonard Lazarick, "China's Smiling Face to the World: Beijing's English-Language Magazines in the First Decade of the People's Republic", 14.

<sup>55</sup> Xianfeng Gan 甘险峰, *History of Chinese foreign news communication* 中国新闻对外传播史, 150.

<sup>56</sup> Leonard Lazarick, "China's Smiling Face to the World: Beijing's English-Language Magazines in the First Decade of the People's Republic", 14.

<sup>57</sup> Xianfeng Gan 甘险峰, *History of Chinese foreign news communication* 中国新闻对外传播史, 150.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

period.<sup>59</sup> The ideal audience for *Shanghai News* was the foreigners in Shanghai hence it was mainly circulated in Shanghai.<sup>60</sup> At the same time, the CIB also founded a monthly Esperanto magazine, *El Popola Cinio* (人民中国报道), which was distributed in Eastern European countries and areas where English, Russian, and French were less prevalent.<sup>61</sup>

However, both publications mentioned above had clear limits in their scope of circulation. Although another influential English magazine, *China Construct* was established in 1952 in the midst of the war, it is impossible to investigate the continuity and developments of PRC's international propaganda during the whole Korean War by analyzing this magazine. Therefore, *People's China* will be the most ideal publication to be examined to comprehensively explore China's international propaganda during the Korean War. The forthcoming chapters will scrutinize the archival materials from the propaganda department of the CCP and the textual output of *People's China*. This examination aims to elucidate the contents and strategies employed by the CCP in its international propaganda efforts, particularly in response to the evolving dynamics of the Korean battlefield and shifting international circumstances. The analysis will proceed in a chronological manner, tracing the trajectory of the CCP's foreign propaganda initiatives over time.

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<sup>59</sup> Jonathan J. Howlett, "The Shanghai News (1950–1952): New Democracy and External Propaganda in Early 1950s Shanghai," *Journal of Chinese History* 中國歷史學刊 5, no. 1 (January 2021): 107–30, <https://doi.org/10.1017/jch.2020.5>.

<sup>60</sup> Xianfeng Gan 甘險峰, *History of Chinese foreign news communication* 中国新闻对外传播史, 147.

<sup>61</sup> Foreign Language Press 中国外文局, *Chronology of the Foreign Languages Press* 中国外文局五十年大事记, 4-5.

## 2 Early Wartime Propaganda

Despite the PRC refraining from intervention in the Korean War until October 1950, the CCP had already been engaged in international propaganda efforts since the outbreak of the conflict. This chapter will integrate materials from the CCP's propaganda department and pertinent articles from *People's China* to illuminate the PRC's foreign propaganda activities in 1950.

### 2.1 The Breakout of the Korean War

While this research does not focus specifically on the Korean War, it is essential to provide a brief overview of the conflict for background purposes. In the context of the PRC, the Korean War is commonly referred to as the “Resist US Aggression and Aid Korea” (RAAK, 抗美援朝) which began in October 1950.<sup>62</sup> This distinction sets it apart from the Korean War that commenced in June 1950. Chinese officials frequently employ the concept of RAAK to a significant extent to sidestep discussions about the responsibility for initiating the Korean War, although the academic consensus is that the war was launched by North Korea with the consent, support, and help of the Soviet Union and China.<sup>63</sup>

On June 25, 1950, the Korean War erupted.<sup>64</sup> The Korean People's Army (KPA) of North Korea, with substantial military support from the Soviet Union, swiftly launched a successful offensive that rapidly nearly overran South Korean forces. The Republic of Korea

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<sup>62</sup> “70th Anniversary of the Victory of the War to Resist US Aggression and Aid Korea (1950-1953) - China Military,” China Military, accessed November 2, 2023, <http://eng.chinamil.com/SpecialReports/2023/70thAnniversaryoftheVictoryoftheWartoResistUSAggressionandAidKorea19501953/index.html>.

<sup>63</sup> Zhihua Shen 沈志华, “China's Intervention in the Korean War: Analysis and Reflections 中國介入朝鮮戰爭決策的分析和反思,” *Twenty-First Century* 二十一世紀, no. 198 (2023): 58–76.

<sup>64</sup> The origins of the Korean War have long been a subject of dispute within academic circles. Chinese scholar Shen Zhihua posits that the Soviet Union's loss of significant interests in Northeast China following the signing of the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Alliance compelled Stalin to support North Korea in initiating the Korean War, aiming to safeguard the USSR's security and strategic concerns in the Far East. However, some scholars argue that the USSR benefited from a favorable arrangement in a secret protocol of the treaty. In contrast to Shen's perspective, Russian scholar Yuri Galenovich contends that both Mao and Kim were enthusiastic about instigating the war, while Stalin opposed such actions. Galenovich suggests that following the Second World War, Stalin, constrained by prevailing sentiments and circumstances within the USSR, was compelled to declare, to some extent, a stance against military adventurism. The initiation of the Korean War, according to Galenovich, was orchestrated by Mao and Kim Il Sung, with Stalin reluctantly compelled to participate to a limited extent and endeavor to prevent the Soviet Union from further involvement. In this interpretation, Stalin emerges as anti-war, while Mao advocates for conflict. See Zhihua Shen 沈志華, 最後的天朝 *The Last “Celestial Empire”*, 190-199; Litai Xue, Sergei N. Goncharov, and John W. Lewis, *Uncertain Partners: Stalin, Mao, and the Korean War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 110-129; Yuri Galenovich Ю. М. Галенович, *Сталин и Мао. Два вождя [Stalin and Mao: two leaders]* (Восточная книга, 2009), 500-501.

Army's defenses crumbled under the intense assault by the KPA, prompting the United States to consider the possibility of military intervention. Subsequently, the United States made the decision to enter the conflict on June 26, even prior to the United Nations (UN) consultations scheduled for June 27 and initiated the deployment of a U.S.-led UN military force to the Korean Peninsula.<sup>65</sup> During the summer of 1950, the KPA made significant territorial gains, inflicting a series of defeats on American forces. However, by the end of August, the KPA's advances on the battlefield began to stall.<sup>66</sup> In September 1950, the majority of American military units arrived in Korea, and the situation on the battlefield underwent a rapid transformation following General MacArthur's successful planning and execution of the Inchon landing in mid-September. This event marked a turning point in the conflict as the United Nations forces swiftly pushed the KPA back north of the 38th Parallel and eventually crossed it in October.<sup>67</sup> On the 19th of October, the Chinese People's Volunteer Army (CPVA, 中国人民志愿军) entered Korea covertly to support North Korea in the war effort.<sup>68</sup> In terms of China's reasons for intervening in the war, academic perspectives can be categorized into the following three main theories: the Impact-Response Theory, the World and Asian Revolution Theory, and China's National Security Theory.

One of most influential scholars of the Impact-Response Theory is Yao Xu. He argues that China's decision to deploy troops to Korea was a direct response to the swift and extensive military actions taken by U.S. President Truman, involving a massive invasion of Korea by air, sea, and land forces. Additionally, Truman sent the 7th Fleet to openly seize Taiwan, a move that convinced Mao Zedong of the inevitability of a contest between China and the United States.<sup>69</sup> Yao's perspective, however, has faced criticism for being ensnared by the "impact-response" model and the American-centered view, which perceived China's diplomatic decisions just as the passive reaction to the policies of the U.S.<sup>70</sup>

Chen Jian, along with Shen Zhihua, supports the World and Asian Revolution Theory. Chen argues that Mao deployed Chinese forces to engage in the Korean War with the intention of winning a "glorious victory" over the U.S. imperialists and its capitalists alliance. This

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<sup>65</sup> Bruce Cumings, *The Korean War* (New York: Modern Literary, 2013) 11-13.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid*, 16.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*, 16-23.

<sup>68</sup> Mao Zedong 毛泽东, "The CPVA currently participating in the war cannot be disclosed publicly" 志愿军参战这件事目前只做不说 in *Selections from the Party's propaganda documentary work: 1949-1956* 党的宣传文件工作选编 1949-1956, e.d. Central Propaganda Department of the Chinese Communist Party 中央宣传部办公厅 (Beijing: Xuexi Press, 1996), 138.

<sup>69</sup> Xu Yao 姚旭, *From the Yalu to Panmonjum* 从鸭绿江到板门店 (Beijing: The People's Press, 1985), 21-22.

<sup>70</sup> Jian Chen, *China's Road to the Korean War: The Making of the Sino-American Confrontation* (Columbia University Press, 1996), 4.

strategic move was motivated to protect China's "security interest" as well as to support Mao's revolutionary efforts to reshape the state and society of China.<sup>71</sup> Shen claims that Mao Zedong's deep-seated considerations in sending troops to Korea were, on the one hand, to gain Stalin's trust so as to consolidate the Sino-Soviet alliance and stabilize the foundation of the new regime, and, on the other hand, to protect and help Kim Il Sung in order to assume the responsibility of being the leader of the Asian revolution.<sup>72</sup> Additionally, while not necessarily a determining factor, a sense of indebtedness and revolutionary solidarity existed between North Koreans and the Chinese, as North Koreans made significant contributions to the success of the Chinese Communist Revolution. Many North Koreans served in the ranks of the CCP's army during both the Second Sino-Japanese War and the Chinese Civil War. Despite Mao's initial vision of resolving the Korean issue after China's reunification,<sup>73</sup> the KPA's setbacks on the battlefield of the Korean War undoubtedly accelerated the need for the revolutionary aid that China was expected to extend to North Korea.

In contrast, Kim Dong-gil aligns with China's National Security Theory. Kim contends that the primary motive behind China's decision to deploy troops was the anticipation that if China intervened in the Korean conflict, the U.S. and South Korean forces might halt their advance, enabling China to shift its national defense line from the Yalu River to the northern part of Korea without direct confrontation with the United States.<sup>74</sup> Furthermore, in accordance with the classic propaganda slogan of the CCP, "Resist the US and Aid North Korea, Defend the Country (抗美援朝, 保家卫国)", to prevent the conflict from spreading to Northeast China, the CCP found it imperative to intervene in the war as the KPA steadily weakened on the battlefield during the autumn of 1950.

Although China did not intervene in the Korean War until October of 1950, its pro-North Korean propaganda had been actively organized since the breakout of the war. The following sections will investigate how *People's China* responded to the propaganda policies of the PRC government and the situation of the war by analyzing the documents of the Central Propaganda Department of the CCP and the war-related articles of *People's China*.

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<sup>71</sup> Jian Chen, "Far Short of a 'Glorious Victory': Revisiting China's Changing Strategies to Manage the Korean War," *The Chinese Historical Review* 25, no. 1 (January 2, 2018): 1–22, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1547402X.2018.1437505>.

<sup>72</sup> Zhihua Shen 沈志华, 最後的天朝 *The Last "Celestial Empire"*, 189.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 206.

<sup>74</sup> Donggil Kim, "Securing the Northern Part of North Korea without Fighting: Reconsideration of China's Intervention in the Korean War 「出而不戰」: 中國出兵朝鮮決策重探," *Twenty-First Century* 二十一世紀, no. 198 (2023): 38–57.

## 2.2 Stand with the Korean People

In June 1950, with the outbreak of the Korean War, Mao Zedong refrained from providing direct military support to North Korea. Nevertheless, China opted to align itself with North Korea diplomatically and condemn the United States. This decision promptly shaped the trajectory of China's propaganda efforts. On June 29, 1950, the General Administration of Press of the Chinese Central Government (中央政府新闻总署) released a directive outlining how to disseminate information about U.S. interference in the domestic affairs of China and Korea ("Propaganda instruction of the General Administration of Press of the Chinese Central Government on the public interference of the U.S. Imperialists in the domestic affairs of China and Korea-Vietnam and other countries,"<sup>75</sup> hereafter referred to as the "29th June Propaganda Instructions"). This directive wielded a profound influence on the PRC propaganda during the early stages of the Korean War.

In addition to the 29th June Propaganda Instructions, the Chinese Central Government issued several similar directives in response to evolving circumstances. Through the throughout textual analysis of these propaganda documents and the content of *People's China* in 1950, the characteristics of PRC's international propaganda can be listed as follows:

### **Pan-Asianism and Anti-Colonial Discourse**

In the "29th June Propaganda Instruction," a crucial focus of the PRC propaganda efforts was explaining President Truman's statement, emphasizing America's military intervention in the domestic affairs of China, Korea, Vietnam, and the Philippines, as well as interference in broader Asian affairs. According to the instruction, Truman's declaration constituted open armed aggression, threatening peace in the Far East and global stability.<sup>76</sup> This narrative aimed to respond to America's actions in Asia. Following the eruption of the Korean War, the United States not only deployed military troops to Korea but also adjusted its strategic diplomatic approach in other Asian countries. In the Philippines, the U.S. heightened its military involvement to assist the Philippine government in suppressing domestic communist rebels. In Vietnam, the US provided the French with substantial military assistance

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<sup>75</sup> "Propaganda instruction of the General Administration of Information of the Central People's Government on the public interference of the U.S. Imperialists in the domestic affairs of China and Korea-Vietnam and other countries" 中央人民政府新闻总署关于美国帝国主义公开干涉我国和朝鲜越南等国内政的宣传指示 in *Selections from the Party's propaganda documentary work: 1949-1956* 党的宣传文件工作选编 1949-1956, e.d. Central Propaganda Department of the Chinese Communist Party 中央宣传部办公厅 (Beijing: Xuexi Press, 1996), 91.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

in Vietnam worth \$20 million for their fight in Indochina. Additionally, the U.S. dispatched the 7th Fleet to the Taiwan Strait in the Far East, asserting military control over Taiwan.<sup>77</sup>

From China's perspective, the U.S.'s conduct was deemed "counter-revolutionary," suppressing communist movements in the Philippines and hindering Vietnamese national liberation from French colonization. The CCP argued for Asian unity against U.S. threats, advocating the isolation of the U.S. in Asian affairs. Despite not explicitly endorsing Pan-Asianism<sup>78</sup>, the CCP's discourse reflected its core tenets, asserting Asian ownership of the continent and opposing Western intervention. Notably, within Mao's Asian Cominform network context, Pan-Asianism discourse in CCP's propaganda became justifiable. At the same time, anti-colonialism discourse was evident in CCP's propaganda, expressing dissatisfaction with America's intervention in Vietnam's anti-colonial struggle.

This Pan-Asianism and Anti-Colonial discourse also manifested in the text of *People's China*. The first article of Vol. 2, No. 2 *People's China*, titled "All Asia Supports Korea's Fight," criticized the U.S. for encouraging South Korea to attack North Korea, accusing it of premeditated aggression in Asia.<sup>79</sup> The article contended that the U.S. aimed to hinder rising national liberation movements in Asia, under the context of the successful Chinese revolution. It argued for global opposition against warmongers and U.S. imperialism was facing significant resistance in Asia. The article depicted the U.S. as an imperialist antagonist, scheming to intensify domestic tension in Asian countries and aid counter-revolutionary regimes for its colonial interests in Asia, driven by the interests groups in the Wall Street.<sup>80</sup> This depiction is echoed in various other articles. For instance, in the article titled "Let the U.S. Aggressors Take Heed!", it argued that U.S. imperialists are extensively allocating funds and resources to support their counterrevolutionary allies, aiming to preserve Wall Street's interests in Southeast Asia.<sup>81</sup>

In a comic titled "One Target," the U.S. was portrayed as an argyle octopus with a money sign on its head, attempting to extend its influence on various Asian countries but encountering resistance from the national liberation movement. The article asserted that Asian people could no longer harbor illusions about the U.S., emphasizing the U.S. as a common

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<sup>77</sup> Joseph C. Goulden, *Korea, the Untold Story of the War* (McGraw-Hill, 1983), 74.

<sup>78</sup> Pan-Asianism was first introduced by the Japanese in the late 19th century as a means to foster Asian unity in response to Western imperialist powers. Subsequently, it evolved into an ideological instrument wielded by Japanese militarism in the 20th century to justify its expansionist policies in Asia. Although the CCP did not explicitly endorse "Pan-Asianism," its propaganda rhetoric emphasizing Asian unity against Western intervention in regional affairs resonated with the principles of Pan-Asianism.

<sup>79</sup>"All Asia Supports Korea's Fight", *People's China*, July 16, 1950, 3-4.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> "Let the U. S. aggressors Take Heed!", *People's China*, September 16, 1950, 3.

enemy for Asian people.<sup>82</sup> Furthermore, in additional articles within *People's China* that denounced U.S. intervention in Taiwan Strait issues, particularly its deployment of the 7th Fleet to the Taiwan Strait, the narrative consistently framed this action as “a provocation for a war of aggression against Asian peoples.”<sup>83</sup> Notably, Korea, Vietnam, and the Philippines were consistently referenced together in these condemnations. This deliberate reference served a dual purpose – not only to evoke sympathy from readers in different regions regarding China’s plight but also to incite outrage among Southeast Asian readers against the United States, fostering the idea of an Asian anti-America alliance.



Image 1, Jack Chen, “One Target” in *People's China*, July 16, 1950, 3.

### Delivering “Diverse” Voices

In the 29th June Propaganda Instructions, the Central Government explicitly advocated for the delivery of diverse voices in propaganda efforts, including speeches by representative figures, rallies, or telegraphic protests by people’s organizations and democratic parties. These activities aimed to demonstrate the determination of the regional populace against threats posed by U.S. imperialism.<sup>84</sup> This policy aligned with the characteristics of the “New Democracy” stage (新民主主义时期, 1949-1953) in China, during which the party forged a wide alliance comprising socially disadvantaged classes in both urban and rural areas, progressive scholars,

<sup>82</sup> “All Asia Supports Korea’s Fight”, *People's China*, July 16, 1950, 3.

<sup>83</sup> “China: Angry and Resolute”, *People's China*, July 16, 1950, 26.

<sup>84</sup> “Propaganda instruction of the General Administration of Information of the Central People's Government on the public interference of the U.S. Imperialists in the domestic affairs of China and Korea-Vietnam and other countries” 中央人民政府新闻总署关于美国帝国主义公开干涉我国和朝鲜越南等国内政的宣传指示 in *Selections from the Party's propaganda documentary work: 1949-1956* 党的宣传文件工作选编 1949-1956, 91.

and receptive “patriotic democrats.”<sup>85</sup> *People’s China* effectively implemented this policy by encompassing various groups, such as minor political parties, popular organizations, peasants, workers, members of the People’s Liberation Army (中国人民解放军, PLA), and even religious groups.

In *People’s China’s* coverage of America’s involvement in the Taiwan Strait issue, the Chinese Democratic League (中国民主同盟), one of the eight minor political parties in the PRC, asserted that it constituted an armed invasion of China’s territory. The All-China Federation of Labor (中华全国总工会) declared that the militant Chinese working class would confront American aggressors decisively. Workers and peasants nationwide publicly pledged to increase production to provide more supplies for the PLA’s campaign to liberate Taiwan. The PLA combat hero Wei Lai-kuo, representing the troops of the entire 3rd Field Army, stated that the PLA was confident in delivering a decisive blow to the imperialists who in the past had equipped and directed over five million KMT troops.<sup>86</sup>

At the same time, the CCP also expressed the strong voice of peace advocates through their active promotion of a peace petition. In support of the 1950 World Peace Congress held in Warsaw, which explicitly denounced the use of atomic weapons and the American intervention in Korea, the CCP’s Central Committee issued directives to various administrative levels to gather public signatures for this petition emphasizing its significance. The Central Committee mandated its officials to collect a total of two hundred million signatures while intertwining this initiative with other political campaigns, notably the ongoing land reform.<sup>87</sup> This petition also became the propaganda objective by *People’s China* as well: “The Chinese people have expressed their firm support for the activities and resolutions of the World Peace Congress. They are ready to work under the leadership of the World Peace Council. Over 223, 000,000 of them have signed the peace appeal. They demand their place at the U.N. precisely to enable it to fulfill its work for peace. In the face of the grave threats to peace in Asia, they have given substantial testimony of their will to peace.”<sup>88</sup> Moreover, *People’s China* also conveyed the peace-seeking voices of Chinese Christians. According to *People’s China*,

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<sup>85</sup> Chun Lin, *The Transformation of Chinese Socialism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 42.

<sup>86</sup> “China: Angry and Resolute”, *People’s China*, July 16, 1950, 26.

<sup>87</sup> “Instructions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on continuing to do a good job of signing peace signatures” 中共中央关于继续做好和平签名工作的指示 in *Documents of Chinese Communist Party Central Committee, Oct. 1949-May. 1966, Volume 4* 中共中央文件选集, e.d. National Archives Administration of China 中央档案馆 and Party Literature Research Center of the CCP Central Committee 中共中央文献研究室(Beijing: People’s Press, 2013), 136-137.

<sup>88</sup> “Peace Will Conquer the War”, *People’s China*, December 1, 1950, 3-4.

general secretaries of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) across China, during a conference in Shanghai in July 1950, unanimously endorsed the Stockholm peace appeal in a joint statement with the National Committee of the China YMCA.<sup>89</sup>

However, this raises the question: Did these voices genuinely represent the will of the respective groups? Even for the signatures of the peace appeal, the authenticity of it shall be questioned. In 1949, the total population of the PRC at the end of the year was 542 million,<sup>90</sup> while the illiteracy rate in the PRC was as high as 80% in 1949, and the first large-scale literacy campaign in the PRC began in 1952.<sup>91</sup> Thus, the assertion that over 223 million individuals—nearly half of China's population—signed the peace appeal appeared contradictory with the prevailing reality. More importantly, the intertwining of the signature collection process with the land reform initiative raises suspicions of potential coercion. Consequently, this casts doubt on the credibility of the CCP's presented figures, suggesting the potential fabrication or exaggeration of the portrayed numbers.

Meanwhile, since the spring of 1950, local Christian groups had been endorsing anti-imperialist operations, particularly targeting American influence. Chinese Christians were instructed to adhere to the “three selfs” going forward: self-control, self-sustainment, and self-proselytizing.<sup>92</sup> Through the daily implementation of the anti-America campaign, the CCP successfully transformed the YMCA into a patriotic organization aligned with the government's stance.

Regarding the voices of the people, it represented the sentiments of a specific segment. Even after the CPVA entered the Korean Peninsula, the Chinese people's attitude toward China's military aid to North Korea remained highly polarized. On one hand, the vast majority displayed a passive viewpoint,<sup>93</sup> with grassroots CCP offices receiving numerous letters opposing the dispatch of troops to the Korean Peninsula.<sup>94</sup> On the other hand, some individuals wrote to newspapers expressing their extreme anti-America sentiment that “If China wants to

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<sup>89</sup> “One the Peace Front”, *People's China*, July 16, 1950, 26.

<sup>90</sup> “National Bureau of Statistics: moderate population growth in the 60 years of China's history, marked structural improvement 统计局：新中国 60 年人口适度增长 结构明显改善,” *The Central People's Government of People's Republic of China*, accessed November 21, 2023, [https://www.gov.cn/gzdt/2009-09/11/content\\_1415054.htm](https://www.gov.cn/gzdt/2009-09/11/content_1415054.htm).

<sup>91</sup> “From literacy to higher education, from 80% illiteracy rate to universalization of higher education 从扫盲到高考，曾经文盲率 80% 迈向高教普及化,” *CCTV*, accessed November 21, 2023, <http://news.cctv.com/2019/07/06/ARTIiJcDvWnLVDSewiU2tA1M190706.shtml#>.

<sup>92</sup> “Nanjing YMCA&YWCA,” accessed November 7, 2023, <http://www.njymca-ywca.org/en/about.php?cid=13>.

<sup>93</sup> Hailong Sun, “The Chinese Portrayal of the Korean Peninsula in the Resisting America and Assisting Korea Literature of the 1950s,” *Sungkyun Journal of East Asian Studies* 15 (October 1, 2015): 242, <https://doi.org/10.21866/esjeas.2015.15.2.005>.

<sup>94</sup> Masuda Hajimu, *Cold War Crucible: The Korean Conflict and the Postwar World* (Harvard University Press, 2015), 114-115, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt13x0jk3>.

fight the US, we should do so early; if it's delayed, we will be passive.”<sup>95</sup> This polarization of people's attitude could be confirmed by the report of the Central Committee of the CCP on the RAAK movement. The report revealed distinct regional variations in attitudes toward the America. It noted that historically, the northeast and northwest regions exhibited relatively lower levels of interaction with the U.S., leading to a limited influence. However, amidst the current circumstances, sentiments in the northeast predominantly lean towards strong opposition to the United States and active support for North Korea. Conversely, in regions like East China, South China, and Yunnan, where America held more considerable sway, the response to the call for resistance against the United States and support for North Korea appeared more challenging. The industrial and commercial sectors, alongside certain minor political parties, demonstrated a more complex and hesitant stance, displaying a higher degree of internal discord and diverse considerations in the RAAK movement.<sup>96</sup> In this context, the CCP's international propaganda wasn't entirely fabricated; rather, it selectively presented facts that favored its intentions to cover.

By selectively reporting and exaggerating these “facts,” the CCP could construct a favorable public opinion environment without concerns about the credibility and validity of the news and messages they conveyed. Therefore, even though *People's China* featured diverse voices of the groups, the stances of these opinions were uniform and aligned with Communist authority, exemplifying the CCP's propaganda tradition established since the Yan'an period, insisting that all propaganda and communication activities must convey a unified and singular message.<sup>97</sup>

### **The Restrained Support to North Korea and the Hidden Government**

On October 19, 1950, the CPVA entered North Korea to assist the KPA against the United Nations force led by the U.S. However, the CPVA's involvement was veiled in secrecy,

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<sup>95</sup> “Instruction of the General Administration of Information of the Central People's Government and the Xinhua News Agency on the issues to be attended to in reporting on the campaign of protecting the homeland and defending the nation against the United States and in support of the North Korea” 中央人民政府新闻总署、新华通讯社关于抗美援朝保家卫国运动的报道应注意问题的指示 in *Selections from the Party's propaganda documentary work: 1949-1956* 党的宣传文件工作选编 1949-1956, e.d. Central Propaganda Department of the Chinese Communist Party 中央宣传部办公厅 (Beijing: Xuexi Press, 1996), 154-155.

<sup>96</sup> “The CCP Central Committee forwards Peng Zhen's report on RAAK” 中共中央转发彭真关于抗美援朝工作的报告, in *Documents of Chinese Communist Party Central Committee, Oct. 1949-May. 1966, Volume 4* 中共中央文件选集, e.d. National Archives Administration of China 中央档案馆 and Party Literature Research Center of the CCP Central Committee 中共中央文献研究室 (Beijing: People's Press, 2013), 361-364.

<sup>97</sup> Hailong Liu 劉海龍, “The Evolution of the Chinese Propaganda Model and Its Logic in the Global Context” 全球語境下中國宣傳模式嬗變及其邏輯, *Twenty-First Century* 二十一世紀 no.182(2020): 24-25.

as Mao instructed that this information should not be disclosed immediately.<sup>98</sup> Consequently, while support for North Korea in propaganda was deemed necessary, it was also constrained. In a propaganda instruction document issued by the Central Committee of the CCP on October 26, 1950, emphasis was placed on restraining support for North Korea in propaganda efforts: “Until the Central Committee issues new instructions, newspapers should focus on publishing comments, news, and letters opposing the U.S. expansion of the war of aggression against North Korea and Taiwan, opposing pro-U.S. sentiments, and reinforcing national defense and law and order. Support for North Korea in newspapers is limited to expressing sympathy and encouragement for the North Korean people to persevere in the belief that they will ultimately achieve victory.”<sup>99</sup>

Crucially, the Chinese Central Government stressed that expressions of support for North Korea should not mention the Chinese government: “All political parties will release a joint declaration supporting the nation’s demand for self-defense against the United States and aid to North Korea. After the publication of this declaration, local newspapers, people’s organizations, and the public should endorse and support it but not attribute it to the government or link it to government policies and actions.”<sup>100</sup> In another propaganda instruction issued in November, even though the fact that the CPVA was fighting in Korea was disclosed, the Central Government reaffirmed the need to avoid involving the government and the military in the various reports of people’s voluntary support for the CPVA and emphasized a deliberate omission regarding people’s expressions of interest in enlisting in the CPVA, with the exception the Manchuria region close to North Korea.<sup>101</sup>

This characteristic also manifested in *People’s China*, which refrained from covering news concerning the Chinese government’s direct support for North Korea. Instead, the focus was directed towards individual motivations driving support for North Korea. An article titled

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<sup>98</sup> Mao Zedong 毛泽东, “The CPVA currently participating in the war cannot be disclosed publicly” 志愿军参战这件事目前只做不说 in *Selections from the Party’s propaganda documentary work: 1949-1956* 党的宣传文件工作选编 1949-1956, e.d. Central Propaganda Department of the Chinese Communist Party 中央宣传部办公厅 (Beijing: Xuexi Press, 1996), 138.

<sup>99</sup> “Instructions from the Central Committee of the CCP on the nationwide dissemination of current affairs propaganda” 中央关于在全国进行时事宣传的指示 in *Selections from the Party’s propaganda documentary work: 1949-1956* 党的宣传文件工作选编 1949-1956, e.d. Central Propaganda Department of the Chinese Communist Party 中央宣传部办公厅 (Beijing: Xuexi Press, 1996), 139-142.

<sup>100</sup> “Instructions of the Central Committee of the CCP on the launching of the anti-U.S. campaign and aid North Korea” 中央关于开展抗美援朝运动的指示 in *Selections from the Party’s propaganda documentary work: 1949-1956* 党的宣传文件工作选编 1949-1956, e.d. Central Propaganda Department of the Chinese Communist Party 中央宣传部办公厅 (Beijing: Xuexi Press, 1996), 145.

<sup>101</sup> “Instruction of the General Administration of Information of the Central People’s Government and the Xinhua News Agency on the issues to be attended to in reporting on the campaign of protecting the homeland and defending the nation against the United States and in support of the North Korea”.

“Why Chang Yi-yuan Volunteered for Korea”, spotlighted a story of a worker named Chang Yi-yuan’s voluntary support to North Korea in his work unit near Beijing. Chang admitted to initially lacking awareness regarding events in North Korea and the extent of American inhumanity until encountering Premier Zhou Enlai’s statement and learning about the U.S. Army’s bombardment along the northeastern border of the PRC. This revelation prompted his decision to participate in the RAAK campaign. Chang highlighted how the Communist regime was different from the previous cruel regimes, such as the Japanese and the KMT, emphasizing how the Communist Party under Chairman Mao Zedong rescued workers from unemployment and starvation: “What I have, what we all have, and what we are today, our life, work, studies, training, our homes, are all due to Chair-man Mao Tsé-tung and the Communist Party”. Consequently, he felt compelled to support North Korea’s efforts to resist the United States and safeguard the PRC.<sup>102</sup> However, despite the propaganda instruction’s stipulation to avoid reporting on individuals’ requests to join the CPVA for the Korean conflict, this article clearly expressed Chang’s fervent desire to enlist: “As a Communist, it is my duty to go to Korea.”<sup>103</sup> Hence, while the propaganda magazine operated as an instrument for disseminating the CCP’s directives, it did not consistently adhere strictly to these instructions.

More importantly, concealing the government behind propaganda efforts may have aimed to prevent unnecessary diplomatic disputes arising from inappropriate content, reflecting a CCP propaganda strategy that persists to this day. For instance, when Hu Xijin, the chief editor of the influential state-running media and propaganda machine *The Global Times*, advocated in 2020 for China to expand its nuclear warheads to 1,000, the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Hua Chunying, clarified that this was Hu Xijin’s personal opinion, and he had freedom of speech in China.<sup>104</sup> As long as the Chinese government is not directly linked to propaganda activities, it can disclaim responsibility by asserting the propagandist’s freedom of speech when the content offends other countries. Simultaneously, concealing the government’s involvement in propaganda could enhance the credibility of news covered by the propaganda machinery.

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<sup>102</sup> “Why Chang Yi-yuan Volunteered For Korea”, *People’s China*, December 1, 1950, 22-23.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> “Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hua Chunying chaired a regular press conference on 8 May 2020” 2020年5月8日外交部发言人华春莹主持例行记者会, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China* 中华人民共和国外交部, accessed November 15, 2023, [https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/wjdt\\_674879/fyrbt\\_674889/202005/t20200508\\_7816154.shtml](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/wjdt_674879/fyrbt_674889/202005/t20200508_7816154.shtml).

As the CPVA recovered Pyongyang in December of 1950, the achievements of the CPVA and the KPA became the emphasis of the CCP's propaganda work,<sup>105</sup> for which *People's China* covered the news on the victory of the CPVA and the KPA and disclosed how the U.S. had planned the intrigue with the Syngman Rhee government to launch the Korean War to invade North Korea.<sup>106</sup> Apart from these regular propaganda work, the CCP also urged its officials to prevent people from doing extreme anti-American activities because there had been cases of disputes caused by a few students writing the RAAK slogans on the walls of the doors of expatriates or foreign embassies in Beijing.<sup>107</sup> This directive underscored the CCP's cautious approach to conducting propaganda activities linked to diplomatic matters, reflecting a serious effort to lessen any possible negative diplomatic effects arising from such actions.

Examining these propaganda instructions, it became evident that the CCP adopted a cautious approach to its propaganda work during the early Korean War. Despite anti-American sentiment and aid to North Korea being key themes in its propaganda since the outbreak of the Korean War, caution was exercised in expression to avoid diplomatic complications and conceal the real strategy. As the battlefield situation evolved, the fact of the CPVA's entry into Korea was eventually revealed to the public, it led to changes in propaganda direction.

### 2.3 Fight in the Two Battlefields

The CPVA forces made their entry into Korea on October 19th, swiftly initiating their First Phase Offensive by late October to early November. This offensive targeted the U.S. forces, compelling them to retreat to the southern bank of the Chongchon River. In this atmosphere of success, Mao agreed to unveil CPVA's involvement in the Korean conflict to the public. The revelation ceased the secrecy surrounding CPVA's intervention when Xinhua News Agency disseminated a North Korean radio report praising CPVA's and KPA's bravery and victory in the First Phase Offensive.<sup>108</sup> Subsequently, the CCP propaganda narratives expanded beyond mere sympathy for the Korean populace. They pivoted towards highlighting the unified efforts of the CPVA and the KPA on the battlefield.

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<sup>105</sup> "Instructions of the Central Committee on Warmly Celebrating the Recovery of Pyongyang" 中央关于热烈庆祝收复平壤的指示 in *Selections from the Party's propaganda documentary work: 1949-1956* 党的宣传文件工作选编 1949-1956, e.d. Central Propaganda Department of the Chinese Communist Party 中央宣传部办公厅 (Beijing: Xuexi Press, 1996), 158.

<sup>106</sup> "The Way of the U.S. Aggressor: Korea", *People's China*, December 16, 1950, 5-7.

<sup>107</sup> "Instructions of the Central Committee on Warmly Celebrating the Recovery of Pyongyang".

<sup>108</sup> "Before and after the public report of the CPVA's fight in RAAK period" 妙香山上战旗妍——志愿军抗美援朝出国作战公开报道前后, *Dangjianwang* 党建网, accessed November 10, 2023, [http://www.dangjian.com/shouye/dangjianwenhua/dangshigushi/202010/t20201013\\_5813322.shtml](http://www.dangjian.com/shouye/dangjianwenhua/dangshigushi/202010/t20201013_5813322.shtml).

In a propaganda directive issued in November 1950, the Chinese Central Government urged propagandists to stress public enthusiasm and encouragement across diverse regions, attributed to the CPVA's entry into the Korean War and its initial triumph. Additionally, emphasis was placed on fostering a belief in the CPVA's eventual victory alongside the KPA, encouraging unity in the face of adversity.<sup>109</sup> However, as discussed in the previous section, the CCP avoided encouraging vast Chinese people to enlist and stipulated that only the news of those who organized medical and propaganda teams to serve in the war zone in a planned manner under the leadership of the government should be reported.<sup>110</sup> The *People's China* followed the order only partially, as it covered the news that non-combatant vice teams of blood donors, stretch bearers, nurses, and entertainers were being organized by workers and students in Peking, Changchun, and other places for volunteer duties in North Korea,<sup>111</sup> while it also published a letter of a returned overseas Chinese student who had decided to join the CPVA to fight in Korea.<sup>112</sup> In another article, *People's China* not only asserted that numerous Chinese supported the CPVA and the KPA's fighting on the battlefield, but also mentioned that a large portion of the tragically portrayed girl combatants in the film "Daughters of China" were Koreans.<sup>113</sup> This narrative sought to blur the lines of national identity between Chinese and Koreans, emphasizing instead the narrative of mutual assistance and enduring friendship between the two peoples within the CCP's official discourse.

Simultaneously, the government instructed propagandists to spotlight the populace's engagement in domestic practical initiatives. This included activities like combating banditry, countering espionage, implementing land reforms, stabilizing prices, curbing speculation, and launching patriotic production contests. These efforts aimed to fortify the people's democratic governance and bolster national defense in support of CPVA's endeavors.<sup>114</sup> This highlight showed another important characteristic of the CCP's international propaganda-internally and externally related but differentiated.

In fact, even though the PRC was established in 1949 and the main forces of the KMT had retreated to Taiwan, significant portions of China still remained under the KMT's control, which prolonged the battles between the remaining KMT military and the PLA that lasted to

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<sup>109</sup> "Instruction of the General Administration of Information of the Central Committee of the CCP and the Xinhua News Agency on the issues to be attended to in reporting on the campaign of protecting the homeland and defending the nation against the United States and in support of North Korea".

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> "Service Team for Korea", *People's China*, December 1, 1950, 27.

<sup>112</sup> "A Letter from a Returned Student", *People's China*, December 1, 1950, 26.

<sup>113</sup> "Chinese and Koreans Fight Japanese Too", *People's China*, December 1, 1950, 24-25.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

1952 in Tibet and Southwest China border region. Even in regions under the CCP authority, numerous bandits collaborated with remaining KMT forces, posing multifaceted threats to the CCP regime. These challenges included assassinations of grassroots CCP officials, intimidation tactics targeting peasants to resist land reform, and disruption of local infrastructures.<sup>115</sup> To remove these threats, the CCP launched the Campaign to Suppress Counterrevolutionaries (镇压反革命运动) in the spring of 1950, and the breakout of the Korean War intensified this campaign. As Meisner argues, it caused the perceived threat for the domestic suppression counterrevolutionaries movement, threatened the survival of the newly established PRC, and signaled the beginning of a period of domestic political repression.<sup>116</sup> The CCP's concerns regarding domestic counter-revolutionaries were mirrored in their international propaganda directives. In the 29th June Propaganda Instructions, the Central Government argued that Truman's statement on June 27 was intimidating and threatening, which showed that the United States intended to support the reactionaries to oppress the people globally.<sup>117</sup> This statement underscored the CCP's recognition of the significance of domestic reactionary elements, interlinked with the Korean War in the CCP's considerations.

Following the Inchon Landing in September 1950, rumors proliferated across China, instigating widespread panic among the populace. Speculation ranged from KMT counterattacks with U.S. support to allegations of coastal provinces already falling under KMT occupation.<sup>118</sup> More importantly, according to the archive of the Central Committee of the CCP, these rumors triggered varied responses among different segments of society: speculation on profiteering amid war, uncertainties among landlords regarding land reform interruptions, concerns among overseas Chinese about their foreign ties, and intensified activities by U.S. and KMT spies capitalizing on the situation.<sup>119</sup>

Paralleling with the anti-America propaganda, intensifying suppression of counterrevolutionaries became an important political task for the CCP as well in the autumn of 1950. In an instruction on the Central Committee of the CCP on the suppression of counter-revolutionary activities released on the 10<sup>th</sup> of October, just 2 days after October 8 when Mao

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<sup>115</sup> Masuda Hajimu, *Cold War Crucible: The Korean Conflict and the Postwar World*, 125-127.

<sup>116</sup> Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China and After: A History of the People's Republic* (New York: The Free Press, 1999), 69.

<sup>117</sup> "Propaganda instruction of the General Administration of Information of the Central People's Government on the public interference of the U.S. Imperialists in the domestic affairs of China and Korea-Vietnam and other countries".

<sup>118</sup> Masuda Hajimu, *Cold War Crucible: The Korean Conflict and the Postwar World*, 121-125.

<sup>119</sup> "The CCP Central Committee forwards Peng Zhen's report on RAAK".

Zedong officially issued an order on the formation of the CPVA,<sup>120</sup> the Central Committee of the CCP issued an instruction emphasizing the necessity to suppress counter-revolutionary activities, particularly targeting those affiliated with the KMT and collaborating with imperialists. The instruction heavily criticized party cadres' deviations from the policy of combining suppression with leniency, resulting in the inadequate punishment of persistent counterrevolutionaries.<sup>121</sup>

Interestingly, despite the Central Government's emphasis on the importance of addressing anti-counterrevolutionary activities, such as combating banditry and countering espionage, there were no articles addressing the suppression of anti-counterrevolutionaries in *People's China* from the winter of 1950 to the spring of 1951. In contrast, *People's Daily* extensively covered this topic, with 5 articles in October 1950, 3 in November, and 2 in December 1950, peaking in the spring of 1951 with 15 articles in March, 43 in April, and 21 in May.<sup>122</sup> Even though the CCP alleged that the suppressing counterrevolutionaries were closely associated with the RAAK,<sup>123</sup> *People's China* did not address these activities. Instead, it focused on presenting a positive image to the Chinese populace, highlighting the enthusiasm for production and a unified China comprising diverse ethnic groups in domestic affairs although it sometimes alleged that Chinese people were fearless to the war and prepared to liberate Taiwan as well. Thus, despite the close link between domestic and external affairs, domestic and external propaganda campaigns emphasized different aspects and priorities.

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<sup>120</sup> Zhihua Shen 沈志华, 最後的天朝 *The Last "Celestial Empire"*, 221

<sup>121</sup> "Instructions of the Central Committee of the CCP on the suppression of counter-revolutionary activities" 中共中央关于镇压反革命活动的指示, in *Documents of Chinese Communist Party Central Committee, Oct. 1949-May. 1966, Volume 4* 中共中央文件选集, e.d. National Archives Administration of China 中央档案馆 and Party Literature Research Center of the CCP Central Committee 中共中央文献研究室 (Beijing: People's Press, 2013), 158-161.

<sup>122</sup> The data is summarized the database of *People's Daily*, [http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2023-02/23/nbs.D110000renmrb\\_19.htm](http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2023-02/23/nbs.D110000renmrb_19.htm).

<sup>123</sup> "The suppression of the counter-revolution is inseparable from the fight against the U.S. and North Korea" 镇压反革命和抗美援朝分不开, *People's Daily* 人民日报, March 23, 1951.

### 3 Propaganda in 1951

In 1951, the CIB formulated a preliminary work plan and presented it to the General Administration of Press of the Chinese Central Government in January of that year. Building upon the achievements of 1950, the plan outlined key directives for the upcoming year. These directives aimed at advancing several fundamental objectives: initiating propaganda efforts targeted at Asian nations and highlighting the struggles of colonial populations worldwide. The overarching goal was to disseminate these narratives effectively in Europe and the United States through their propaganda channels. Simultaneously, this initiative sought to facilitate interconnections among colonial societies, fostering an exchange of experiences and mutual inspiration while amplifying the CCP's message. The strategy also involved conducting counter-propaganda against adversaries by unveiling the aggressive machinations of the American capitalism camp and dismantling their deceitful narratives to undermine their morale.<sup>124</sup> In this chapter, I will examine documents from the Department of Propaganda of the CCP alongside excerpts from *People's China*. This analysis aims to unveil how these guiding propaganda principles manifested in the PRC's international propaganda endeavors, thereby illuminating their impact and implementation in 1951.

#### 3.1 Refusal to the Cease-Fire Solution of the U.N.

As the CPVA and KPA secured victories, advancing close to the 38th parallel by the end of 1950,<sup>125</sup> the United Nations (U.N.) proposed a cease-fire in January 1951. In fact, the entry of the CPVA into North Korea prompted India, Britain, and other UN members to initiate negotiations aiming to halt Chinese troop advancement beyond the 38th parallel. Initially, Britain engaged in discussions primarily with the United States, while India focused on establishing contact with China, marking the earliest mediation efforts in the Korean conflict.<sup>126</sup> Originally, Stalin and Mao Zedong intended to drive American forces behind the 38th parallel, protecting North Korea, and then seeking resolution through negotiations. However, after achieving swift victories and the subsequent occupation of Seoul by the CPVA and KPA in January 1951, the United Nations Political Committee offered a cease-fire solution

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<sup>124</sup> Foreign Language Press 中国外文局, *Chronology of the Foreign Languages Press* 中国外文局五十年大事记, 11-12.

<sup>125</sup> Zhihua Shen 沈志華, 最後的天朝 *The Last "Celestial Empire"*, 238.

<sup>126</sup> Zhihua Shen, "China's Decision to Reject the Cease-Fire Proposal by the United Nations in the Early 1951-- A Preliminary Exploration 试论 1951 年初中国拒绝联合国停火议案的决策," *Foreign Affairs Review* 外交评论, no. 4 (2010): 105.

and the U.S. government also voted in favor of this resolution.<sup>127</sup> The U.N.'s resolution comprised five key recommendations: immediate cessation of hostilities, convening a political conference to restore peace, phased withdrawal of foreign forces from Korea with arrangements for Korean elections, management of Korea's reunification and administration, and a post-ceasefire conference involving Britain, the United States, the Soviet Union, and PRC to address Far East issues, including Taiwan's status and the PRC's representation in the United Nations.<sup>128</sup>

However, the PRC and the USSR advocated a complete resolution of the Korean question by removing U.N. forces from the Korean peninsula via military means or pressure. In this disposition, neither Mao nor Kim earnestly considered the armistice talks proposed by the United Nations Political Committee in January 1951, missing a favorable opportunity to swiftly end the war. This stance led China into a notably passive position across political, diplomatic, and military domains.<sup>129</sup> Scholars like Shen Zihua find the Chinese government's reasons unconvincing. China opposed the U.N. resolution mainly due to its understanding of the "truce before negotiation" principle, believing it to be a tactic by the U.S. government to buy time. Moreover, China's lack of participation in the resolution discussions and the repeated emphasis on the ceasefire being an American ploy were additional grounds for their opposition.<sup>130</sup>

While the available archives did not provide a direct blueprint of how the CCP orchestrated its propaganda machinery in response to the U.N.'s cease-fire rejection, insights into their strategies emerge from the texts within the *People's China*. The CCP within these texts labeled the U.N. resolution as illegitimate, portraying it as a result of American coercion, manipulation, and pressure tactics exerted upon its U.N. allies, given the PRC's absence from the resolution discussions. Meanwhile, the CCP fiercely protested against the characterization by the U.N. of China's deployment of the CPVA to Korea as an "invasion",<sup>131</sup> and condemned the resolution as a part of America's elaborate scheme, committing irreversibly to a policy of warfare against Asian nations. Notably, in discussing the opposing forces against the U.S., the article employed the term "Arab-Asian nations" instead of solely referencing "Asian nations" as was previously done. This inclusion of "Arab" nations likely pointed towards Egypt, as

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid, 111-118.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid, 117.

<sup>129</sup> Zihua Shen, 最後的天朝 *The Last "Celestial Empire"*, 243.

<sup>130</sup> Zihua Shen, "China's Decision to Reject the Cease-Fire Proposal by the United Nations in the Early 1951-- A Preliminary Exploration", 119-121.

<sup>131</sup> "Imperialism America Wants War, Not Peace!", *People's China*, February 16, 1951, 3.

China's ceasefire proposal in January 1951 suggested involvement from seven countries: China, the USSR, the UK, the U.S., France, India, and Egypt. In China's proposal, the outcomes of this seven-nation conference also tied PRC's legitimate status within the United Nations.<sup>132</sup> However, it appears puzzling why China adopted a friendly stance towards Egypt, considering Egypt's condemnation in the United Nations Security Council of the "Case of American Aggression against Taiwan," presented by Wu Xiuquan and other representatives of the PRC on November 30, 1950.<sup>133</sup>

Simultaneously, the warning issued by the Indian delegate at the U.N. garnered special attention and respect. India, having actively participated in cease-fire efforts and being a newly independent nation freed from colonial rule, received notable acknowledgment in the mid-February issue of the *People's China*. This issue not only commended the Indian delegate's remarks at the U.N. but also featured an article titled "Chairman Mao Tse-tung Greets Indian Anniversary" and a letter from an Indian reader. In Mao Zedong's speech in the article, commemorating India's National Day, he emphasized India's significant contributions toward fostering peace in the Korean War: "We hope that two nations, China and India, will continue to unite together to strive for peace. People all over the world need peace, only a few people want war. India, China, the Soviet Union, and all other peace-loving countries and people, unite together to strive for peace in the Far East and the whole world."<sup>134</sup> The reader's letter not only praised the enduring friendship between India and China and celebrated the achievements of both governments but also highlighted America was perceived threat to Asia and the world: "You know, as we do, that the Americans have been trying to drive a wedge between us so that there will be no power in Asia to prevent them from exploiting the natural resources abundant in this part of the world."<sup>135</sup> It was evident that the RAAK theme prominently featured in PRC's diplomatic narratives when engaging with other nations.

However, China's rejection of the U.N. Cease-fire proposal stirred dissatisfaction among certain countries. Britain, a longstanding supporter of China's admission to the United Nations, publicly expressed agreement with the condemnation of China's intervention in support of the aggressor, although it refrained from advocating significant new decisions at this stage. Evidently, Zhou Enlai recognized the tactical inadequacy in China's handling of the

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<sup>132</sup> Zhihua Shen, "China's Decision to Reject the Cease-Fire Proposal by the United Nations in the Early 1951-- A Preliminary Exploration", 119.

<sup>133</sup> "Security Council official records, 5th year :530th meeting, 30 November 1950, New York," 1952, [https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/632960/files/S\\_PV.530-EN.pdf](https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/632960/files/S_PV.530-EN.pdf).

<sup>134</sup> "Chairman Mao Tse-tung Greets Indian Anniversary", *People's China*, February 16, 1951, 29.

<sup>135</sup> "Letters from Our Readers", *People's China*, February 16, 1951, 30.

situation. To win over global public opinion, the Chinese Foreign Ministry offered a revised proposal on January 2 in response to the Indian Ambassador. Yet, under U.S. influence, the U.N. ceased considering China's explanations. Ultimately, encouraged and orchestrated by the U.S., the U.N. General Assembly passed a resolution on February 1st, labeling the Chinese government as engaged in aggression in Korea.<sup>136</sup>

Hence, to rebuild a positive image of the PRC following the disputes over the cease-fire solution, the March 1st edition of *People's China* reiterated that the entry of the CPVA into Korea aimed to assist the KPA in resisting U.S. aggression, safeguarding PRC borders, and ultimately preserving peace in Asia and the world. Emphasizing the Chinese people's consistent advocacy for peaceful resolutions to significant Asian issues, the publication notably refrained from mentioning PRC's refusal of the U.N. proposed cease-fire, sidestepping discussions about efforts by other U.N. members and the compromises offered by the U.S.<sup>137</sup>

In response to the U.N.'s resolution characterizing the PRC as aggressors in Korea, *People's China* strongly discredited the U.N.'s credibility and validity: "As a result of passing such a shameless resolution slandering China, the United Nations has alienated itself from the Chinese People's Republic which represents one-quarter of humanity. In the eyes of the Chinese people, the United Nations is nothing but a naked instrument of aggression in the hands of the American aggressor against China and Asia."<sup>138</sup> Moreover, it cited Mao's perspective to question the legitimacy of U.N. intervention in Asian affairs: "The affairs of Asia should be run by the peoples of Asia, and not by the United States,"<sup>139</sup> challenging the post-World War II global order established through the U.N. This stance presented a contradictory narrative in PRC's propaganda. On one hand, there was a fervent pursuit of a legitimate seat within the U.N., while on the other, there was radical criticism of the U.N.'s credibility. This raises questions about the coherence and rationale within the PRC's approach. If the U.N. was deemed a tool of U.S. war tactics, and illegitimate of intervening in Asian affairs, why was the PRC earnestly seeking U.N. membership?

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<sup>136</sup> Zhihua Shen, "China's Decision to Reject the Cease-Fire Proposal by the United Nations in the Early 1951-- A Preliminary Exploration", 122.

<sup>137</sup> "Take the Cause into Our Hands", *People's China*, March 1, 1951, 3.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

### 3.2 People's Voluntary Support and "The Rice Sprout Song": the Challenges to the CCP's Propaganda

In a directive issued during the winter of 1950, the Chinese Central Government instructed its propaganda machinery to highlight the emotional and material support extended by people across all societal classes towards the CPVA-KPA, and civilians bravely defending against the U.S. aggression in North Korea. This encompassed various activities such as writing letters of condolence, gathering relief supplies, and other initiatives aimed at bolstering this cause.<sup>140</sup> The portrayal of Chinese solidarity with the CPVA and KPA was primarily conveyed through visual imagery. Specifically, in issues released on December 16, 1950, and March 16, 1951, the *People's China* disseminated a series of images illustrating how its populace engaged in the RAAK movement in their daily lives. These images depicted scenes such as peasants serving as stretcher-bearers in Northeast China, Beijing's housewives meticulously crafting bags of gifts for the CPVA and KPA, schoolchildren in Beijing honoring a volunteer's mother during the Spring Festival, and substantial donations—like pigs—flowing across the Yalu River for the CPVA and KPA.<sup>141</sup> The outpouring of gifts and contributions from ordinary citizens formed the central theme of these pictorials.

The CCP unmistakably sought to craft a narrative depicting voluntary Chinese support for the RAAK policies and a harmonious picture, in which citizens of all classes stood in solidarity with their government and military. However, reality diverged significantly from the CCP's propagated narrative. An underlying crisis brewed beneath the surface of harmony. A pervasive trend of formalism had infiltrated the patriotic pact campaign.<sup>142</sup> A report submitted by the Party Committee of Henan Province to the Central Committee of the CCP uncovered violations within the donation campaign in the RAAK movement. These transgressions breached the principle of voluntary participation, compelling donations that stoked discontent among the populace. In specific instances, such as in the Qixian, Guergang, and Ziqi County

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<sup>140</sup> "Instruction of the General Administration of Information of the Central People's Government and the Xinhua News Agency on the Content of Reporting on the Campaign of RAAK" 中央人民政府新闻总署、新华通讯社 关于报道抗美援朝保家卫国运动内容的指示 in *Selections from the Party's propaganda documentary work: 1949-1956* 党的宣传文件工作选编 1949-1956, e.d. Central Propaganda Department of the Chinese Communist Party 中央宣传部办公厅 (Beijing: Xuexi Press, 1996), 152-153.

<sup>141</sup> "Support Our Volunteers in Korea", *People's China*, December 16, 1950, 15. "Support to the Volunteers in Korea", *People's China*, March 16, 1951, 15.

<sup>142</sup> "Instruction of the Central Committee on the Inspection of the Three Calls for Resistance to U.S. Aid for Korea" 中央关于检查抗美援朝三大号召工作的指示 in *Selections from the Party's propaganda documentary work: 1949-1956* 党的宣传文件工作选编 1949-1956, e.d. Central Propaganda Department of the Chinese Communist Party 中央宣传部办公厅 (Beijing: Xuexi Press, 1996), 272.

districts, individuals were mandated to contribute 3,000 yuan each. Some cadres even pressured peasants who had received land during the Land Reform to contribute more, even donating their recently acquired grain. Simultaneously, many cadres neglected adequate political indoctrination and failed to raise ideological consciousness among the masses during the campaign. For instance, in the Chenliu area, a segment of both the populace and cadres failed to comprehend the essence of donation. Instead, people felt compelled to donate solely due to the high casualties in North Korea. Some businesspersons lamented, feeling that it was merely another demand for money.<sup>143</sup>

Upon delving into archival records, it became evident that widespread discontent simmered within the populace concerning the donation campaign, a fact the CCP sought to conceal within its international propaganda efforts. Yet, did the CCP successfully obscure this reality and present a harmonious image to the international community? Not quite. Despite the PRC's isolation from the Western world and the Communist Party's control over most communication channels aimed at the external sphere, the totalitarian regime's grip remained imperfect. Despite concerted efforts by the CCP to cultivate a favorable image in its international propaganda, a significant revelation came to light through a widely acclaimed novel, "The Rice Sprout Song," which unveiled the CCP's brutality to a global readership in the mid-1950s.

"The Rice Sprout Song" (秧歌) was a novel written by the famous Shanghainese writer Eileen Chang (張愛玲, 1920-1995). During the Republican era, Chang resided in Hong Kong and Shanghai, establishing herself as a prolific author and a prominent figure in Shanghai's literary landscape. Despite initially choosing to stay in Shanghai after the establishment of the PRC in 1949, Chang subsequently opted to depart for Hong Kong in 1952. To sustain herself, she engaged in translating works for the United States Information Agency (USIA) which also funded the publication of her own works, including "The Rice Sprout Song" (秧歌) and "Naked Earth" (赤地之戀).<sup>144</sup> While "Naked Earth" was commissioned by the USIA, "The Rice Sprout Song" was initiated by Eileen Chang independently in English. However, during the writing process, the U.S. Information Service intervened, acquiring the copyright and representing the

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<sup>143</sup> "Report of the Henan Provincial Party Committee on the Work of the Three Calls for RAAK" 河南省委关于抗美援朝三大号召工作的报告 in *Selections from the Party's propaganda documentary work: 1949-1956* 党的宣传文件工作选编 1949-1956, e.d. Central Propaganda Department of the Chinese Communist Party 中央宣传部办公厅 (Beijing: Xuexi Press, 1996), 273-274.

<sup>144</sup> Mei-Hsiang Wang 王梅香, "The Unknown Story: The Rice-Sprout Song and the Naked Earth under the USIS Book Translation Program 不為人知的張愛玲:美國新聞處譯書計畫下的《秧歌》與《赤地之戀》," *EurAmerica* 歐美研究 45, no. 1 (2015): 89-93.

U.S. publisher she had sought.<sup>145</sup> Initially serialized in Chinese in 1954 by the *World Today* (今日世界) magazine established by the USIA in Hong Kong,<sup>146</sup> “The Rice Sprout Song” gained traction in Western society after Chang’s relocation to the U.S. in 1955, where it was published in English and garnered significant attention.

Set in the rural areas near Shanghai in the early 1950s, the narrative backdrop of “The Rice Sprout Song” unfolds amidst the Land Reform. Despite acquiring land during this reform, peasants found themselves struggling with hunger due to the mandated relinquishment of significant yields to the government. During the Lunar New Year festivities, CCP cadres demanded each family distribute half a pig and 20kg of rice cakes as gifts to CPVA families, an imposition that stoked fury among the peasants, leading to the eventual burning of government storehouses.<sup>147</sup> While primarily centered on Land Reform, the novel’s climax is reached when peasants fired the government storehouse in response to mandatory donations for CPVA families under the RAAK movement. The ending of “The Rice Sprout Song” depicts the government quelling the peasants’ resistance, resulting in the execution of participants branded as spies and counter-revolutionaries.<sup>148</sup> The remaining peasants, amidst the happy lunar new year atmosphere, presented their gifts to CPVA families while performing the rice sprout song—a starkly contrasting portrayal from the harmonious image propagated by the *People’s China*, revealing the obscured and untold narrative underlying the facade of unity.

While there has been extensive debate surrounding “The Rice Sprout Song,” with some scholars dismissing it as mere anti-communist propaganda<sup>149</sup> and others lauding its literary value,<sup>150</sup> I argue that this novel realistically portrays the lives of Chinese peasants under the communist regime to a considerable extent. Eileen Chang herself acknowledged residing in the countryside for three to four months before crafting “The Rice Sprout Song,”<sup>151</sup> a detail often

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid, 102.

<sup>146</sup> Shu-hui Lin 林淑惠, “The Cultural Cold War Code of Moving Narration in Today’s World 《今日世界》所載移動敘事的文化冷戰符碼,” *Literature and Philosophy* 文與哲, no. 32 (2018): 440.

<sup>147</sup> Eileen Chang 張愛玲, *The Rice Sprout Song* 秧歌 (Taipei: Crown Culture, 2001).

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Wen-biao Tang 唐文標, *Research on Eileen Chang* 張愛玲研究 (Taipei: Linking, 1995), 70.

<sup>150</sup> C.T. Hsia, *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction* (Yale University Press, 1961), 416-427.

<sup>151</sup> Yunpeng Yin 殷允芃, “Interview with Ms. Eileen Chang 訪張愛玲女士,” *Splendorness and desolation: Eileen Chang’s memorial essays* 華麗與蒼涼: 張愛玲紀念文集, ed. Cai Fengyi 蔡鳳儀 (Hong Kong: The Crown, 1996), 159. ed. Cai Fengyi 蔡鳳儀 (Hong Kong: The Crown, 1996), 105-124, quoted in Jian-zhong

Chen, “‘Exile’ in Hong Kong: Re-Reading Eileen Chang’s *The Rice-Sprout Song* and *Naked Earth* 「流亡」在香港——重讀張愛玲的《秧歌》與《赤地之戀》,” *Journal of Taiwan Literary Studies* 臺灣文學研究學報, no. 13 (October 1, 2011): 275-311.

considered evidence of her direct observation of the Land Reform's impact.<sup>152</sup> Additionally, the CCP's Central Committee urged senior intellectuals to participate in or visit land reforms for political education in early 1951<sup>153</sup>—a move that likely involved Chang, a renowned intellectual, in the rural reform efforts. Moreover, the novel's narrative closely echoes the imagery depicted in *People's China* and aligns with records from the CCP's archives. When the CCP directed the cessation of nationwide donations for the RAAK movement, emphasis remained on preventing coercive tactics during collection. As discussed previously, the report from the Party Committee of Henan Province, submitted to the Central Committee of the CCP, highlighted how compulsory donations provoked widespread dissatisfaction among the populace. While we lack specific details to confirm if the riot depicted in “The Rice Sprout Song” occurred in Henan Province, the significance of this report, submitted to the Central Committee, underscores the substantial nature of the “discontent of the masses,” which implies that the discontentment wasn't limited to a small scale, indicating a broader and notable sentiment of unrest among the people.

Upon its 1955 publication, “The Rice Sprout Song” garnered significant attention and acclaim beyond mainland China. Translated into Korean<sup>154</sup> and Japanese<sup>155</sup>, the novel served as a crucial tool for comprehending Communist China.<sup>156</sup> Chang's work received many highly favorable reviews from reputable sources such as *The New York Times*, *The Saturday Review of Literature*, and the *New York Herald Tribune*.<sup>157</sup> *The New York Times* thought highly of

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<sup>152</sup> Jian-zhong Chen 陳建忠, “‘Exile’ in Hong Kong: Re-Reading Eileen Chang's The Rice-Sprout Song and Naked Earth 「流亡」在香港——重讀張愛玲的《秧歌》與《赤地之戀》,” *Journal of Taiwan Literary Studies* 臺灣文學研究學報, no. 13 (October 1, 2011): 288.

<sup>153</sup> “Instructions of the Central Committee of the People's Republic of China on mobilizing democrats to participate in or observe the land reforms” 中共中央关于动员民主人士参加或参观土改的指示 in *Documents of Chinese Communist Party Central Committee, Oct. 1949-May. 1966, Volume 5* 中共中央文件选集, e.d. National Archives Administration of China 中央档案馆 and Party Literature Research Center of the CCP Central Committee 中共中央文献研究室(Beijing: People's Press, 2013), 401.

<sup>154</sup> WooKyung Im 任佑卿, “Literary History and the Boundary of the Nation: Focusing on Aileen-Chang and Constructing Taiwanese New Literary History 國族的界限和文學史: 論建構台灣新文學史與張愛玲研究,” *A Journal of Cultural Studies* 文化研究, no. 2 (March 1, 2006): 260, [https://doi.org/10.6752/JCS.200603\\_\(2\).0007](https://doi.org/10.6752/JCS.200603_(2).0007).

<sup>155</sup> Mei-Hsiang Wang, “Reporting on ‘China’ in a ‘Novel’ Way: Japanese Translations of Eileen Chang's The Naked Earth and The Rice-Sprout Song in the USIS-Tokyo Book Translation Program (1952-1956),” *EurAmerica* 50, no. 3 (September 1, 2020): 613, [https://doi.org/10.7015/JEAS.202009\\_50\(3\).0004](https://doi.org/10.7015/JEAS.202009_50(3).0004).

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 614.

<sup>157</sup> Yiliang Lin 林以亮, *Whispering Eileen Chang 私語張愛玲, Splendor and desolation: Eileen Chang's memorial essays* 華麗與蒼涼:張愛玲紀念文集, ed. Cai Fengyi 蔡鳳儀(Hong Kong: The Crown, 1996), 105-124, quoted in Jian-zhong Chen, “‘Exile’ in Hong Kong: Re-Reading Eileen Chang's The Rice-Sprout Song and Naked Earth 「流亡」在香港——重讀張愛玲的《秧歌》與《赤地之戀》,” *Journal of Taiwan Literary Studies* 臺灣文學研究學報, no. 13 (October 1, 2011): 275-311.

Chang's novel: "For all its apparently casual revelation of day-to-day life in a Chinese village, Miss Chang's novel is a tightly constructed and subtly modulated piece of work. She is not concerned with black-and-white patterns of villainy and goodness."<sup>158</sup> In contrast of the popularity of Chang's "The Rice Sprout Song", the CCP faced obstacles in distributing its message internationally, notably due to the U.S. government's freezing of Chinese assets and subsequent embargo against China in the 1950s.<sup>159</sup>

Hence, despite the CCP's efforts to portray a positive relationship between the Chinese populace and government while concealing internal conflicts, it couldn't control all channels disseminating information to the global community. Chang's "The Rice Sprout Song," rooted in her rural Chinese experiences, gained resounding success abroad, weakening the CCP's propaganda narrative. The novel's revelation of truth posed a significant challenge to the CCP's international propaganda efforts, revealing the regime's limitations in controlling narratives. However, despite its portrayal of the social reality in communist China, "The Rice Sprout Song" remains inevitably tagged as anti-communist propaganda within the context of the Cold War. This labeling arises from the prevailing sentiments and the dominant ideological stances during that era. In the midst of this dichotomy, the perceived stance of information often mattered more than its authenticity, blurring the distinction between authenticity and bias in understanding and interpreting narratives.

### 3.3 Re-armament of Japan

Along with the propaganda on the 1951 cease-fire proposal, the CCP actively engaged in propaganda against Japan's rearmament, a campaign initiated in December 1950. Prior to the outbreak of the Korean War, General MacArthur emphasized that Japan's agreement to maintain U.S. military bases must be a precondition for ending the occupation. Concurrently, within the United States Government, there was a prevailing sentiment advocating for a separate peace with Japan at the earliest feasible opportunity. The strategic elevation of Japan's position due to the Korean War exacerbated the dilemma of insufficient U.S. military power in the Far East, intensifying the urgency of Japan's rearmament.<sup>160</sup> On November 20, 1950,

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<sup>158</sup> John J. Espey, "Roots Without Water", *The New York Times*, April 3, 1955.

<sup>159</sup> Foreign Language Press 中国外文局, *Chronology of the Foreign Languages Press 中国外文局五十年大事记*, 12.

<sup>160</sup> Zhihua Shen 沈志华, "The Sino-Soviet Alliance, the Korean War and the Peace Settlement with Japan: The Three Steps in the Formation of the Cold War Situation in East Asia and Their Interaction 中苏同盟、朝鲜战争与对日和约—东亚冷战格局形成的三部曲及其互动关系," *World History 世界史*, no. 12 (2005): 176–178.

discussions between the U.S. and the Soviet Union commenced regarding a peace treaty with Japan. Following the CPVA's significant victory in the Korean War, and in response to the Soviet-US discussions, China issued the "Statement on the Question of Peace with Japan" on December 5. This statement represented the Chinese government's comprehensive articulation of its viewpoints and positions regarding Japan's peace. It emphasized that the Central People's Government of the PRC was the sole legitimate representative of the Chinese people and insisted on its participation in the formulation, drafting, and signing of the peace treaty with Japan. Moreover, the statement condemned the United States for its reluctance to withdraw troops from Japan and its utilization of Japan as a base for aggression against Korea and China. It strongly criticized the U.S.'s arming of Japan and its attempts to transform Japan into a war base for invading China.<sup>161</sup>

Subsequent to the Chinese Central Government's statement on the peace treaty with Japan, *People's China* published numerous articles between the winter of 1950 and the spring of 1951 condemning Japan's rearmament associating it with the Korean War. An issue of *People's China* released on December 16, 1950, accused the U.S. of utilizing the Japanese islands as a primary base for aggression against Asian nations, labeling the U.S. invasion of Korea as the initial step in this strategy.<sup>162</sup> Concurrently, it underscored the significance and necessity of Chinese participation in shaping the Japanese peace treaty: "Events in Korea have shown that no major question in the Far East of primary concern to the Chinese people can be settled without their participation."<sup>163</sup> Within the narratives of *People's China's* propaganda, the PRC was depicted not only as the leader of the Asian Revolution but also as a pivotal power entwined in major Asian affairs. Subsequently, the imperative of Chinese involvement in the drafting of a peace treaty with Japan became a foundational principle reiterated in CCP propaganda rhetoric.<sup>164</sup>

In early 1951, *People's China* extensively covered Japan's rearmament, reaching a crescendo in February and March. A publication on February 16, 1951, detailed the U.S. plan to rearm Japan, depicting it as an attempt to drive the "Japanese people into the firing line to replenish their dwindling stocks of cannon-fodder". It urged the Japanese people to resist both the U.S. and the Yoshida government.<sup>165</sup> Another article equated Japan's rearming with the resurgence of a fascist regime, drawing parallels to the harrowing experiences endured during

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid, 180-181.

<sup>162</sup> "U.S. Intrigues on the Japanese Peace Treaty", *People's China*, December 16, 1950, 3-4.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> "For A Genuine Peace Treaty with Japan", *People's China*, June 16, 1951, 8-9.

<sup>165</sup> "The U.S. Gamble in Japan", *People's China*, February 16, 1951, 4.

the Second Sino-Japanese War, alleging that “Recalling the bitter suffering brought on the Chinese people by the Japanese army during the Anti-Japanese War, men and women throughout the country vowed to fight against the resurrection of a fascist, militarized Japan.”<sup>166</sup>

Similar themes persisted in March 1951 issues. To vividly portray the suffering caused by Japan, *People’s China* published pictorials titled “Part of Imperialist Japan’s Sanguinary Record,” reminding readers of Japan’s inhumane acts during World War II, notably the Nanjing Massacre of 1937-38.<sup>167</sup> It didn’t solely focus on Chinese suffering but also shed light on the anguish of other Asian nations subjected to Japanese invasion. For instance, an article titled “Koreans in China” delineated the brutalities endured by Koreans during Japan’s occupation, forcing many to seek refuge in China.<sup>168</sup>



Image 2. “Part of Imperialist Japan’s Sanguinary Record”, *People’s China*, March 1, 1951, 16.

Meanwhile, propaganda aimed to increase readability and credibility by incorporating personal stories illustrating the dehumanizing actions of the Japanese army. One account highlighted a Korean’s ordeal during the occupation, where even dogs wouldn’t consume the rotten rice porridge that constituted their meals. They were coerced into military practices despite being half-starved and subjected to menial tasks for the Japanese.<sup>169</sup> Letters from readers, including those from Southeast Asia, echoed these narratives of suffering during World War II, expressing discontentment toward Japan’s rearmament. An Indonesian reader recounted gruesome experiences of witnessing floggings to death, forced spectating of

<sup>166</sup> “U.S. Re-arming Japan”, *People’s China*, February 16, 1951, 28.

<sup>167</sup> “Part of Imperialist Japan’s Sanguinary Record”, *People’s China*, March 1, 1951, 16-17.

<sup>168</sup> “The Koreans of China”, *People’s China*, March 1, 1951, 23-24.

<sup>169</sup> “Japan Must Not Be Re-armed”, *People’s China*, March 1, 1951, 30.

executions, and other appalling acts imposed by the Japanese.<sup>170</sup> Consequently, *People's China* rallied all Asian victims of Japanese aggression during World War II to oppose Japan's rearmament vehemently. It articulated a collective demand across Asia: "Throughout Asia the people who suffered from Japanese aggression demand: 'No re-armament of Japan!'"<sup>171</sup>

Expanding beyond regional impact, *People's China* linked Japan's rearmament to global peace threats. Articles, such as "Women Defend Peace, Oppose U.S. Imperialism," underscored the belief that the UN's agenda to re-arm Japan aimed to perpetuate aggression, endangering not just Japan but the entire Asian populace in a blood-soaked conflict. Advocacy for global peace encouraged women to thwart America's aggressive plans: "We call on all our peace-loving sisters to adopt every effective measure to oppose the schemes of the United States imperialists with regard to re-arming Japan and Western Germany, and to provide effective safeguards for world peace."<sup>172</sup> Moreover, diverse voices were showcased to oppose Japanese rearmament. An article by Australian journalist Wilfred Burchett highlighted Australian resistance against Japanese fascism during World War II. It emphasized the refusal to align with former adversaries: "(Australian people) They refuse to accept the enemies of Yesterday, German Nazism and Japanese Fascism, as their allies today."<sup>173</sup>

In these propaganda narratives, the CCP adeptly tapped into the collective memories of the Chinese people and other Asians who had endured the Japanese invasion during World War II. They merged individual tales of hardship with the broader campaign against Japan's rearmament, rendering their ideological slogans more relatable to the general populace. Simultaneously, by connecting the rearmament of Japan and Western Germany,<sup>174</sup> their argument became more accessible to Western audiences who had experienced Nazi Germany's invasion or participated in combat against these fascist regimes. By intertwining the rearmament issue with poignant recollections of World War II, which were still vivid in people's minds, the CCP found an emotional and compelling point that resonated universally, facilitating greater sympathy and support for the PRC among international audiences.

Following the peak of propaganda centered on Japanese rearmament in February and March 1951, *People's China's* coverage diminished, yet it continued featuring one article on Japanese rearmament each month until September 1951, coinciding with the signing of the San Francisco Peace Treaty with Japan, marking another pivotal moment for CCP propaganda

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<sup>170</sup> "Jap Atrocities in Indonesia", *People's China*, March 1, 1951, 30.

<sup>171</sup> "Asia Opposes U.S. Re-armament of Japan", *People's China*, March 1, 1951, 4-6.

<sup>172</sup> "Women Defend Peace, Oppose U.S. Imperialism", *People's China*, March 1, 1951, 7-8.

<sup>173</sup> "The Australian People Say No to Japanese Rearmament", *People's China*, March 16, 1951, 10-11.

<sup>174</sup> For more personal stories, please refer to "On Japanese Rearmament", *People's China*, June 16, 1951, 10-12.

efforts. While the publication only showcased articles aligned with the CCP’s viewpoint, it did extend invitations to contributors from diverse regions. Alongside the perspectives of Indonesian readers and an Australian journalist, *People’s China* published an article by a Japanese individual named Kawamura Kazuo, articulating the dissatisfaction of Japanese citizens regarding Japan’s rearmament. Kazuo’s piece highlighted the plight of numerous Japanese citizens compelled to support American military efforts in the Korean War. Echoing prior propaganda themes, Kazuo reiterated that “All the facts prove that the Japanese people are being treated as cannon fodder by the American troops, and this has been made possible through the help of the Japanese militarists and fascists.” Despite repeating familiar narratives, the inclusion of a Japanese author bolstered the credibility of CCP’s propaganda. Furthermore, Kazuo underscored the strong anti-war sentiment among the Japanese populace and their opposition to the policies of both the U.S. and the Yoshida government in Japan. He argued that Japanese workers had persistently advocated for “opposition to the intervention in Korea and opposition to the manufacture and transport of military supplies,” emphasizing their longstanding struggle for these objectives.<sup>175</sup>



Image 3. “The Way of Life and the Way of Death”, *People’s China*, June 16, 1951, 9.

The writings of Burchett and Kazuo vividly distinguish foreign governments from their respective peoples. Despite Australia and Japan being U.S. allies, *People’s China* strived to showcase how the citizens of these nations opposed their governments’ policies concerning the Korean War. In CCP’s propaganda, these “people” were portrayed as peace-loving, rational individuals, viewed as allies of the New China. This portrayal was evident as *People’s China* emphasized, “The Japanese people are fighting it (American draft peace treaty) with might and main. The Chinese people are resolved to struggle together with them and all other peoples of

<sup>175</sup> “The Japanese People Will Smash the U.S. Plots to Re-arm Japan”, *People’s China*, April 1, 1951, 8-11.

Asia to throw it back into the teeth of the U.S. imperialists.”<sup>176</sup> Simultaneously, these “people” were depicted as victims suppressed by their reactionary governments, repeatedly highlighting, “the Japanese people are being treated as cannon fodder by the American troops”. A cartoon titled “The Way of Life and the Way of Death” symbolized the Japanese people’s desire for a peace treaty proposed by the PRC and the Soviet Union, contrasting with the coercive imposition of the U.S.-backed treaty by the reactionary Yoshida government and the U.S. military, perceived as leading to a path of destruction.<sup>177</sup> This perception permeated not only propaganda but also the internal cultural policies of the PRC. Despite the general dismissal of American music as “sappy” or “decadent,” certain African American spirituals and Broadway musicals were introduced into China in the early 1950s, aiming to condemn capitalist oppression.<sup>178</sup>

However, despite the active propaganda efforts of the PRC through texts like *People’s China*, the stalemating of U.S. forces by the CPVA and KPA in the Korean War did not significantly bolster PRC’s diplomatic leverage in Japanese peace treaty negotiations. Without superior hard power support, soft power tactics such as propaganda had limited efficacy. Capitalizing on military superiority during the spring and summer of 1951 in the Korean War, the U.S. not only compelled the Japanese government to refrain from engaging in a treaty with the PRC but also coerced the British government into endorsing the exclusion of the PRC and ROC from the Multilateral Peace Conference.<sup>179</sup> Zhou Enlai’s statement on August 15, 1951, highlighted that any peace treaty with Japan lacking the PRC’s participation would be deemed illegal and ineffective.<sup>180</sup> Subsequently, the September issue of *People’s China* emphasized the illegitimacy of a treaty excluding the PRC and accused the U.S. of attempting to divide Asia, citing China’s severe suffering from Japanese aggression and prolonged battle against Japanese fascism in Asia. It alleged that “The U.S. is vainly attempting to split Asia on this vital issue,” as China was the country that suffered most cruelly from Japanese aggression, that battled longest against Japanese fascism, stood in Asia irrevocably against this instrument for the revival of that fascist militarism under U.S. auspices.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> “U.S. War Treaty with Japan”, *People’s China*, May 1, 1951, 4.

<sup>177</sup> “For A Genuine Peace Treaty with Japan”, *People’s China*, June 16, 1951, 8-9.

<sup>178</sup> Yan Li, *China’s Soviet Dream: Propaganda, Culture, and Popular Imagination* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 105.

<sup>179</sup> Zhihua Shen 沈志华, “The Japanese Peace Treaty and the Korean Truce Negotiations 对日和约与朝鲜停战谈判,” *Collected Papers of History Studies* 史学集刊, no. 1 (2006): 70-71.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>181</sup> “The U.S. Draft Peace Treaty with Japan Menaces All Asia”, *People’s China*, September 1, 1951, 5-7.

With the signing of the Treaty of Peace with Japan (Treaty of San Francisco) on September 8, 1951, CCP's propaganda concerning Japanese rearmament reached its conclusion. Although *People's China* published numerous critical articles on the treaty, the narratives echoed previous themes, focusing on U.S. ambitions to invade Asia, distinctions between the Japanese people and the Yoshida government, and the wartime crimes of the Japanese military.<sup>182</sup> The October 1951 issue of *People's China* shifted its emphasis away from the Treaty of Peace with Japan, signaling a departure from this propaganda focus.

### 3.4 The Kaesong Negotiation

In late January 1951, the U.S. Army initiated a counteroffensive against the CPVA and the KPA, reclaiming Seoul subsequently. From April to late spring, the battleground between the U.S. and CPVA-KPV forces stabilized along the 38th parallel.<sup>183</sup> As the conflict lingered, the PRC found the war increasingly challenging to sustain. By late May 1951, Mao Zedong chaired a meeting of the Central Committee of the CCP and advocated a policy of "fighting while engaging in dialogue, striving to resolve the conflict through negotiation."<sup>184</sup> In June 1951, Stalin sought detailed information from Mao Zedong regarding armistice negotiations and expressed his agreement with Mao's policy. On June 23, the Soviet representative, Yakov Malik, proposed an armistice at the United Nations.<sup>185</sup> The U.S. accepted the Soviet Union's proposal, suggesting a meeting between both sides in Kaesong, near the 38th parallel.<sup>186</sup> Subsequently, from July 1951 until the war's termination, periods of conflict alternated with halts, with more than half the time devoted to armistice negotiations.

Facing the prospect of a ceasefire, the Chinese Central Government swiftly issued propaganda directives outlining the guidelines for the negotiations at Kaesong. These directives highlighted five key points. Firstly, they emphasized the year-long struggle of the Korean people and the eight-month engagement of the Chinese people, prompting the U.S. to acknowledge the strength of both the Chinese people and Korean people, abandon its original invasion plans, and ensure the security of North Korea and the PRC. This was perceived as a direct gain from the conflict against the United States, which was experiencing significant war-

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<sup>182</sup> "The Asian Peoples Will Smash the War Treaty", *People's China*, September 16, 1951, 3. "At the San Francisco 'Conference'", *People's China*, September 16, 1951, 4. "Why the San Francisco Treaty Will Fail", *People's China*, September 16, 1951, 9-10.

<sup>183</sup> Bruce Crumings, *The Korean War*, 30.

<sup>184</sup> Zhihua Shen, 最後的天朝 *The Last "Celestial Empire"*, 253.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>186</sup> Bruce Crumings, *The Korean War*, 31.

related difficulties and was keen on a swift armistice. Secondly, the proposition of an armistice at the 38th parallel and limiting talks to military matters was deemed an immediate and urgent path to peace. Such a solution, presented by the peace and democracy camp, was viewed as politically proactive, globally agreeable, and conducive to worldwide support. The propaganda urged caution against setting excessive conditions, warning that this could thwart successful negotiations, hinder peace efforts, and promote political passivity. The third point highlighted the proposal for an armistice, noting the U.S.'s reluctance due to insufficient losses and the persistence of figures like MacArthur, who advocated war expansion. This hindered genuine peace talks as the enemy still aspired to dominate Korea entirely and extend the conflict northeastward. Negotiations at the previous time were thus deemed impractical. The fourth point stressed the negotiations' reliance on the enemy's sincerity. Insincerity from the opposition would threaten successful talks, potentially prolonging the Chinese and Korean people's fight. Conversely, if the enemy showed sincerity, it was perceived as a potential political advantage for both parties. Finally, the propaganda reiterated the need to maintain normal frontline operations and rear support, emphasizing that ongoing actions were necessary given the absence of a ceasefire. It highlighted U.S. actions in Taiwan, Korea, and Japan, illustrating ongoing imperialist hostility and stressing that the situation remained fundamentally unchanged despite the armistice talks.<sup>187</sup> Essentially, the propaganda directive endeavors to rationalize the delay in the PRC's engagement in negotiations during the earlier stages of its military successes.

In the issue published on July 16, 1951, an article in *People's China* titled "Strive for a Peaceful Settlement for the Korean Question" was featured, originally published in the *People's Daily* on July 3, 1951. The piece highlighted the Chinese people's inclination towards peace and their persistent pursuit of peaceful resolutions for international conflicts. Aligned with the propaganda directives concerning negotiations at Kaesong, the article emphasized that the success of these talks rested on the sincerity of the U.S.'s intentions for a ceasefire. It stressed that while halting military action was merely the initial step toward a peaceful resolution in Korea, authentic dedication from the American Government and other involved parties would mark a significant advancement. The piece envisioned this as a crucial step

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<sup>187</sup> "Propaganda instruction of the Central Committee of the CCP on the Korean negotiation issue" 中央关于朝鲜谈判问题的宣传指示 in *Selections from the Party's propaganda documentary work: 1949-1956* 党的宣传文件工作选编 1949-1956, e.d. Central Propaganda Department of the Chinese Communist Party 中央宣传部办公厅 (Beijing: Xuexi Press, 1996), 250-251.

toward achieving a peaceful settlement—something fervently desired by the peoples of Korea, China, the Soviet Union, Asia, and peace-loving individuals worldwide.<sup>188</sup>

Another article in *People's China* highlighted the CPVA and KPA's battlefield actions, contending that their combat thwarted America's ambitions to invade China. It emphasized the fearlessness of both the Korean and Chinese people in confronting the U.S. The article suggested that if the U.S. continued to reject proposals for peaceful resolution in Korea, the joint forces of the Korean and Chinese people possessed the capability to triumph over the invading enemy through perseverance in a prolonged and challenging war.<sup>189</sup> Similarly, *People's China* also praised the tenacity of the Chinese and Korean peoples, attributing the U.S.'s contemplation of ceasefire negotiations to their efforts. It depicted Kaesong as a significant juncture where super-mechanized imperialism was compelled to engage in negotiations on an equal footing with the free peoples of Asia—a historic event that the Americans, still fixated on the supremacy of wealth and technology, found challenging to fully comprehend.<sup>190</sup> Furthermore, the magazine directly lauded the CPVA for fighting alongside the KPA, pushing back imperialist forces, primarily led by the U.S., from the borders of China to the 38th parallel: “They secured the peace of China. They gave the warmongers pause in their plans to unleash further aggressions against the people of Asia and the world.”<sup>191</sup> These narratives consistently echoed the propaganda directives concerning the Kaesong negotiations. They stressed that the ongoing RAAK movement stemmed from the combined efforts of the Chinese and Korean people during the war. These efforts compelled the United States to acknowledge the strength of both populations, abandon plans for invasion, ensure the security of North Korea and the PRC, and swiftly pursue a ceasefire.

Meanwhile, *People's China* leveled accusations against the U.S. military for an attack on the Korean-Chinese Delegation, denouncing it as a display of insincerity. The magazine stressed the pivotal role of sincerity in the success of the Kaesong talks, highlighting a perceived lack of it on the American side since negotiations commenced. This lack of sincerity was allegedly manifested in the preposterous demands made by the Americans for a demarcation line that would grant them an additional 12,000 square kilometers of North Korean territory. It states: “It is now shown more fully in these two criminal and provocative incidents until the Americans show a genuine change of heart at the Korean armistice negotiations, it is

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<sup>188</sup> “Strive for a Peaceful Settlement for the Korean Question”, *People's China*, July 16, 1951, 3.

<sup>189</sup> “One Year of the Korean War”, *People's China*, July 16, 1951, 26-28.

<sup>190</sup> “Kaisung—A Historical City”, *People's China*, September 1, 1951, 24.

<sup>191</sup> “1951-A Year of Victories”, *People's China*, December 16, 1951, 3.

impossible for the world to believe that they have any intention of ending the bloodshed in Korea”.<sup>192</sup> Moreover, *People’s China* criticized the suspension of Kaesong negotiations, attributing it to repeated U.S. breaches of the neutral zone agreement. Instances included attacks on flagged vehicles of the Korean-Chinese Delegation, the ambush and killing of a Chinese patrolman in the neutral zone, and bombings and strafing of the Kaesong conference area by U.S. forces. These incidents, as per the publication’s perspective, signaled the American side’s lack of genuine intent to swiftly and successfully conclude negotiations. Their refusal to abandon unrealistic claims in negotiations and the failure to disclose them publicly, coupled with intolerable provocations aimed at pressuring talks, reinforced this viewpoint.<sup>193</sup> In the narratives of *People’s China*, the CCP was very eager to cast the responsibility of unsmooth cease-fire negotiations to the U.S.

Furthermore, akin to its approach in the propaganda concerning Japanese rearmament, *People’s China* differentiated between the American people and their government. It staunchly defended individuals persecuted in the McCarthy movement, asserting that those advocating for peace were unjustly persecuted and imprisoned under the pretext of combating communist “subversive propaganda.”<sup>194</sup> The magazine expressed solidarity with those persecuted, condemning the persecution of American Communist leaders and individuals: “The Chinese people join with other peoples in condemning the persecution of the American Communist leaders who hold high the banner of the struggle for peace and liberty and they protest against the persecution of all those best sons and daughters of the American people, loyal to the finest traditions of their country.”<sup>195</sup> This demonstrated the CCP’s sensitivity to U.S. domestic politics, utilizing it for its propaganda objectives.

Moreover, the CCP’s narratives shifted the blame for the Korean War to Wall Street interest groups, absolving the American people of responsibility. Articles in *People’s China* framed the Korean War as a fabrication orchestrated by Wall Street’s elite for their gains, claiming that aggression in Korea was increasingly unpopular among the American populace.<sup>196</sup> The CCP extended this narrative to Asian and Australian populations, portraying them as victims of Wall Street’s deceitful schemes. Consequently, the CCP urged solidarity among these populations in a broader peace movement to thwart what it alleged to be an

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<sup>192</sup> “Kaisung and San Francisco”, *People’s China*, September 1, 1951, 3.

<sup>193</sup> “U.S. Violations Stopped Kaisung Talks”, *People’s China*, September 1, 1951, 35.

<sup>194</sup> “The American People Against the War-Makers”, *People’s China*, July 16, 1951, 4.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

<sup>196</sup> “A Lie to Torpedo Peace”, *People’s China*, December 1, 1951, 4.

American ploy orchestrated for the profit of a handful of millionaires on Wall Street.<sup>197</sup> By employing this conspiracy theory, the CCP sought to exonerate the people in capitalist nations from culpability in the Korean War, portraying a positive image worldwide and seeking support from these populations.

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<sup>197</sup> “The Australian Referendum and Asia”, *People’s China*, October 16, 1951, 6.

## 4 Propaganda in 1952

In 1952, the focus of the PRC's international propaganda shifted from Japan's rearmament and the Kaesong Negotiation to germ warfare and the Asia-Pacific Peace Conference (APC). Whether or not the United States employed biological weapons during the Korean War, the CCP seized upon germ warfare as a significant opportunity to cultivate a favorable image of the PRC. Within the context of the APC propaganda, the CCP regarded the conference as a direct means of communication with foreign audiences. In its propaganda efforts concerning these two events, the CCP employed distinct strategies reflecting differing propaganda objectives, thereby demonstrating the flexibility and multifaceted nature of CCP propaganda.

### 4.1 1.1 Germ Warfare

In the spring of 1952, the focus of CCP's international propaganda shifted significantly towards the issue of U.S. germ warfare. Historian Jeon Ye-mok notes that the North Korean Foreign Minister, Park Heon-young, initiated accusations against America regarding germ warfare on May 8, 1951. The proliferation of these claims intensified in 1952, facilitated by collaborative efforts between North Korea, the PRC, and the Soviet Union.<sup>198</sup> Notably, before Park's formal allegations in May 1951, the CCP had already hinted at suspicions regarding the U.S. use of biological weapons in its domestic propaganda as early as 1951. In January of 1951, the Xinhua News Agency covered the news that the scientists in laboratories of Fort Detrick (The U.S. Army Biological Warfare Laboratories) said that their lab was getting more and more research done on germ warfare by a Japanese wartime institute, alleging that the U.S. was using the Japanese war criminals to develop the biological weapons.<sup>199</sup> Following North Korea's formal accusation in May 1951, the CCP not only endorsed North Korea's claims but also asserted that the U.S. Army conducted bacteriological experiments on captives of the CPVA in its domestic propaganda.<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> Ye-mok Jeon, "The Process of 'Biological Warfare' Allegation and Behind-The-Scenes Accounts during the Korean War," *military history*, no. 120 (2021): 1–42, <https://doi.org/10.29212/mh.2021..120.1>.

<sup>199</sup> Xinhua News Agency 新华社, "The U.S. Empire used Japanese war criminals to study germ warfare 美帝利用日本战犯研究细菌战", *Chinese Science Bulletin* 科学通报, no.2 (1951), 159.

<sup>200</sup> Xinhua News Agency 新华社, "The U.S. Army's crime of germ warfare has been proved 美军进行细菌战的罪行又获新一证明", *Chinese Science Bulletin* 科学通报, no.6 (1951), 636. Xinhua News Agency 新华社, "The U.S. Army used the CPVA's captives for biological weapon experiments 美军竟用志愿军被俘人员作细菌武器实验", *Chinese Science Bulletin* 科学通报, no.6 (1951), 636.

However, despite the emergence of accusations against the U.S. in 1951, the CCP did not engage in international propaganda on germ warfare until the spring of 1952. On February 22, 1952, the North Korean Foreign Minister officially accused the U.S. of dropping infected insects carrying diseases such as cholera and plague over North Korea during January and February.<sup>201</sup> In what seemed to be a coordinated effort with North Korea's diplomatic action, the Central Committee of the CCP issued a propaganda directive on February 21, 1952. This directive highlighted reports of germ dissemination by the U.S. Air Force, purportedly affecting frontline positions in North Korea and the country's hinterlands.<sup>202</sup> Simultaneously, the Central Government instructed the launch of a propaganda campaign to condemn and counter the alleged actions of the U.S. Army. The campaign involved several measures: publishing Xinhua News Agency reports in newspapers, organizing public figures and scientists to protest against U.S. actions, encouraging convalescing CPVA members to voice their opposition, repeatedly publishing letters from various individuals denouncing the U.S., and highlighting Japan's historical involvement in germ warfare. Party committees in affected regions were directed to facilitate interviews with individuals opposing the use of Japanese war criminals by the U.S. Army for bacteriological warfare on the Korean front.<sup>203</sup>

In March of 1952, Chinese Foreign Minister Zhou Enlai endorsed North Korea's claims and asserted that America had also employed germ weapons against China.<sup>204</sup> Subsequently, on March 7, 1952, the Central Committee of the CCP issued another propaganda directive aimed at further regulating campaigns related to germ warfare. This directive outlined specific guidelines: (a) Certain materials were prohibited from future publication unless authorized by the Central Government via the Xinhua News Agency. These included: (1) reports on epidemics caused by enemy bacteriological warfare; (2) general epidemics within China and measures for prevention, irrespective of their connection to enemy actions; (3) locations where the enemy had deployed germs, particularly military strongholds, along with details of germ dissemination; (4) identification and types of bacteria being disseminated by the enemy; and (5) any information that could expose vulnerabilities in epidemic prevention measures. (b) The

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<sup>201</sup> Milton Leitenberg, "A Chinese Admission of False Korean War Allegations of Biological Weapon Use by the United States," *Asian Perspective* 40, no. 1 (2016): 132.

<sup>202</sup> "The Central Committee's Propaganda Instruction on Opposing Bacteriological Warfare Conducted by the U.S." 中央关于反对美帝进行细菌战的宣传指示 in *Selections from the Party's propaganda documentary work: 1949-1956* 党的宣传文件工作选编 1949-1956, e.d. Central Propaganda Department of the Chinese Communist Party 中央宣传部办公厅 (Beijing: Xuexi Press, 1996), 330-331.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

<sup>204</sup> Milton Leitenberg, "A Chinese Admission of False Korean War Allegations of Biological Weapon Use by the United States," 132

directive emphasized the dissemination of the notion that China could effectively counter enemy bacteriological warfare. It called for the promotion of general knowledge on epidemic prevention and practical strategies for dealing with such warfare, alongside exposing evidence of enemy criminality. The Xinhua News Agency was slated to publish photographs documenting instances of enemy germ warfare.<sup>205</sup>

While actively urging participation in the germ warfare propaganda campaign, the CCP exercised caution regarding information sources. Only materials released by the Xinhua News Agency and approved by the Central Committee of the CCP were deemed acceptable for dissemination. Concurrently, the CCP sought to convince its populace of the U.S. Army's use of biological weapons in the Korean War while suppressing news of epidemics within the PRC, likely to prevent public panic. Medical historian Yang Nianqun posits that the Communist government approached germ warfare strategically: neither arousing social panic nor fostering indifference. This stance provided an opportunity to cultivate nationalism and spur social mobilization. Through initiatives such as the patriotic health movement, the CCP effectively bolstered popular patriotism and enhanced contemporary health systems in Chinese society.<sup>206</sup> The domestic and international dimensions of the germ warfare propaganda campaign diverged significantly. Domestically, the focus lay on social mobilization and state-building, whereas internationally, the objective was to discredit the U.S. and garner support for the PRC within the global community. Subsequent sections will delve into how *People's China* addressed the issue of germ warfare.

#### 4.1.1 The PRC's Propaganda on the Germ Warfare in *People's China*

Following the requests of two propaganda directives on germ warfare by the Central Committee of the CCP, germ warfare swiftly emerged as a prominent theme in *People's China*. Beginning in March of 1952, nearly every issue of *People's China* published throughout the year focused on the germ warfare agenda. Notably, the issue released on March 16, 1952, featured Zhou Enlai's statement on biological warfare alongside the publication of the statement "Against U.S. Bacteriological War" by The National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (PPCC). The PPCC, as the highest power

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<sup>205</sup> "Instruction of the Central Committee on Precautions to be Taken in Propaganda Against the U.S.'s Biological Warfare 中央关于反对美帝细菌战的宣传应注意事项的指示" in *Selections from the Party's propaganda documentary work: 1949-1956* 党的宣传文件工作选编 1949-1956, e.d. Central Propaganda Department of the Chinese Communist Party 中央宣传部办公厅 (Beijing: Xuexi Press, 1996), 334.

<sup>206</sup> Nianqun Yang, "Disease Prevention, Social Mobilization and Spatial Politics: The Anti Germ-Warfare Incident of 1952 and the 'Patriotic Health Campaign,'" *The Chinese Historical Review* 11, no. 2 (September 1, 2004): 155–82, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1547402X.2004.11827202>.

institution from 1949 to 1954, represented democratic parties in China, including the CCP and other minor democratic parties, reflecting the characteristics of the New Democracy period in Chinese society. In their statement, the PPCC and democratic parties accused the U.S. of flagrantly violating international conventions and perpetrating the monstrous crime of large-scale bacteriological warfare. They contended that the U.S. had been preparing for bacteriological warfare since well before the Second World War, citing the refusal of both the United States and Japan, among the great powers, to ratify the Geneva Protocol against bacteriological warfare in 1925. Furthermore, they alleged that the U.S. had enlisted Japanese war criminals to develop its biological weapons and had employed soldiers from the KPA and the CPVA to test these weapons—an assertion they deemed to be a well-known fact.<sup>207</sup> However, while urging readers to give full attention to the document, the statement fell short of providing convincing evidence, relying instead on repeated arguments and indirect evidence to bolster its conspiracy theory. Despite the lack of persuasive evidence, *People's China* staunchly asserted that the document constituted an incontrovertible indictment of the United States government.<sup>208</sup>

The U.S. denied involvement in germ warfare. Both the PRC and North Korea rebuffed requests for the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Red Cross Organization to investigate germ warfare issues in China and North Korea. Instead, they conducted their own investigations, which were carried out by USSR agencies in March of 1952.<sup>209</sup> Critically, these agencies failed to conduct independent fieldwork, merely accepting the evidence provided by the PRC and North Korean governments.<sup>210</sup> Subsequent investigations by Western scientists heavily criticized the reports released by the socialist camp, and voices from the PRC and North Korean officials began to reveal that the germ warfare allegations were a propaganda campaign constructed by the PRC.<sup>211</sup> Nonetheless, regardless of whether the U.S. actually employed biological weapons during the Korean War, the CCP effectively utilized germ warfare as a pretext and propaganda tool to shape international public opinion.

In the issue published on April 1, 1952, *People's China* continued to advance its conspiracy theory, elaborating on how the U.S. purportedly had planned and developed germ

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<sup>207</sup> “Against U. S. Bacteriological War”, *People's China*, March 16, 1952, 3-4.

<sup>208</sup> “Down with the Germ War Criminals”, *People's China*, March 16, 1952, 5-6.

<sup>209</sup> Milton Leitenberg, “A Chinese Admission of False Korean War Allegations of Biological Weapon Use by the United States,” 133.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid*, 134.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid*.

warfare over a decade.<sup>212</sup> In its article, *People's China* bolstered its argument by citing a report from *The New York Times*, dated April 13 of the previous year: “*The New York Times* on April 13 last year reported about the setting up of bacteriological stations in Japan staffed with war criminals, and generals MacArthur and Ridgway encouraging the continuation of Japanese bacteriological research and production”.<sup>213</sup> However, it is crucial to note that the original source text from *The New York Times* pertained to discussions in the Soviet press regarding General MacArthur’s dismissal. *The Red Fleet*, the newspaper of the Soviet Navy, launched a scathing attack on MacArthur, accusing him of developing bacteriological weapons for use against the Korean people.<sup>214</sup> *People's China* deliberately omitted this important context and background information, portraying the Soviet press’s allegations against MacArthur as facts reported by *The New York Times*. This deliberate manipulation of source information underscores a propaganda strategy still actively employed by the CCP to shape favorable global public opinion for the PRC.<sup>215</sup> By selectively citing and distorting past source texts from mainstream Western newspapers like *The New York Times*, the CCP effectively enhanced its credibility among English-language readers, who may not have the time or inclination to fact-check news from a year prior.

Reiterating its accusation of the U.S. engaging in germ warfare, *People's China* vilified the U.S. as a common enemy of humanity: “Bacteriological warfare is a method of mass destruction that recognizes no national boundaries. Now directed against the Korean and Chinese peoples, it menaces all other peoples including the American people. In unleashing its long-prepared bacteriological warfare in Asia, the United States government stands indicted as the most dangerous enemy of mankind. Even the Hitlerites hesitated before this act. Yet the U.S. imperialists, in their arrogant drive for world domination, felt no compunction in committing this most bestial of crimes against humanity.”<sup>216</sup> At the same time, *People's China* also criticized supporters of the U.S., asserting that anyone who refuses to endorse the call to ban germ-war weapons and brand their users as war criminals aligns themselves with this heinous crime.<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> “The Case Against the U.S. Germ Warfare Criminals”, *People's China*, April 1, 1952, 5-8.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>214</sup> “Soviet Organ Sees Confusion in U.S.”, *The New York Times*, April 13, 1951, 6.

<sup>215</sup> “How the People’s Republic of China Seeks to Reshape the Global Information Environment,” *United States Department of State* (blog), accessed January 9, 2024, <https://www.state.gov/gec-special-report-how-the-peoples-republic-of-china-seeks-to-reshape-the-global-information-environment/>.

<sup>216</sup> “Outlaw Bacteriological Warfare-Punish the War Criminals”, *People's China*, April 1, 1952, 3-4.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*

Furthermore, *People's China* highlighted declarations from various sectors to reflect widespread condemnation of U.S. actions. For example, the vice-president of the Academy of Sciences, Lee Sse-kuang (J. S. Lee) declared: "The Chinese people who have been steeled by long years of revolutionary war will certainly defeat this base action of the American aggressors." Wu Yao-tsung (Y. T. Wu), a well-known Chinese Christian Leader, stated: "The Christians in China will not tolerate this inhuman crime which violates International Law."<sup>218</sup> Additionally, *People's China* also emphasized the global outcry against American germ warfare, citing protests from the Soviet Union, Viet-Nam, India, Pakistan, Burma, Indonesia, Israel, Italy, France, Belgium, Finland, Holland, Switzerland, and other nations.<sup>219</sup> This broad spectrum of protests, spanning continents and ideologies, aimed to underscore the universal condemnation of U.S. actions. While the veracity of these claims remains uncertain, it is evident that the PRC sought to portray its appeal as widely supported worldwide, casting the U.S. as the true enemy of humanity.

The recurring narrative portraying America as the common adversary of humanity, destined to be overcome by peace-loving people, permeated various articles. One such example can be found in the piece titled "For World Unity Against Germ War" by *People's China*, where it asserts, "The Chinese people who, together with their Korean brothers-in-arms stand in the forefront of the world's battle against this atrocious U.S. attempt at mass murder that threatens all peoples, are confident that the solidarity of the world's peace-loving peoples will defeat this and all other U.S. imperialist crimes against humanity."<sup>220</sup> In another article titled "A World Campaign Against U.S. Germ Warfare," *People's China* elaborates on the protests that erupted across Southeast Asia, and Eastern and Western Europe. Notably, it highlights the involvement of the Britain-China Friendship Association, the British Electrical Trades Union, and the Permanent Commission of the National Peace Council in France, underscoring the interconnectedness between the CCP and leftist entities in Western nations. These protests were commended by *People's China*, which quoted, "Determined action by all peace-loving people can prevent the outbreak of the war being prepared by the imperialists which will exterminate humanity."<sup>221</sup> Furthermore, *People's China* sheds light on Western organizations condemning the U.S.'s deployment of biological weapons, including The International Conference in Defense of Children, The Permanent Commission of the French Peace Movement, the British

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<sup>218</sup> "A World Campaign Against U.S. Germ Warfare", *People's China*, April 1, 1952, 27-28.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

<sup>220</sup> "For World Unity Against Germ War", *People's China*, April 16, 1952, 3.

<sup>221</sup> "A World Campaign Against U. S. Germ Warfare", *People's China*, April 16, 1952, 26.

Peace Committee, the British Communist Party Congress, The Belfast Trades Council, and The Commission of the International Association of Democratic Lawyers,<sup>222</sup> demonstrating a robust leftist network in Western Europe.

Simultaneously, *People's China* rebuffed the intervention of the WHO and the International Red Cross Organization, aiming to conduct an independent investigation on germ warfare in North Korea and China. It criticized these organizations, branding the WHO as a U.S. propaganda tool, citing statistics to highlight the disproportionate representation of Americans in key positions. For example, *People's China* contended that as early as February 1949, out of a total staff of 288 listed by the WHO, 177 originated from the United States, Britain, and Switzerland, as a result, Americans predominantly occupied high-salaried and influential senior positions, orchestrating behind-the-scenes efforts to ensure that delegates from U.S.-influenced nations conveyed the American viewpoint and proposals during discussions. *People's China* asserted that so-called “experts” and “health missions” were deployed to various countries under the guise of health initiatives, concealing ulterior motives behind positive official reports on their activities. Moreover, *People's China* argued that under the influence of the United States, the WHO consistently neglected to address the fundamental social and economic factors contributing to disease outbreaks. Additionally, *People's China* also discredited the International Red Cross Committee, labeling it as neither truly “international” nor “non-political,” asserting its perceived alignment with the U.S. government. Lastly, *People's China* argued that the proposed investigation by these organizations in China and North Korea was a ploy to gather intelligence on the effects of U.S. germ weapons and to absolve America of guilt through a fabricated report.<sup>223</sup>

Furthermore, *People's China* actively engaged scientists to contribute to their cause, offering a compelling exposition of the U.S.'s germ warfare tactics. Dr. Sicien H. Chen, Director of the Laboratory of Entomology at Academia Sinica, authored an article titled “Insect Agents of U.S. Germ Warfare.” In this piece, he detailed how the U.S. deployed disease-carrying insects such as Anthomyiid flies, house flies, non-biting stable flies, sunflies, Aedes mosquitoes, locusts, springtails, and spiders to disseminate bacteria in China. Dr. Chen argued that the timing, locations, mass appearances of these insects in isolated areas, their distribution, and the high percentage of infected insects in non-epidemic zones were all abnormal occurrences, which could only be explained by dissemination via American aircraft.<sup>224</sup> In

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<sup>222</sup> “A World Campaign Against U. S. Germ Warfare”, *People's China*, May 1, 1952, 14.

<sup>223</sup> “The ‘Health’ Agents of the Germ-War Criminals”, *People's China*, April 16, 1952, 11.

<sup>224</sup> “Insect Agents of U.S. Germ Warfare”, *People's China*, May 1, 1952, 12-14.

addition, *People's China* published an acknowledgment issued by twenty-nine Peking bacteriologists who refuted attempts by certain American scientists to deny U.S. imperialists' engagement in germ warfare. These scientists affirmed that insects could spread germs through various means, including ingestion and mechanical transmission, and expressed deep regret that certain American scientists attempted to defend germ warfare criminals.<sup>225</sup>

Moreover, in June 1952, the Chinese People's Congress for the Defense of World Peace invited the International Scientific Commission, organized by a Soviet Union proxy organization, the "World Peace Council," to investigate germ warfare. The Commission completed its work on August 30, 1952. Subsequently, on September 13, the Central Committee of the CCP issued a propaganda directive to disseminate the Commission's investigation report widely. The Central Committee emphasized the report's impartial and objective scientific findings, noting its potential to mobilize global opposition against U.S. germ warfare.<sup>226</sup> Responding to this directive, the publication date of *People's China* in September was delayed by one day, from September 16 to September 17. This issue extensively covered the International Scientific Commission and its findings. The editorial titled "Irrefutable Proof of U.S. Germ Warfare" quoted the Commission's conclusion, highlighting the urgent need for collective action to prevent the use of science for humanity's destruction and urging individuals to join the fight for peace and justice against germ warfare: "It is now for all people to redouble their efforts to preserve the world from war and prevent the discoveries of science being used for the destruction of humanity. That is indeed the only conclusion that can be drawn from this damning indictment of the American imperialists. There can be no neutrality or half-heartedness in the face of such a monstrous crime as germ warfare. Let all those who hesitated before or fell unwilling victim to the lies of the germ criminals hesitate no longer, but join with the fighters for peace and do all in their power to halt this horror; to end the U.S. germ warfare; outlaw bacteriological warfare and other weapons of mass destruction and bring the germ war criminals to justice."<sup>227</sup> At the same time, the issue

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<sup>225</sup> "Peking Scientists Refute U.S. Germ War Denials", *People's China*, June 16, 1952, 34-35.

<sup>226</sup> "The Central Committee's instructions on anti-bacteriological warfare propaganda in the nation's newspapers and magazines 中央关于在全国报刊上大张旗鼓地进行反细菌战宣传的指示", in *Selections from the Party's propaganda documentary work: 1949-1956* 党的宣传文件工作选编 1949-1956, e.d. Central Propaganda Department of the Chinese Communist Party 中央宣传部办公厅 (Beijing: Xuexi Press, 1996), 417-419.

<sup>227</sup> "Irrefutable Proof of U.S. Germ Warfare", *People's China*, September 17, 1952, 5-6.

dedicated four pages to showcasing images of the International Scientific Commission's work<sup>228</sup> and included the Commission's report as a supplement.<sup>229</sup>

The coverage of the International Scientific Commission (ISC) continued into October, with the propaganda focus shifting to the national day of the PRC. The propaganda directive issued by the CCP regarding the celebration of the national day only briefly mentioned germ warfare. Following the propaganda directive issued on September 13, which instructed propaganda channels to publish the full text of the ISC report on September 17 and the main annexes of the report on September 18 and thereafter,<sup>230</sup> *People's China* adhered to the schedule. The ISC report was published on September 17, and selections from an appendix to the report were released on October 11.<sup>231</sup> Consistent with the tone of previous articles, *People's China* featured numerous pieces on the ISC's investigation and report in subsequent issues. The aim was to attract the attention of the international community and increase English-language readers' awareness of the ISC's findings.

Members of the commission examining three metal containers dropped by U.S. planes for disseminating germ-infected objects, which were found on March 27 and 31, 1952 in Ch'ang-Pai county, Liaotung province and also a porcelain germ bomb of the same type made by the Japanese germ war criminal Shiro Ishii



4.1. A photo of ISC's work in China, from "The International Scientific Commission Investigates Evidence of U.S. Germ Warfare in Korea and Northeast China", *People's China*, 22.

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<sup>228</sup> "New Proofs of U.S. Germ Warfare", *People's China*, September 17, 1952, 19; "The International Scientific Commission Investigates Evidence of U.S. Germ Warfare in Korea and Northeast China", *People's China*, September 17, 1952, 20; "The International Scientific Commission Takes the Evidence of U.S. Germ-War Flyers and Eyewitnesses of U.S. Germ Warfare in Korea and Northeast China", *People's China*, September 17, 1952, 22.

<sup>229</sup> Supplement: "Report of the International Scientific Commission for the Investigation of the Facts concerning Bacteriologic Warfare in Korea and China", *People's China*, September 17, 1952, 28 pages.

<sup>230</sup> "The Central Committee's instructions on anti-bacteriological warfare propaganda in the nation's newspapers and magazines 中央关于在全国报刊上大张旗鼓地进行反细菌战宣传的指示" in *Selections from the Party's propaganda documentary work: 1949-1956* 党的宣传文件工作选编 1949-1956, 417-419.

<sup>231</sup> "The Public Health and Hygiene Improvement in China", *People's China*, October 1, 1952, 33-37.

#### 4.1.2 Reaction in the West to the PRC's Germ Warfare Propaganda

Despite the considerable efforts made by the CCP to disseminate the work of the ISC, it failed to garner significant attention from the mainstream Western press. *The New York Times*, for instance, only featured a reader's letter addressing the issue. A.V. Hill, a reader from the U.K., lamented the limited acknowledgment of the ISC's report in the UK, remarking, "The report of the so-called International Scientific Commission for the investigation of the facts concerning bacterial warfare in Korea and China may have puzzled some people in the United States, not by reason of its content, which is obvious propaganda, but because so little attention has apparently been paid to it by responsible scientific opinion in the United Kingdom." Moreover, Hill cast doubt on the quality of the ISC's work, noting its rapid completion in a sardonic tone: "One thing, however, must be conceded. The investigation described in the report of the 'commission' began in Peking at the end of June, and the printed results (62 pp.) appeared in England in September. A large volume containing the forty-six appendices of evidence, at present in French, is to be available soon in English, In view of the vast extent of the material examined and the drastic nature of the conclusions, and the fact that 'the work was done in an atmosphere of calm and scientific objectivity,' the time taken in the whole business (including the 'hazardous or arduous' travels of the commission) is easily a world's record."<sup>232</sup>

Hill's accounts underscored that despite the intense hostility between opposing factions and the U.S.'s embargo on the PRC, the socialist camp managed to disseminate its propaganda materials to Western countries swiftly and in multiple language versions. This distribution was likely facilitated through cultural networks with leftist social organizations in those countries, showcasing the formidable organizational and mobilization capacity of communist propaganda machines. However, while these materials reached Western audiences, persuading individuals to actively engage with them and believe in the "facts" and messages conveyed therein proved challenging, especially since reputable Western press outlets largely ignored them due to their overtly propagandistic nature. Despite the CCP's persistent emphasis on germ warfare throughout 1952, aiming to portray the Chinese populace as victims of inhumane biological weapons wielded by the U.S. and seeking to garner international support from a humanitarian standpoint, the success of its international propaganda remains questionable and difficult to ascertain.

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<sup>232</sup> A.V. Hill, "Report on Bacterial Warfare", *The New York Times*, November 2, 1952, 159.

## 1.2 The Peace Conference of the Asian and Pacific Regions

The PRC resolved to invite representatives of thirty-one countries and the World Labor Union from across the ideological divide to participate in the Asia-Pacific Peace Conference (APC) during a preliminary conference that took place in Beijing from June 3 to June 6, 1952.<sup>233</sup> Compared with the huge propaganda work on the APC in September and October, the preliminary conference received little attention from the propaganda machine, as the CCP had taken the approach of not expanding its publicity because at that time it did not know much about the peace movement in the capitalist countries participating in the Conference and because of the working session nature of the Conference.<sup>234</sup> The APC was finally held in Beijing from October 2–12, 1952, organized by The China Peace Council and with the financial support of the Soviet Union’s proxy agent World Peace Council, in response to growing worries about aggressive wars in Asia and an inadequate postwar peace with Japan.<sup>235</sup> The phrase “inadequate postwar peace with Japan” is particularly intriguing in this context, as the ROC government in Taiwan signed the Treaty of Taipei with Japan, formally declaring the end of the war between “China” and Japan, while the PRC did not establish a formal peace treaty with Japan.

According to the conference, the most important regional issues facing Asia at the time were the rearmament of Japan and the growing American militarism that many believed was behind the ongoing wars in Korea, Vietnam, and Malaya; the UN’s shortcomings; the threat of biological and atomic warfare; and issues pertaining to women’s rights, national independence, and cultural exchanges.<sup>236</sup> Numerous APC delegations were not composed of “state sectors”; rather, trade unionists played a significant role in these delegations, as well as in the organizing forces behind regional peace initiatives. Women delegates were also present at the APC.<sup>237</sup> The US, Mexico, Guatemala, Colombia, El Salvador, Honduras, Chile, Peru, Ecuador, Panama, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica were among the countries that applied to participate. The Soviet Union, Japan, North Korea, Thailand, the Philippines, India, Myanmar, Vietnam, Laos,

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<sup>233</sup> Junghyun Park, “Frustrated Alignment: The Pacific Pact Proposals from 1949 to 1954 and South Korea–Taiwan Relations,” *International Journal of Asian Studies* 12, no. 2 (July 2015): 226, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479591415000157>.

<sup>234</sup> “Directives of the Central Committee on the Propaganda of the Asia-Pacific Peace Conference 中央关于亚洲及太平洋区域和平会议宣传工作的指示”, in *Selections from the Party’s propaganda documentary work: 1949-1956 党的宣传文件工作选编 1949-1956*, e.d. Central Propaganda Department of the Chinese Communist Party 中央宣传部办公厅 (Beijing: Xuexi Press, 1996), 408-410.

<sup>235</sup> Rachel Leow, “A Missing Peace: The Asia-Pacific Peace Conference in Beijing, 1952 and the Emotional Making of Third World Internationalism,” *Journal of World History* 30, no. 1/2 (2019): 23–24.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*, 31-32.

Cambodia, New Zealand, Canada, Mongolia, Ceylon, Pakistan, Indonesia, and Australia were as well. However, many of the guests, including those from Australia, the United States, and Japan, were unable to attend due to visa issues.<sup>238</sup> Nonetheless, more than 470 peace activists and observers from around 50 nations came together for it.<sup>239</sup>

The CCP accorded significant importance to the APC, viewing it as a strategic opportunity for ideological dissemination. In a directive issued on September 7, 1952, the Central Committee of the CCP acknowledged the intricate political landscape among the delegates, comprising diverse elements ranging from progressive to reactionary. The Committee recognized the necessity for comprehensive propaganda and education targeting both the delegates attending the conference and the populations of concerned nations.<sup>240</sup> The guidelines in the instruction emphasized a multifaceted approach to APC propaganda, advocating for a balance between domestic and international outreach while prioritizing the appeal to external audiences. The strategy endorsed a measured, fact-based tone, eschewing provocative rhetoric to resonate with broader audiences, particularly those less politically aligned. Delineating the parameters for internal and external propaganda, the directive underscored distinct focal points. Externally, the emphasis lay on engaging representatives and citizens of capitalist, colonial, and semi-colonial nations, highlighting the significance of the APC and the prevailing conditions in China. Pre-conference efforts aimed to galvanize support for peace initiatives, outline preparations for participation and expose perceived subversive actions by the US imperialists. During the conference, the narrative centered on promoting solidarity among delegates, transcending national, racial, class, professional, and religious divides in pursuit of peace. Post-conference endeavors aimed to disseminate the achievements and resolutions of the event, portraying their resonance with the broader populace and fostering the momentum of the peace movement in respective nations. In spotlighting New China, the focus remained on showcasing strides made in political, economic, and cultural spheres over the preceding three years, depicting a democratic, prosperous society committed to peace. External publicity efforts were under the direct purview of the Central Committee, ensuring a coordinated and strategic dissemination of information.<sup>241</sup>

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<sup>238</sup> Junghyun Park, "Frustrated Alignment: The Pacific Pact Proposals from 1949 to 1954 and South Korea–Taiwan Relations," 226.

<sup>239</sup> Rachel Leow, "A Missing Peace: The Asia-Pacific Peace Conference in Beijing, 1952 and the Emotional Making of Third World Internationalism," 24.

<sup>240</sup> "Directives of the Central Committee on the Propaganda of the Asia-Pacific Peace Conference 中央关于亚洲及太平洋区域和平会议宣传工作的指示", in *Selections from the Party's propaganda documentary work: 1949-1956* 党的宣传文件工作选编 1949-1956, 408-410.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid.

Following the propaganda instructions, the approach of *People's China* to propaganda underwent significant adjustments, particularly evident in its coverage of Japan's rearmament and germ warfare. The Central Committee's mandate to prevent provocative language led to a notable shift in tone. Previously, the discourse had been marked by hostility, with the U.S. and its allies targeted in harsh critiques, especially those nations aligned with America deemed as warmongers. However, in the context of the APC, the narrative pivoted. Criticism was primarily directed towards the United States, with a deliberate effort to avoid antagonizing potential audiences in other capitalist countries. Moreover, the portrayal of Japanese citizens as mere pawns of the U.S., previously prominent, faded from coverage of the APC, despite the conference's underlying aim to boost opposition against Japan's rearmament.

Furthermore, in response to the Central Committee's directive to showcase the achievements of the "new China" in international propaganda, the depiction of the PRC underwent a transformation. No longer portrayed solely as a victim of germ warfare, the PRC emerged as a model for newly independent nations and former colonies.<sup>242</sup> Assertions were made that the Chinese people elicited admiration from all free individuals, transcending racial biases. Figures such as Madame Sun Yat-sen, Soong Ching-ling, Chairperson of the Chinese People's Relief Administration at the time, exemplified China's rapid transformation from semi-colonial status to an independent nation of significant accomplishments under the CCP's leadership. Soong Ching-ling articulated China's journey succinctly, highlighting its transition from the "sick man of Asia" to a global leader within a mere three years. The narrative underscored China's restoration of national dignity and the establishment of a formidable presence, attributing these achievements to successful struggles for independence and the implementation of a people's democracy. China's reconstruction served as a tangible testament, offering a viable blueprint for other nations grappling with similar challenges in Asia and the Pacific. Through these strides, China not only reshaped its own destiny but also offered inspiration and guidance to nations across the region.<sup>243</sup>

The CCP adopted a strategic approach towards the delegations attending the conference, recognizing the predominance of representatives from capitalist and colonial semi-colonial nations.<sup>244</sup> In light of this composition, the CCP refrained from framing the newly established PRC solely within the context of the Communist revolution. Instead, it positioned

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<sup>242</sup> "The Peace Conference in China", *People's China*, October 1, 1952, 9-10.

<sup>243</sup> "For Peace in Asia, the Pacific Regions and the World", *People's China*, September 16, 1952, 7-9.

<sup>244</sup> "Directives of the Central Committee on the Propaganda of the Asia-Pacific Peace Conference 中央关于亚洲及太平洋区域和平会议宣传工作的指示", 408-410.

the PRC as a symbol of national independence and reconstruction, emphasizing its struggle against Western invasions and colonial rule. This narrative aimed to resonate with countries facing similar challenges, transcending ideological divides. The CCP's narrative underscored the universal significance of national liberation and resistance against foreign domination, drawing parallels with historical struggles for independence, even in capitalist nations like the United States during its founding period. By highlighting China's tumultuous history of independence and reconstruction, the CCP sought to forge connections with nations across diverse ideological spectrums.

In particular, Soong Ching-ling articulated a vision of solidarity among colonial and semi-colonial nations in Asia, portraying imperialism as a common threat to their existence and cultural heritage: "Our long and bitter experience has been that, even in times when there was no general war, this by no means applied to those countries suffering the oppression of imperialism. There may have been peace elsewhere, but in our countries, imperialism was threatening our very existence. Most of our nations have a glorious past, great potential for a rich economy, and a high level of cultural attainment. But imperialism attempted to grind our past into dust; it did reduce many of our economies into stifling monocultures or simply to suppliers of raw material and cheap labor; it vitiated our culture and tried to substitute its own. This has been the way of imperialism in a great many places in Asia and the Pacific. It brought us vast misery and ignorance, a terrible toll on lives, and a cruel retardation. It has incurred the wrath of all of us."<sup>245</sup> This depiction aimed to evoke a shared sense of indignation and solidarity among nations affected by imperialism's exploitative practices. Similarly, James G. Endicott, Chairman of the Canadian Peace Congress, echoed the theme of anti-colonialism, advocating for a firm commitment to the independence of all colonial and semi-colonial territories: "There must be a definite commitment by those who want peace on the matter of independence for all colonial and semi-colonial countries."<sup>246</sup> His statement underscored the imperative of addressing colonial oppression as a fundamental aspect of achieving lasting peace and justice globally.

Meanwhile, the CCP strategically situated its appeals within the broader context of global national liberation movements, seeking to garner support from diverse nations. Emphasizing the imperative of halting U.S. aggression in Asia, the CCP framed its demands within the framework of socialism's promise of a brighter future and the fundamental rights of

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<sup>245</sup> "For Peace in Asia, the Pacific Regions and the World", 7-9.

<sup>246</sup> "My Hope for the Asia and Pacific Peace", *People's China*, September 16, 1952, 14-15.

nations to independence, freedom, and peaceful coexistence: “The hand of the American aggressors must be stayed. This is not only a prerequisite to our early attainment of Socialism with its promise of an even happier life, it is also vital to the independence and freedom of all nations. It is the will of every nation which demands independence, freedom, and a peaceful existence.”<sup>247</sup> This rhetoric aimed to resonate with nations worldwide striving for self-determination and sovereignty. Similarly, Endicott contextualized Japan’s rearmament within the framework of national independence, expressing hope that the APC would inspire the Japanese people to reject militarization and embrace complete independence: “I look forward to hearing that the Asian and Pacific Peace Conference has sent a message of hope and inspiration to the Japanese people, calling on them to demand, their complete independence and to refuse rearmament and war as offering any solution to their problems.”<sup>248</sup> Furthermore, *People’s China* bolstered its arguments by highlighting the deficiencies in Japan’s judicial system, underscoring the impunity enjoyed by North American offenders and the lack of accountability for their actions. This portrayal aimed to underscore the injustices perpetuated by foreign powers and galvanize international condemnation.<sup>249</sup>

In the CCP’s anti-colonialism narratives, contemporary conflicts were attributed to the legacies of colonialism and U.S. aggression. The Korean War was depicted as a consequence of U.S. intervention, while Japan’s rearmament was framed as a byproduct of incomplete independence stemming from imperialist influence. The turmoil in Vietnam and Malaya was portrayed as direct consequences of colonial rule, further underscoring the imperative of national liberation in achieving global peace. Moreover, the CCP’s propaganda language synthesized themes of anti-colonialism, national liberation, peace advocacy, and anti-American sentiment. Soong posed a critical question “Who benefits from the fighting in Korea, Vietnam, and Malaya, by the unilateral treaties which keep other countries as colonies, by rearmament, by restriction of trade and cultural intercourse?”<sup>250</sup> highlighting the interconnectedness of conflicts and colonial legacies perpetuated by the U.S. *People’s China* heavily criticized the U.S. as the embodiment of colonialism and imperialism, holding it solely responsible in its anti-colonial discourses. Despite the colonial legacies in Vietnam and Malaya being attributed to France and the UK, the CCP placed blame squarely on the U.S. in its oversimplified anti-colonial and pacifist narratives.

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<sup>247</sup> “The People’s Republic of China-Bulwark of Peace in the Asian and Pacific Region”, *People’s China*, September 16, 1952, 3-5.

<sup>248</sup> “My Hope for the Asia and Pacific Peace”, *People’s China*, September 16, 1952, 14-15.

<sup>249</sup> “The Peace Conference in China”, *People’s China*, October 1, 1952, 9-10.

<sup>250</sup> “For Peace in Asia, the Pacific Regions and the World”, 7-9.

While the CCP attributed the enduring European colonial legacy in Asia primarily to the United States, this criticism holds some truth. Although the U.S. consistently supported national self-determination, its apprehensions about communist expansion and USSR geopolitical ambitions during the Cold War often took precedence over its support for decolonization. The intense rivalry between the USSR and the United States in the late 1940s and early 1950s heavily influenced American diplomacy. Consequently, the Truman and Eisenhower governments became more anxious that USSR-backed communist parties would seize power in newly independent countries if European colonial powers withdrew.<sup>251</sup> Hence, in the 1950s, the U.S. exerted great efforts to help European countries to maintain their rules in the colonials. To ensure France remained committed to countering USSR influence in Europe during the 1950s, the U.S. aided France in suppressing the Vietnamese communist rebellion. Likewise, the U.S. justified its assistance for Portuguese colonies in Southern Africa by emphasizing the strategic importance of retaining access to military facilities in the Azores for NATO operations.<sup>252</sup> The Korean War marked a significant turning point in U.S. foreign policy, which began to support European colonial rule more explicitly. The CCP's propaganda reflected this shift in U.S. diplomatic policy.

In the CCP propaganda surrounding the APC, the dichotomy between the socialist and capitalist camps was replaced by the dichotomy between the U.S. and the rest of the world. This dichotomy was evident in an article titled "A Great Victory for Peace," wherein the CCP condemned U.S. intervention from Asia to Latin America, asserting that the U.S. represented a common enemy to humanity: "Who can doubt that the people of Korea, battling a vile invader, yearn for just and reasonable peace? Who can doubt that the peoples of Vietnam and Malaya bravely fighting against napalm-dropping, head-hunting imperialist troops, want peace? The people of the Philippines are fighting for their independence against a corrupt, U.S.-dominated tyranny. The peoples of Latin America and other countries in this area are rising against the adverse effects of the U.S. aggressive plans on the Pacific area, against the provocative U.S. war propaganda, and the embargoes and blockades that impoverish them by obstructing their normal avenues of trade. The people of Japan are suffering the humiliations of a foreign occupation. They see their country betrayed by a clique of American puppets and

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<sup>251</sup> "Milestones in the History of U.S. Foreign Relations: Decolonization of Asia and Africa, 1945–1960," Office of the Historian, Foreign Service Institute United States Department of State, accessed May 21, 2024, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/asia-and-africa>.

<sup>252</sup> Cary Fraser, "Decolonization and the Cold War," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Cold War*, ed. Richard H. Immerman and Petra Goedde, 1st ed. (Oxford University Press, 2013), 469–85, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199236961.013.0027>.

the return to power of the fascist thugs and militarists who brought their country to ruin.”<sup>253</sup> The article highlighted the struggles of various nations against U.S. imperialism, including Korea’s battle for peace, Vietnam and Malaya’s resistance against imperialist forces, the Philippines’ fight for independence, and Japan’s subjugation under U.S. occupation. These narratives aimed to underscore the detrimental impact of U.S. aggression on global peace and stability.

Simultaneously, the Central Committee underscored the necessity for comprehensive coverage preceding the Conference, advocating for widespread support for peace and active engagement from various countries’ populations. *People’s China* diligently introduced delegations from diverse nations preparing for the APC, encompassing Korea, Japan, Vietnam, India, the USSR, the U.S., Burma, Pakistan, Indonesia, Australia, Ceylon, Canada, Thailand, Khmer, New Zealand, and Latin America. Intriguingly, *People’s China* tailored its language to suit different countries. For instance, while expressing broad support for the conference in Japan, India, Vietnam, Burma, and the USSR, usually stated “Support for the conference is widespread” and “Peace conferences are being held throughout the country in preparation for the forthcoming conference”. Conversely, it highlighted prominent American figures’ involvement in promoting U.S. participation, along with significant statements and actions of delegates from Australia, Canada, and New Zealand.<sup>254</sup> Noteworthy is *People’s China*’s recognition of religious groups’ contributions to peace, particularly citing Buddhist monks’ involvement in the Ceylon peace movement and the Muslim Party’s advocacy for peace in Indonesia. In contrast, earlier coverage had predominantly featured anti-American sentiments from domestic Christian groups, largely overlooking other religious factions such as Buddhism and Islam.

However, in contrast to the heightened pre-conference propaganda, *People’s China* only published two articles detailing the APC’s achievements. Emphasizing a continued anti-American stance, *People’s China* depicted the APC as fostering a newfound sense of unity and strength among Asian peoples, rallying against militarization, pursuing peace treaties, and promoting women’s and children’s rights, among other objectives: “This undoubtedly is the first result of the Conference of the Asian and Pacific peoples— a new consciousness of their unity and strength, a new clarity in knowing where the danger lies and how the danger can be combatted. The people will know how to recognize the hand of the warmakers no matter how

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<sup>253</sup> “A Great Victory for Peace”, *People’s China*, October 1, 1952, 3-4.

<sup>254</sup> “Forward to the Asian and Pacific Peace Conference!”, *People’s China*, September 16, 1952, 15-17.

skillfully it is gloved. They can now be mobilized on a yet wider scale for the defense of peace and national independence, to halt the U.S, remilitarization of Japan, ensure the signing of an all-in peace treaty to create an independent, democratic, free, and peaceful Japan, to achieve an immediate, just and reasonable peace in Korea, and conclusion of a Five Power Peace Pact, to protect the rights of women and children, to open the clogged paths of trade and cultural interchange, and force back the hand of reaction and war.”<sup>255</sup> Another article “The Achievements of the Peace Conference of the Asian and Pacific Regions” lauded the APC’s commitment to democratic consultation and international solidarity among peace-loving nations.<sup>256</sup> Notably, it celebrated the unanimous adoption of eleven resolutions,<sup>257</sup> attributing this to the spirit of socialist democracy, where dissenting votes or abstentions were absent.

It appears that the APC did not yield substantive outcomes, prompting the Chinese CCP to limit its propaganda efforts regarding its results to moral encouragement. Nonetheless, the APC remained a focal point of the CCP’s international propaganda in 1952, particularly concerning the issue of germ warfare. In addressing distinct agendas such as germ warfare and the APC, the CCP employed diverse propaganda languages and strategies to maximize the impact of its international messaging, showcasing a degree of flexibility within its propaganda apparatus. Despite employing varied methods for propaganda regarding germ warfare and the APC, the CCP consistently conveyed a unified anti-American message and theme. Moreover, the Cold War’s conventional narrative of confrontation between the capitalist and socialist blocs, typified by the rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union, was often supplanted by a narrative pitting war-makers, symbolized by the U.S., against peace-loving individuals. The ideological divide between the two camps was not emphasized in CCP propaganda; instead, adherence to peace became the distinguishing factor between them. Whether the CCP’s international propaganda minimized the significance of ideology or reframed ideological differences in terms of a commitment to peace, the absence of ideological confrontations in its portrayal of the Korean War underscored its unique characteristics in foreign propaganda during the 1950s.

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<sup>255</sup> “The Voice of Asia and the Pacific”, *People’s China*, November 1, 1952, 20-22.

<sup>256</sup> “The Achievements of the Peace Conference of the Asian and Pacific Regions”, *People’s China*, November 1, 1952, 5-7.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid.

## 5 Propaganda at the End of the War

David Cheng Chang delineates the Korean War as bifurcated into two distinct phases: the initial phase characterized as the “War for Territories,” followed by the subsequent phase known as the “War for Prisoners of War (POWs).” The latter phase, commencing in December 1951, was primarily characterized by negotiations revolving around the issue of POWs, persisting until June 1953 when consensus was reached regarding POW exchange, subsequently cemented by an armistice agreement on July 27th.<sup>258</sup>

In the phase of the “War for POWs”, significant discord surfaced between the PRC and the U.S. concerning POW repatriation: China and North Korea (CPVA-KPA) advocated for an “all-for-all exchange”, whereas the U.S. negotiating delegation advocated for the principle of voluntary repatriation, posited on January 2, 1952. This proposal, labeled as “voluntary repatriation,” ostensibly contradicted the Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War (Geneva Convention III), ratified in 1949, wherein Article 118 mandates the swift release and repatriation of POWs upon cessation of hostilities. Subsequently, the U.S. contended that the essence of Geneva Convention III was to safeguard the best interests of POWs, thus rebranding “voluntary repatriation” as “non-compulsory repatriation,” denoting the prohibition of coercive measures in repatriating unwilling POWs. This stance was solidified as the “final and irrevocable” position of the U.S. government by President Harry S. Truman in February 1952.<sup>259</sup> In April 1952, during POW screening by Union camp authorities, over half of the Chinese POWs expressed reluctance to be repatriated to China, a stance adamantly rejected by Chinese authorities. Consequently, truce negotiations stalled in May and collapsed entirely by October 1952.<sup>260</sup>

Meanwhile, the CPVA-KPA’s stance towards POWs crystallized in October 1952. Initially, China and North Korea espoused divergent approaches to POW repatriation. In the spring of 1952, Kim Il Sung advocated for acquiescence to U.S. terms, citing North Korea’s wartime devastation wrought by U.S. airstrikes amid the contentious armistice negotiations. Conversely, Mao Zedong advocated for prolonged conflict with the U.S. and Stalin supported Mao’s decision within the broader framework of the Soviet Union’s geopolitical confrontation

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<sup>258</sup> David Cheng Chang, “The Korean War Armistice Talks and the US Policy of ‘Voluntary Repatriation’ of Prisoners 朝鮮停戰談判與美方「自願遣返」戰俘政策,” *Twenty-First Century* 二十一世紀, no. 198 (2023): 96.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid, 97.

with the United States.<sup>261</sup> Beyond political motives, the divergence in China and North Korea's stances on POWs during negotiations stemmed from practical considerations, notably differing policies on POW management. Influenced by domestic war practices and lacking international experience, China initially eschewed detaining POWs, resulting in a comparatively smaller captive population. Moreover, in November 1951, China and North Korea decided to streamline POW release efforts by transferring South Korean POWs to the KPA administration, with the CPVA solely managing POWs from other nations. Consequently, China possessed a limited number of POWs and wielded minimal bargaining leverage, likely motivating their advocacy for "all-for-all exchange". Conversely, North Korea clandestinely retained a substantial number of POWs to address post-war labor needs. Notably, they detained 13,094 individuals from Syngman Rhee's army, with 6,430 integrated into the KPA and the remainder allocated to various roles in internal ministries. Additionally, 42,262 individuals "mobilized" from South Korea to join the KPA pre-war were detained, a category North Korea disputed as non-POWs. Given these circumstances, the North Korean leadership couldn't reasonably insist on an "all-for-all exchange". However, Stalin's persuasion of Kim in September 1952 led to the alignment of North Korea's stance with the PRC.<sup>262</sup> The shift in CPVA-KPA's stance occurred when Stalin's sudden death in early March 1953 altered the political climate of the Soviet Union. New Soviet leaders urged the CCP to compromise on the POW issue, prompting both sides to negotiate a partial exchange agreement, with China consenting to a limited repatriation.<sup>263</sup>

Amidst the impasse in resolving the POW disputes and the subsequent breakdown of armistice talks in late 1952, the POW issues became focal points in the international propaganda campaign of the PRC. Within *People's China*, POWs were portrayed as victims of American aerial bombardment. In an article titled "Stop the Slaughter in Korea," published on January 1, 1953, *People's China* revealed the toll of wounded and killed POWs attributed to U.S. military actions since October 1952. Characterizing these actions as "brutal massacres," *People's China* leveraged them to denounce America's advocacy for voluntary repatriation of POWs in armistice negotiations, alleging, "It is only too clear that the Pongam mass murder"<sup>264</sup>

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<sup>261</sup> Shen Zhihua, 最後的天朝 *The Last "Celestial Empire"*, 254.

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid*, 256-259.

<sup>263</sup> David Cheng Chang, "The Korean War Armistice Talks and the US Policy of 'Voluntary Repatriation' of Prisoners 朝鮮停戰談判與美方「自願遣返」戰俘政策," 97.

<sup>264</sup> "Pongam mass murder" refers to a riot that happened in the UN POW camps in Pongam. On December 14, 1952, Civilian internees persistently engaged in military drilling despite orders from the United Nations Command to cease such activities. Consequently, a ROK security battalion was dispatched to quell the disturbance. This unrest resulted in more than 80 fatalities and over 100 individuals injured. For details, see

was the result of the direct encouragement given by the adoption of the illegal resolution; it proves once more that what the so-called principle of ‘voluntary repatriation’ or ‘no forcible repatriation’ advocated by the U.S. really means is the use of murder to force prisoners to remain in U.S. custody.”<sup>265</sup>

In another article, “Unconditional Repatriation - An Inviolable Principle of the Geneva Convention,” published on January 16, 1953, *People’s China* defended CPVA-KPA’s stance of unconditional repatriation on the POW issue, heavily censuring the U.S. for perceived insincerity: “From the beginning of the truce talks, the American negotiators have been carrying on the negotiations with one purpose in mind. They have been looking for some plausible pretext to break up the negotiations and to lay the blame at the door of the Chinese and Korean sides.” Beyond critiquing the legitimacy of U.S. voluntary repatriation using Geneva Convention text analysis, *People’s China* invoked the will of Chinese and Korean POWs to bolster its case for unconditional repatriation, stating, “The very posing of the alternatives is absurd, for no one in his senses could ever think of choosing captivity, and, as a matter of fact, the Chinese and North Korean prisoners of war have demonstrated, by their heroic resistance against the enemy’s attempt to break their will to return home, their unshakeable determination to be repatriated.”<sup>266</sup> However, this assertion contradicted reality. In April 1952, during screening by U.S. POW camp authorities, over half of Chinese POWs declared refusal to be repatriated to China, a fact disregarded by the Chinese side.<sup>267</sup> In the screening conducted by the U.N., 14,481 POWs (76%) refused to return to China, while 4,605 POWs (24%) chose to return.<sup>268</sup> Evidently, the CCP, aware of the reluctance among Chinese POWs to return, chose to selectively overlook this reality and instead project a narrative of unwavering patriotism among captured Chinese POWs to international audiences.

Furthermore, *People’s China* resorted to conspiracy theories to obfuscate the reality of Chinese POWs’ reluctance to return home: “As a matter of fact, the ‘social fact’ that the American generals are trying to detain P.O.W.’s for their foul purposes is precisely a circumstance which the participants of the Geneva Convention actually took precautions

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Edward C. Keefer, *FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES, 1952–1954, KOREA, VOLUME XV, PART I* (United States Government Printing Office Washington, 1984), 712, [https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1952-54v15p1/pg\\_712](https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1952-54v15p1/pg_712).

<sup>265</sup> “Stop the Slaughter in Korea”, *People’s China*, January 1, 1953, 12-13.

<sup>266</sup> “Unconditional Repatriation- An Inviolable Principle of the Geneva Convention”, *People’s China*, January 16, 1953, 26-28.

<sup>267</sup> David Cheng Chang, “The Korean War Armistice Talks and the US Policy of ‘Voluntary Repatriation’ of Prisoners 朝鮮停戰談判與美方「自願遣返」戰俘政策,” 97.

<sup>268</sup> David Cheng Chang, *The Hijacked War: The Story of Chinese POWs in the Korean War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020), 259.

against.”<sup>269</sup> From the perspective of the CCP, the refusal of Chinese POWs to return home and the U.S.’s advocacy for voluntary repatriation were construed as deliberate attempts to detain POWs and obstruct their repatriation. Additionally, in other articles, *People’s China* even alleged that Chinese POWs were coerced by the U.S. military into refusing to return home: “As the pressure of public opinion increased and the unsuccessful military offensives failed to gain ground for the Americans, demands were made at the negotiation table, prompting orders to expedite prisoner ‘screening’ to leverage the ‘trump card’ of voluntary repatriation. Prisoners were tattooed with anti-communist slogans. By the end of October 1951, orders were issued to accelerate the tattooing process. When resistance from prisoners reached its limit, a ‘blood petition operation’ was initiated. Prisoners were compelled to draft ‘petitions’ in their own blood opposing repatriation.”<sup>270</sup>

Contrary to the CCP’s propagandistic narrative, assessing the unwillingness of Chinese POWs to return home and their allegiance to the CCP and PRC proves challenging. The CCP was acutely aware of the diverse backgrounds of Chinese military personnel, many of whom had previously served in the KMT army. Kim Il Sung’s disagreement with the PRC’s “all-for-all exchange” proposal stemmed from the perception that a significant portion of Chinese POWs were former KMT army members, deemed politically unreliable, thus diminishing the urgency of advocating for their repatriation.<sup>271</sup> Scholar Chang Cheng highlights numerous internal conflicts between different factions within the Chinese POW population, reflecting enduring tensions from the Chinese Civil War.<sup>272</sup>

Moreover, a considerable number of Chinese peasants were coerced into joining the CPVA through various grassroots CCP mobilization efforts. Scholar Chi Pang-yuan recounted an illustrative example involving her cousin, a typical Northeast Chinese peasant, who was conscripted into the Korean War theater. She described how, during a village meeting, attendees were seated on heated *kang* (heatable earthen beds) during winter. Recruiters encouraged volunteers to stand, while simultaneously stoking the fire under the *kang*. Those unable to withstand the heat and thus stand were applauded and welcomed into the army. These individuals were then forcibly transported, without prior notification, to Sinuiju Station in

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<sup>269</sup> “Unconditional Repatriation- An Inviolable Principle of the Geneva Convention”.

<sup>270</sup> “Koje Unscreened”, *People’s China*, April 16, 1953, 12.

<sup>271</sup> Shen Zhihua, 最後的天朝 *The Last “Celestial Empire”*, 254.

<sup>272</sup> David Cheng Chang, *The Hijacked War: The Story of Chinese POWs in the Korean War*, 191.

Korea, arriving the following day. Consequently, it becomes evident that the loyalty of Chinese POWs to the CCP, as depicted in propaganda, is dubious.<sup>273</sup>

Despite recognizing the political unreliability of many POWs, the CCP persisted in portraying them as heroic figures steadfast in their resistance against the U.S. and fervent in their desire to return home, attributing any refusals to U.S. coercion. However, the actual choices made by Chinese POWs diverged significantly from the CCP's narrative. Notably, Chi Pang-yuan's cousin, coerced into joining the CPVA, along with two-thirds of Chinese POWs (66.8%, totaling 14,342 individuals),<sup>274</sup> opted to go to Taiwan, while the remaining one-third (33.1%, amounting to 7,110 individuals) returned to Mainland China.<sup>275</sup>

Moreover, *People's China* endeavored to cultivate a more favorable perception of the CPVA among American and British POWs, contrasting it with the perceived brutality of the American military. In an article titled "A Merry X'mas, A Happy New Year," *People's China* emphasized the role of Chinese volunteers in ensuring Christmas supplies for POWs, portraying the CPVA in a more endearing and humane light compared to the allegedly harsh tactics employed by the American air force, which purportedly bombed POW camps. This article detailed how POWs engaged in games and enjoyed Christmas dinner together, juxtaposing the CPVA's benevolence with the supposed cruelty of the U.S. military: "Profiting by their experience of last year, the volunteers had provided for everything on a far more lavish scale. But last Christmas, the prisoners were happy. Prisoners' name lists had just been exchanged at Panmunjom, and peace seemed to be within easy reach. No one had heard of 'voluntary repatriation'; no one had heard of the massacres on Koje island, forced screening, tanks, and flame-throwers being used against Korean and Chinese prisoners. Not one man in these camps here doubted that, by Christmas, 1952, he would be at home, in the heart of his own family, looking back on the nightmare of war in Korea as a memory."<sup>276</sup>

Furthermore, *People's China* bolstered the CPVA's positive image through testimony: "Please allow us the privilege to express our high appreciation and grateful feelings to the Chinese people through you for the kind treatment which we prisoners of war have received under the care of the Chinese people's volunteers during the past twenty-five months. Since the day of our capture, not only this kind of treatment has never changed but on the contrary,

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<sup>273</sup> Pang-yuan Chi, *The Great Flowing River: A Memoir of China, from Manchuria to Taiwan* 巨流河 (Taipei: Global Views-Commonwealth Publishing Group, 2009), 563-564.

<sup>274</sup> Ibid.

<sup>275</sup> David Cheng Chang, "The Korean War Armistice Talks and the US Policy of 'Voluntary Repatriation' of Prisoners 朝鮮停戰談判與美方「自願遣返」戰俘政策," 97.

<sup>276</sup> "A Merry X'mas, A Happy New Year", *People's China*, February 1, 1953, 27-28.

things keep improving as time goes on.”<sup>277</sup> Meanwhile, *People’s China* critiqued the U.S.’s voluntary repatriation proposal by quoting POWs: “We lose sleep at night thinking of the Chinese and Korean prisoners being held by the U.N. army on Kojima Island. Here we celebrate all of the Chinese holidays including ours, but in their camps, the Korean and Chinese POWs are beaten and mistreated like animals. If the U.N. side wanted a quick and peaceful settlement to this Korean war, then the proposal of voluntary repatriation would not have been brought up.”<sup>278</sup>

The authenticity of the POWs’ voices seems undeniable, given that 70 percent of American soldiers captured in the Korean War wrote letters of repentance or signed petitions calling for the suspension of U.S. wars in Asia, 15 percent actively cooperated with China, and only 5 percent maintained their original position. Additionally, in the end 21 POWs refused to return to the United States. These figures far surpass those seen among POWs during World War II. Even more surprising to Americans was that upon regaining freedom, some of these POWs continued to uphold the views expressed in their letters of repentance, leading many to attribute this phenomenon to what Edward Hunter termed “brainwashing.”<sup>279</sup>

However, within the CCP’s discourse, the term “thought transformation” (思想改造) is deemed more fitting than “brainwashing.” This concept has roots dating back to the Yan’an period, wherein the CCP not only applied it to POWs but also extended it to intellectuals and its own cadres.<sup>280</sup> During the Second Sino-Japanese War, Japanese POWs undergoing rehabilitation were treated at the company level, enjoying living conditions superior to those administering them. This arrangement engendered a sense of guilt among the POWs, predominantly ordinary soldiers. Simultaneously, Japanese Communists in China and reformed Japanese POWs played crucial roles in persuading and demonstrating to new POWs the fallacy of the stereotype that Japanese soldiers would choose death over surrender.<sup>281</sup> The experiences of Japanese POWs paralleled those of American POWs, who luxuriated in comfortable living conditions and elaborate Christmas festivities. Ultimately, these foreign POWs were successfully transformed into propaganda mouthpieces for the CCP, delivering its anti-America message to the world via various propaganda channels.

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<sup>277</sup> “Letter From Two U.S. P.O.W’s”, *People’s China*, February 1, 1953, 29.

<sup>278</sup> Ibid.

<sup>279</sup> Hailong Liu, *Propaganda: Ideas, Discourses and Its Legitimization*, 204.

<sup>280</sup> For more information about thought transformation, please refer to Hailong Liu, *Propaganda: Ideas, Discourses and Its Legitimization*, 204-209.

<sup>281</sup> Ibid, 205.

Unexpectedly, following Stalin's death on March 5, 1953, the successive leadership of the Soviet Union swiftly altered their stance on POWs. During Zhou Enlai's attendance at Stalin's funeral in Moscow, the Soviets instructed the Chinese to abandon their insistence on repatriating all Chinese captives. The new Soviet authorities aligned with North Korea, in contrast to Stalin, who staunchly supported Mao's hardline stance on POWs and rebuked Kim for his willingness to make concessions. Despite many reservations, Mao acquiesced.<sup>282</sup> On March 28, 1953, Kim Il Sung and Peng Dehuai responded to Commander-in-Chief General Mark Clark, agreeing to exchange sick and wounded prisoners of war for the duration of the war in accordance with Article 109 of the Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War. They suggested the immediate resumption of Panmunjom talks to facilitate a fair resolution of the POW issue. On March 30, Zhou Enlai issued a statement on the Korean Armistice Negotiations, proposing a new approach to the POW issue, the sole unresolved matter in the negotiations, aimed at bridging differences and securing a Korean Armistice. The proposal stipulated: "The two negotiating sides shall commit to repatriate immediately, following the armistice, all prisoners of war who insist on repatriation, and transfer the remaining prisoners to a neutral country to ensure a just resolution of their repatriation." Subsequently, Kim Il Sung and Foreign Minister Molotov of the USSR issued statements on March 31 and April 1 in support of Foreign Minister Zhou's proposal.<sup>283</sup>

In a communique issued by the Propaganda Department of the Central Committee of the CCP, the Party acknowledged making substantial concessions regarding the POW issue in the ongoing truce negotiations. The statement delineated the CCP's recognition of the impasse surrounding POW repatriation as the principal barrier to achieving a Korean armistice, thus necessitating concessions in terms of procedural steps, timing, and methodology to overcome this obstacle. Furthermore, the CCP outlined two potential trajectories for the progression of the truce negotiations. The first scenario envisioned an initial agreement between the CPVA-KPA and the U.S. on the exchange of sick and wounded POWs, followed by subsequent negotiations leading to a comprehensive agreement encompassing the repatriation of all POWs, thereby actualizing the desired Korean Armistice. Conversely, the second scenario foresaw the possibility of the opposing side consenting to the exchange of sick and wounded POWs but

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<sup>282</sup> David Cheng Chang, *The Hijacked War: The Story of Chinese POWs in the Korean War*, 322.

<sup>283</sup> "Notice of the Propaganda Department of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party on the propaganda on the issue of the Korean Armistice Negotiations 中共中央宣传部关于朝鲜停战谈判问题的宣传的通知", in *Selections from the Party's propaganda documentary work: 1949-1956* 党的宣传文件工作选编 1949-1956, e.d. Central Propaganda Department of the Chinese Communist Party 中央宣传部办公厅 (Beijing: Xuexi Press, 1996), 535-540.

complicating matters upon the CCP's proposal for a resolution concerning all POWs, potentially prolonging the Korean War. Vigilance towards this latter prospect was underscored as imperative.<sup>284</sup>

Accordingly, the CCP emphasized the necessity for its propaganda efforts to maintain a tone devoid of cursing or sarcasm towards the U.S., advocating instead for a steadfastly reasoned approach. Specific directives within the CCP's guidance on propaganda practices included: A) articulating the consistent adherence to a peace policy. B) Highlighting the groundwork laid for a Korean armistice through earnest endeavors during the Korean Armistice Talks over the preceding year. Notably, agreements had been reached on all issues except POW repatriation, with consensus achieved on all clauses of the draft armistice agreement pertaining to POW arrangements, barring repatriation. C) Asserting that CCP proposals align harmoniously with the peaceful aspirations and fundamental interests of participating nations and the global populace at large, garnering widespread endorsement. D) Rebuking the fallacy propagated by U.S. warmongers purporting that the full utilization of capitalism's industrial capacity necessitates the perpetuation of the Korean War and arms competition. Moreover, while the CCP delineated potential outcomes of the ceasefire negotiations, it accentuated the foundational progress achieved through its earnest engagement in the Korean Armistice Talks, thereby reflecting the Party's constructive outlook and resolute stance towards a ceasefire in the Korean War.<sup>285</sup>

Following the issuance of the propaganda directive on April 10th, 1953, there was a notable surge in articles pertaining to the truce negotiations of the Korean War. Whereas previous issues published in 1953 typically contained one to two articles addressing the Korean War, with some issues devoid of such coverage entirely, the number of these articles increased to four in the issues released on April 16th and May 16th. In addition to featuring statements by Zhou Enlai, Peng Dehuai, and Kim Il Sung's letter to General Clark, the tone of *People's China* towards the United States underwent a discernible softening, exhibiting a markedly more amicable disposition and conveying a positive signal towards the ceasefire negotiations. In the article titled "Peaceful Negotiations vs. War," *People's China* refrained from criticizing the United States, redirecting its focus towards commending the contributions of the Soviet Union and China to the negotiations while expressing optimistic sentiments regarding the United States: "The Soviet and Chinese Governments are in step with the will and interests of the

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<sup>284</sup> Ibid.

<sup>285</sup> Ibid.

peoples. They are ready to negotiate to settle all outstanding international problems by peaceful means. The people insist on a similar answer from the other powers concerned, from Britain, France, and the United States.”<sup>286</sup> Even in addressing the U.S.’s stance on the POW proposals, *People’s China* refrained from levying accusations of deliberate POW detainment against the United States, instead urging careful consideration of the new appeal proposed by the CPVA-KPA: “Everybody can see that with regard to this proposal – which aims at removing differences between the two sides on the question of P.O.W. repatriation and seeks to bring about a cease-fire — what the U.S. side should do is to make a careful study of it and seek an agreement; it should not, as it has done in the past few days, persist in dismissing and rejecting the proposal. This is an important opportunity to achieve peace by concrete deeds. It is a real test which the U.S. Government simply cannot evade.”<sup>287</sup>

Nevertheless, certain articles in *People’s China* persisted in denouncing U.S. military transgressions, albeit in brief coverage. For instance, in an article commemorating the outcome of the sick and injured POW exchange, *People’s China* recounted instances of mistreatment endured by Korean girls in U.S. camps: “One of these Korean girls, who was driven insane by American maltreatment, sits on her bed staring blankly. They eagerly tell visiting correspondents of their struggles in the American camps sick and injured girls who refused to renounce their right to repatriation were thrown into jails where they were left groaning day and night without any medical treatment. Among the eighty girls, they know to have been wounded or crippled during forcible ‘screening’, only their group of twenty-one was repatriated.”<sup>288</sup>

Furthermore, the discourse found within articles published in *People’s China* distinctly mirrored the emphases outlined in the CCP’s propaganda directives. These articles elucidated the concessions made by China and Korea while underscoring that their new proposal aligned with the collective interests of humanity: “In advancing such a solution, the Korean and Chinese side adheres to the principles of international law which, in the interests of all peoples, it is defending against violation. At the same time, it is making a concession as regards the steps to be taken to ensure the peace the people need.”<sup>289</sup> Moreover, the articles underscored the pivotal role played by the CPVA-KPA in facilitating the prospect of a ceasefire in Korea: “It is on the basis of this principle, which the American negotiators have said that they accept,

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<sup>286</sup> “Peaceful Negotiations vs. the War”, *People’s China*, May 16, 1953, 3.

<sup>287</sup> “Deeds Mean More Than Words”, *People’s China*, May 16, 1953, 5-6.

<sup>288</sup> “Back to Freedom at Kaesong”, *People’s China*, May 16, 1953, 31-32.

<sup>289</sup> “For Peace in Korea”, *People’s China*, April 16, 1953, 3.

that the Korean and Chinese Delegation made a number of concessions in procedure and method after the truce talks resumed. They have met the Americans more than halfway to remove the obstacles set up by the American arguments at the conference table. There are very few people anywhere who still do not see that the Chinese-Korean efforts for peace have been consistent and have brought the Korean war to the verge of peace.”<sup>290</sup> Even upon the signing of the final agreement on POW repatriation by both parties on June 8th, 1953, the CCP asserted that the United States had been compelled by pressure from the peace-oriented coalition to accede to the agreement, once again accentuating their own contributions: “As the result of world public pressure and steadfast efforts by the Korean and Chinese side, the American side asked that the armistice negotiations enter into executive session. After several meetings, both sides finally reached the agreement on the question of POW repatriation which has now been published.”<sup>291</sup>

However, a mere ten days following the agreement’s signing, the CCP levied criticism against the South Korean government for forcibly detaining North Korean POWs, while also censuring the U.S. military for its failure to prevent South Korea’s breach of the agreement. *People’s China* cited diverse commentaries from various media outlets to underscore the global outrage provoked by the South Korean government’s transgression: “Many papers accused the American authorities of complicity in the plot. *The London Daily Worker* recalled that the correspondent of the conservative paper *Observer* had earlier written from Korea that Rhee might release those prisoners who were guarded by South Korean guards. ‘Yet,’ the *Daily Worker* said, ‘so far from any steps being taken to restrain him, it is obvious that he was encouraged by American elements.’ *The Statesman of India* wrote that the ‘replacement of South Korean guards by Americans only after the prisoners had gone suggests more than ordinary ineptitude.’ The British and French Governments have sent notes to the Syngman Rhee clique strongly protesting against this ‘treacherous’ action which, as the French note states, ‘threatens to prevent the stopping of bloodshed and compromise the restoration of peace.’”<sup>292</sup> Furthermore, *People’s China* asserted that the signing of the agreement underscored the growing influence of the peace camp: “Those who believe that different countries of the world can peacefully coexist form a growing legion. The success of the initiatives for relaxing international tension undertaken by the countries of peaceful construction led by the Soviet Union has strengthened their belief that a lasting peace is

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<sup>290</sup> “The Hatred of Peace”, *People’s China*, June 1, 1953, 3-4.

<sup>291</sup> “Pave the Way for the Peaceful Settlement Of the Korean Question”, *People’s China*, June 16, 1953, 3-5.

<sup>292</sup> “The Forcible Detention of North Korean POWs”, *People’s China*, July 1, 1953, 18.

possible. The Panmunjom agreement on POW exchange, one of the first fruits of that initiative, showed, that the forces of peace were stronger than ever before. But millions more must be drawn into the campaign for negotiations bringing the Great Powers to the conference table and thus paving the way to lasting peace.”<sup>293</sup>

Subsequent to the signing of the POW repatriation agreement, the Korean Armistice Agreement was ultimately signed at 10 a.m. on July 27, 1953. In efforts to disseminate news of the Korean War ceasefire, the CCP issued fresh propaganda directives, highlighting that “The Korean Armistice signifies a significant triumph for the Korean and Chinese people in their quest for peace and resistance against aggression, a landmark victory for the global peace movement led by the Soviet Union in its struggle against aggression and defense of global peace, and a resounding setback for the aggressive policies of U.S. imperialism. The steadfast stance of the Korean and Chinese people garnered solidarity and support from the peace camp led by the Soviet Union and peace-loving individuals worldwide. Through the unwavering commitment of the Korean and Chinese people to resolving the Korean issue peacefully and the concerted efforts of peace advocates worldwide, the two-year-long Korean Armistice Negotiations culminated in agreement and the signing of the Armistice Agreement.”<sup>294</sup>

These narratives were prominently echoed in the discourse of *People's China*: “The Chinese people rejoice because with the signing of the armistice they have achieved a signal success in their campaign to resist U.S. aggression, aid Korea and defend their homes and country. The attempt of the U.S. intriguers to use the war in Korea to fan up war hysteria and instigate a yet greater conflagration has been defeated. The Chinese people rejoice because the armistice marks the first step towards the peaceful settlement of the Korean question. The Chinese and the Korean people as well as the peoples of the Soviet Union and the entire camp of peace and democracy have consistently stood for a peaceful settlement of the Korean question. They fought to defend this principle, and finally, the would-be ‘conquerors’, who relied on the force had to sign a truce.”<sup>295</sup> Additionally, select articles in *People's China* asserted that the signing of the Armistice Agreement signaled the bankruptcy of U.S. policy:

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<sup>293</sup> “Negotiations, Not Force”, *People's China*, July 16, 1953, 3.

<sup>294</sup> “Propaganda instructions of the Central Committee on the Korean Armistice 中央关于朝鲜停战的宣传指示” in *Selections from the Party's propaganda documentary work: 1949-1956* 党的宣传文件工作选编 1949-1956, e.d. Central Propaganda Department of the Chinese Communist Party 中央宣传部办公厅 (Beijing: Xuexi Press, 1996), 563-565.

<sup>295</sup> “China Hails the Truce”, *People's China*, August 16, 1953, 3.

“No one can deny that three years of war in Korea have demonstrated the complete bankruptcy of the policy of worldwide aggression carried on by the U.S. ruling clique.”<sup>296</sup>

Concurrently, the CCP also underscored that while the war may have ceased, the struggle persisted with imperialist warmongers and the Syngman Rhee clique continuing to conspire against the armistice. The CCP emphasized the imperative for the Chinese people to remain vigilant in ensuring the faithful implementation of the Korean Armistice Agreement and the peaceful resolution of the Korean issue.<sup>297</sup> This perspective was echoed in *People’s China*: “Steeled with new experience in this struggle, the Chinese people have today a deep and intimate understanding of the value of this victory of peace. They are determined not to let it be snatched away. With redoubled alertness, they will closely watch the actions of the enemies of peace. They will work and struggle with the same persistence as before for a peaceful settlement of the Korean problem so as to expand this victory of peace and negotiations to all other disputed questions in the Far East and the world.”<sup>298</sup>

However, certain elements of the propaganda directive were overlooked by *People’s China*, whether intentionally or inadvertently. For instance, while the CCP emphasized refraining from invoking the slogan of Taiwan’s liberation for the time being, urging instead opposition to continued U.S. aggression against Taiwan,<sup>299</sup> *People’s China* did not address the Taiwan issue at all. Furthermore, as stipulated in the propaganda directive, the CCP stressed the necessity of deepening the populace’s animosity towards U.S. imperialism and enhancing awareness of their own strength.<sup>300</sup> Despite the cessation of the Korean War, *People’s China* did not actively seek pretexts to vilify the U.S. or incite global antipathy towards it. As elucidated in Chapter 2, while the CCP’s propaganda directives played a pivotal role in shaping the international propaganda of the PRC, the detailed implementation of these directives by its propaganda apparatus exhibited a degree of flexibility, illustrating the adaptive nature of its international propaganda framework.

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<sup>296</sup> “The Korean Armistice And World Peace”, *People’s China*, August 16, 1953, 4-6.

<sup>297</sup> “Propaganda instructions of the Central Committee on the Korean Armistice 中央关于朝鲜停战的宣传指示”.

<sup>298</sup> “The Chinese People’s Great Aid to Korea”, *People’s China*, August 16, 1953, 7-10.

<sup>299</sup> “Propaganda instructions of the Central Committee on the Korean Armistice 中央关于朝鲜停战的宣传指示”.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid.

## 6 Conclusion

This thesis has investigated the international propaganda endeavors of the PRC during the Korean War with a focus on discerning the desired international image China aimed to cultivate through its propaganda initiatives. The thesis has scrutinized the propaganda strategies employed by the CCP and examines the propaganda tradition established by the CCP during the war.

Under the current leadership of Xi Jinping, the diplomatic discourse utilized by the Chinese Foreign Affairs Ministry in press conferences has exhibited an increasingly confrontational tone.<sup>301</sup> These assertive rhetorical expressions have become pervasive within Chinese state-run media and have garnered the moniker “Wolf Warrior” diplomacy for China. Analogous to the “Wolf Warrior” phenomenon, Maoist China was often characterized as a “Revolutionary Warrior” during the Cold War era, as delineated by Daniel Lynch.<sup>302</sup> However, contrary to Lynch’s assertion, some scholars contend that China endeavored to cultivate a friendly international image through its propaganda efforts in the 1950s.<sup>303</sup> Nonetheless, this research posits that the portrayal of the PRC shaped by the CCP in the texts of *People’s China* is notably multifaceted, encompassing more than just a depiction as a peace-loving ally or revolutionary force. The CCP adeptly crafted varied images of the PRC depending on the context of different affairs.

Since the outbreak of the Korean War and subsequent U.S. intervention, the CCP’s propaganda machinery showcased the Chinese populace’s profound empathy for the Korean people, while consistently projecting a peace-loving image of the Chinese populace averse to a prolonged conflict. However, as the PRC dispatched its CPVA to the Korean Peninsula to confront the U.S. military, *People’s China* began emphasizing the valiant warrior image of the Chinese people, resolute in their determination to confront aggressors, including the U.S., while still underscoring their commitment to peace. To substantiate this stance, *People’s China* argued that the CPVA’s engagement aimed to defend the nation, thwart U.S. aggression in Asia, and pursue peace for the region, contrasting it with the purportedly belligerent motives of the U.S. military driven by ambitions of invading Asia and Wall Street interests. In this regard, *People’s China* effectively reconciled both peace-loving and warrior images in shaping

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<sup>301</sup> Yaoyao Dai and Luwei Rose Luqiu, “Wolf Warriors and Diplomacy in the New Era,” *China Review* 22, no. 2 (2022): 253–83.

<sup>302</sup> Daniel C. Lynch, *After the Propaganda State: Media, Politics, and “Thought Work” in Reformed China*.

<sup>303</sup> Leonard W. Lazarick, “China’s Smiling face to the World: Beijing’s English-Language Magazines in the First Decade of The People’s Republic”.

China's image. Notably, while the PRC's propaganda materials depicted a somewhat martial disposition, characterizing it as the "Revolutionary Warrior" would be inappropriate as it purportedly fought for peace rather than a socialist revolution in Korea. Unlike the stereotype suggesting that Maoist China vigorously sought to export its revolution to other nations, the CCP's international propaganda underscored the dichotomy between the peace camp and the war camp, rather than solely focusing on the ideological division between the socialist and capitalist blocs. Even though nearly all socialist countries were aligned with the peace camp, the CCP's international propaganda accentuated the important role of proponents of progress and peace within capitalist nations. In its coverage of the Korean War, the CCP's international propaganda accorded paramount importance to the dichotomy between peace and war while downplaying ideological disparities.

Apart from showing its determination and muscles to fight as a warrior, the CCP also presented its weakness and innocence at the right time. When charging the U.S. with the crime of germ warfare, the PRC was shaped as the poor victim of biological weapons. In the coverage of germ warfare, the Chinese people and the CPVA suffered greatly from the U.S.'s germ weapons. In this course, the U.S. military was depicted as a gangster who disregarded the basic humanitarian and moral standards in order to win the war, while Chinese people were innocent victims who had never expected that the U.S. would employ biological weapons in the battlefield and living zones of people. The CCP understood that portraying oneself as the weaker party could win more support and sympathy from public opinion and successfully utilized it in its propaganda work.

Furthermore, following a century of humiliation during which China endured semi-colonial status under Western imperialist powers, the PRC was determined to shed the image of the "sick man of East of Asia" and cultivate a powerful identity for the new China. In its coverage of the APC, the PRC positioned itself as a beacon of inspiration for other newly independent countries, colonies, and semi-colonies, extolling its remarkable achievements in nation-building and industrialization. China actively touted itself as a model for nations across Southeast Asia, Africa, and Latin America whenever opportune, reflecting a profound sense of national pride. This endeavor to overcome historical humiliation and assert national pride has been a recurring theme in the PRC's international propaganda efforts since its inception and continues to reverberate in official rhetoric to this day. Upon assuming leadership in 2012, Xi Jinping not only championed the "great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation" (中华民族伟大复兴) but also advocated for the establishment of a "Community of Common Destiny" (人类命运)

运共同体), aiming to contribute Chinese wisdom to global development endeavors. Over the decades spanning from the 1950s to the 2020s, China transitioned from being a role model solely for newly independent nations, colonies, and semi-colonies to assuming the mantle of a role model for developing countries and even humanity at large in its propaganda discourse.

Thus, as elucidated above, the portrayal of the PRC in international propaganda materials is not static but rather dynamic, evolving, and adapting to changes in the battlefield, diplomatic imperatives, and propaganda objectives. The CCP demonstrates adeptness in adjusting the depiction of the PRC according to prevailing circumstances, presenting varied images to suit different contexts. At times, China has been depicted as a warrior, demonstrating resolve and strength; at other times, it has been portrayed as an empathetic neighbor, extending a helping hand; occasionally, it has assumed the role of a vulnerable and innocent victim, appealing for sympathy; and intermittently, it has emerged as a potent role model, inspiring admiration. Given the multifaceted nature of the images presented in *People's China*, it is challenging to draw a simplistic conclusion regarding the CCP's intention to shape the PRC as either a benign friend or a revolutionary warrior.

The CCP has employed many strategies in its propaganda efforts, among which the manipulation of historical memories, particularly those related to World War II (specifically, the Second Sino-Japanese War), stands out as one of the most significant. In addressing Japan's rearmament, *People's China* actively disseminated numerous articles detailing the atrocities committed by Japanese militarism in the Asia-Pacific region during World War II, citing oral histories from witnesses and survivors to evoke animosity towards Japan. This tactic of stoking animosity towards a nation by exploiting historical grievances has been a recurrent propaganda strategy utilized by the CCP. For example, in response to Japan's decision to discharge nuclear wastewater into the sea in 2023, a move vehemently condemned by the Chinese government, Xinhua News, in addition to covering protests in various countries, tweeted about Japan's germ warfare crimes during the Second Sino-Japanese War in Northeast China.<sup>304</sup> Furthermore, numerous Chinese media outlets directly linked the discharge of nuclear wastewater to the Second Sino-Japanese War, asserting, "Do not forget the national shame: 92 years ago, Japan invaded China, and 92 years later, nuclear sewage was discharged into the sea to the detriment of all mankind!"<sup>305</sup> In this context, the narrative of historical humiliation serves a dual purpose

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<sup>304</sup> <https://x.com/xhnews/status/1698182330089881807?s=46&t=epoADRbFeHHGaTWAD7czlw>.

<sup>305</sup> “勿忘国耻：92年日本侵略中国，92年后核污水排海残害全人类！Don't forget the national shame: 92 years ago, Japan invaded China, and 92 years later, nuclear sewage was discharged into the sea to the detriment of all mankind!” *Zhihu*, accessed March 31, 2024, <https://zhuanlan.zhihu.com/p/656892822>.

for China: on one hand, it represents a national disgrace that China seeks to overcome and move beyond; on the other hand, it serves as a potent tool for propaganda, deployable whenever needed.

Additionally, the CCP adeptly employs conspiracy theories to shift blame onto the United States. In propagating allegations of germ warfare, the CCP propagated a conspiracy theory suggesting that the U.S. military had collaborated with Japanese war criminals at Fort Detrick to develop biological weapons for potential use in the Korean War, despite lacking substantial evidence. Seventy years later, the CCP revived this conspiracy theory, alleging that the U.S. had manufactured the COVID-19 virus at Fort Detrick to absolve China of responsibility for the outbreak's purported origin.<sup>306</sup> Commenting on China's disinformation campaign regarding Fort Detrick as the COVID-19 origin, Maria Repnikova remarked, "It's not just about telling a story. It's about creating a story."<sup>307</sup> According to the findings of this thesis, the CCP dissemination of conspiracy theories regarding the origins of COVID-19 does not involve the creation of a new narrative; rather, it involves the recycling of an existing storyline. Moreover, the CCP consistently attributes blame for adverse events to the U.S. During the Korean War, the CCP blamed the lack of progress in armistice negotiations on U.S. insincerity while claiming credit for its own contributions to the eventual signing of the ceasefire agreement. Similarly, amidst the escalating trade tensions and deteriorating Sino-U.S. relations in the 2010s and beyond, China has consistently asserted that "The U.S. is to blame" (责任全在美方).<sup>308</sup> This narrative has become emblematic of China's "Wolf Warrior Diplomacy" but has roots in the CCP's propaganda language dating back to the 1950s.

Furthermore, although some propaganda principles established in the Yan'an period were exercised during the Korean War and still influence propaganda today, such as the "party principle" (党性原则) proposed by Liu Hailong, some traditions also changed as time developed. During the Korean War, although domestic propaganda and international propaganda were associated and shared same propaganda instructions, their contents, and aims were rather different. For instance, amidst the fever of suppressing the counter-revolutionaries, the *People's Daily* spent much coverage on reporting how many counter-revolutionaries were executed every day to deter counter-revolutionaries, while the *People's China* did not pay

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<sup>306</sup> "Wuhan Lab Leak Theory: How Fort Detrick Became a Centre for Chinese Conspiracies," *BBC*, August 22, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-58273322>.

<sup>307</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>308</sup> "事情发展到今天，责任全在美方 The U.S. Is to Blame for the Way Things Have Turned Out.," *Xinhua News*, accessed April 9, 2024, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2018-07/14/c\\_1123126012.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2018-07/14/c_1123126012.htm).

much attention to this issue to shape a friendly image of Chinese people. However, the difference between domestic propaganda and international propaganda is more and more blurred nowadays and international propaganda has become assimilated by domestic propaganda (“external and internal propaganda integration” 外宣內宣化).

Chu Yin, a Chinese scholar specializing in international relations, has identified the phenomenon characterized by the convergence of external and internal propaganda in China. This convergence, he argues, has blurred the intended target audience of propaganda efforts, resulting in substantial investments in international propaganda that predominantly resonate domestically. Chu contends that there used to be distinct standards governing internal and external propaganda. However, the integration of external and internal propaganda has merged these standards into a singular framework, wherein the techniques and criteria of internal propaganda often dictate external messaging. This blending has led to confusion regarding the intended recipients of propaganda. For instance, it has become increasingly challenging to discern whether the speeches delivered by Chinese diplomats, or the narratives articulated by experts and scholars are meant for foreign or domestic audiences. Moreover, Chu highlights that the fusion of external and internal propaganda has coincided with the proliferation of the Internet and social media platforms, fostering a populist trend in foreign propaganda. Consequently, some experts and diplomats have compromised their professional standards to appeal to populist sentiments, thereby allowing domestic internet discourse to influence and shape foreign propaganda tactics.<sup>309</sup>

Nonetheless, although the CCP’s international propaganda machinery has undergone significant transformations over the course of several decades, there remain numerous facets of CCP propaganda that warrant scholarly exploration. While the CCP frequently obscured aspects of reality, exaggerated certain “facts,” and even disseminated misinformation within its propaganda, it would be erroneous to categorize all of its propaganda as falsehoods. The partial truths conveyed by the CCP still constitute a fraction of reality and warrant consideration by scholars, rather than outright dismissal as mere propaganda. Presently, amidst China’s increasingly conservative political landscape and the CCP’s growing reluctance to disclose information, propaganda materials have resurfaced as crucial supplementary resources for comprehending the Chinese reality. Additionally, since 1949, international propaganda

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<sup>309</sup> “北京學者：中國被民粹情緒控制 外宣內宣化 | 兩岸 | Beijing Scholar: China Controlled by Populist Sentiment: External and Internal Propaganda,” 中央社 CNA, July 15, 2021, <https://www.cna.com.tw/news/firstnews/202107150172.aspx>.

materials have consistently served as vital supplements for deciphering the diplomatic policies and orientations of the PRC.

Finally, historical studies are not confined to the past but have significant relevance to contemporary realities. By scrutinizing the CCP's propaganda efforts during the Korean War, we can identify numerous parallels and divergences with China's current "wolf warrior diplomacy." Examining how the CCP conducted international propaganda to shape the image of the PRC during the Korean War allows us to comprehend the genesis and evolution of the CCP's propaganda strategy and tradition, shedding light on their manifestations in present-day propaganda endeavors. In essence, delving into the history of PRC propaganda in the early 1950s not only enriches our understanding of the historical dynamics of the Korean War and Chinese propaganda history but, more importantly, offers a crucial perspective for comprehending the underlying rationale of China's contemporary wolf warrior diplomacy.



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