

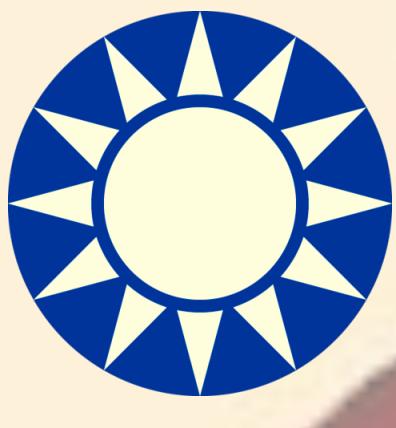
Misconceptions in Parallel: Belligerent Perceptions of Mediator Bias in the Chinese Civil War



1945-



Spencer Gaitsch



-1949



Literature

Post-Cold War trends show a significant decline in interstate wars mirrored by an inverse rise in intrastate conflicts.

Political scientists and policymakers have produced a sizable body of literature dedicated to understanding, preventing, and resolving civil wars.

This literature explores intrastate conflict's causes, characteristics, determinants of length, outcome, and peace settlement failure and success probabilities.

Types of third-party intervention:

- Civilian Aid
- Military Aid
- External Mediation

*Note that states can employ multiple intervention strategies simultaneously.

Perceptions of mediator bias affect how belligerents interpret and interact with mediators.

Methodology & Case Study

This paper combines traditional political science approaches to civil war mediation research with a detailed historical case study of the Chinese Civil War that analyzes the perceptions of critical Communist and Nationalist leaders, focusing on how their respective interpretations of the United States affected their engagement with negotiations. A history lens is used to analyze primary sources from the conflict, enabling precise insights into the mindsets of leaders like Chiang Kai-Shek and Mao Zedong that carry a dialogue with the political science literature. This paper highlights the usefulness of historical analysis within political science to understand better civil war combatants' motives, beliefs, and thought processes and emphasize the privileged place belligerents occupy in determining the outcome of intrastate conflict peace negotiations.

Mao Zedong



Primary sources consulted:

- Journals & diaries
- Diplomatic cables
- Public speeches & announcements
- Newspapers
- Declassified intelligence briefings

The case study also dealt with historical elements of the CCP-GMD struggle and Cold War dynamics emerging in Asia after World War Two.

Chiang Kai-Shek



Conclusion

This study concludes that the perceptions of civil war belligerents are paramount for determining how combatants will act during negotiations based on their understanding of the relevant mediator. It also encourages additional research to determine how third-party mediators can better signal their neutrality and conviction that a mutual settlement is preferable to a military victory.

Why it matters:

Policymakers must place belligerents at the center of future peace negotiation strategies. Civil wars have many complicated dynamics, but the views of those fighting, who are being asked to disarm and demobilize, deserve special attention as it is their commitment to achieving peace that matters most.