Dulles's anti-Communist crusade of the 1950s, allows no room for compromise with a Laotian regime portrayed as evil incarnate. The author has apparently never visited contemporary Laos. She might be surprised to see scores of Hmong-American visitors deplaning at Vientiane International Airport these days to visit relatives in home villages. Her book does a disservice to the portrayal of current reality in Laos. But it is a major contribution to the history of the wartime alliance and subsequent betrayal of the Hmong by the United States.

Lynelllyn D. Long contributes in Ban Vinai: The Refugee Camp a reflective summary of her personal experience as a refugee relief worker, incisive case studies of camp residents and a most useful review of refugee policy issues precipitated by the aftermath of the Indochina wars. This book is not so much a depiction of the primary Lao-Hmong refugee camp as an exploration of camp life and issues in the quest for comprehensive understanding of past and present Indochinese refugee policies. Unlike Ms. Hamilton-Merritt, Ms. Long perceptively assess the end of the nearly twenty-year Indochinese refugee phenomenon as prelude to the development of Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam and the establishment of normal bi-national relations between the United States and Indochina. This book should become a standard reference and text for those concerned with a balanced understanding of the political phenomenon and humanitarian relief effort which transported no less than one million Indochinese refugees to the United States in less than twenty years.

Despite their sometimes glaring omissions of fact or ideological spins of political reality, each of these books contributes significantly to our understanding of the dramatic and in many ways unprecedented role the Hmong have played in international affairs in recent years. When sequestered intelligence files are finally opened, when Laotian Communist archives and oral histories become available and when the now-aging witnesses to the emergence of a tribal people to center stage of world events tell their own stories, only then will the complete mid-twentieth-century history of the Hmong of Laos be told in its entirety.

Eric Crystal
University of California at Berkeley


This solid and valuable work surveys interactions between the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), the Guomindang (GMD), the Soviet Union, and the United States from the Yalta Conference to the beginning of full-scale civil war in China. It is based on extensive research
in archives in Taiwan, the People's Republic of China, and the United States. Westad covers territory that has been well worked by earlier scholars, but does so on the basis of both primary sources—some of which have not been utilized by other scholars—and familiarity with the earlier work of others.

Westad's thesis is that "the cold war" was underway in Asia by the beginning of 1946, and that this was the "cause" of the Chinese civil war. Both halves of this thesis are novel. Conventional scholarly wisdom dates the cold war in Asia from 1949–50, and while many scholars have traced the diplomatic convolutions of CCP-GMD rivalry, few have gone so far as to argue that Soviet-American relations were the decisive factor in the evolving Chinese contest for power.

Westad dismisses the notion that Truman modified Roosevelt's China policy in mid-1945 by engaging in "atomic diplomacy" designed to minimize Soviet influence in Manchuria. Rather, Truman sought to continue Roosevelt's policy of cooperating with the USSR in northeast Asia. Stalin too remained dedicated to alliance with the United States in early and mid-1945, and dealt with China in a fashion intended to stabilize Soviet-American amity. Within months of the end of World War II, however, deepening conflicts in central Europe and the Middle East convinced leaders in both Washington and Moscow that they now confronted an apparently global struggle with the other. This shift in Weltanschauung marked the beginning of the cold war. It was swiftly reflected in the policies of each superpower toward the CCP and the GMD. When stabilization of the wartime alliance was the priority of Moscow and Washington, both sought to staunch a Chinese civil war. Once emphasis shifted to countering the perceived aggressive aims of the other superpower, each chose a Chinese partner to support as a bulwark against the influence of the other. Once these alignments—the United States with Jiang Jieshi's GMD and the Soviet Union with Mao Zedong's CCP—were in place, the cold war had begun. The date was the beginning of 1946. The stage was set for civil war.

Neither Jiang nor Mao sought or planned for civil war, according to Westad. Each sought to manipulate the two superpowers to create conditions propitious for the growth of their own party's power. Jiang sought to compel the CCP to submit to the authority of the National government by securing continued support from the United States while persuading Stalin not to support the CCP. Thus isolated from international support, Mao would conclude that a war against the GMD was hopeless, Jiang hoped, and accept a subordinate position. Jiang was quite ready to reward Stalin with territorial concessions in Mongolia and Manchuria for Soviet nonsupport of the CCP. Mao