

[Member book, Meyskens, Mao's Third Front: The Militarization of Cold War China](#)

Discussion published by Covell Meyskens on Wednesday, July 1, 2020

Dear colleagues,

I am pleased to announce the publication of my book, [Mao's Third Front The Militarization of Cold War China \(Cambridge University Press, 2020\)](#). *Mao's Third Front* is available for order at [Cambridge University Press](#), [Amazon](#), and [independent bookstores](#). Orders through Cambridge's website receive 20% off with the discount code MTF2020 through March 31, 2021. I am also in the process of creating a companion [website](#), which contains images, oral histories, and memoirs of the Third Front.

Brief Description

In 1964, the Chinese Communist Party made a momentous policy decision. In response to rising tensions with the United States and Soviet Union, a top-secret massive military industrial complex in the mountains of inland China was built, which the CCP hoped to keep hidden from enemy bombers. Mao named this the Third Front. The Third Front received more government investment than any other developmental initiative of the Mao era, and yet this huge industrial war machine, which saw the mobilization of fifteen million people, was not officially acknowledged for over a decade and a half. Drawing on a rich collection of archival documents, memoirs, and oral interviews, my book provides the first history of the Third Front campaign. It shows how the militarization of Chinese industrialization linked millions of everyday lives to the global Cold War, merging global geopolitics with local change.

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From the Back Cover

"In this magisterial work, Covell Meyskens draws on the vast range of material now available in China on the 'Third Front,' enriched with his own interviews, to bring the full scope of this once top-secret program into focus for the first time ever. Meyskens provides an indelible portrait of the Third Front, tying together international tensions, domestic politics, and life at the grass roots. The result is an engaging read that will permanently change how the reader thinks about Mao's China."

- Barry Naughton, University of California, San Diego

"Meyskens challenges the notion that the developmental policies of the Chinese Communist Party were driven by irrationality, revealing instead the strategic and economic logic that guided the Third Front project -- the largest, most expansive, and most expensive industrialization campaign of the Mao era. Deploying an impressive array of sources, both archival documents and oral testimonies, Meyskens provides a model for writing new economic histories of the PRC period."

- Aminda Smith, Michigan State University

"An outstandingly insightful book on what was perhaps the biggest public project in Maoist China: the construction of a gigantic but secret industrial base area in the inland mountains, in preparation for war against the United States and the Soviet Union."

- O.A. Westad, author of *The Cold War: A World History*

"In the 1960s and 1970s the People's Republic of China had to do the impossible--fend off a succession of foreign threats and do so by industrializing fast. In this first study of the most expensive industrialization effort of the Mao era, Meyskens examines the effects of the Third Front on everyone and everything from the millions of workers relocated to remote factories to the national austerity required to pay for the costly strategy, demonstrating just how profoundly this effort shaped the country and its peoples."

- Karl Gerth, University of California, San Diego

"This book offers a richly informative account of the massive geo-strategic redeployment of China's technological elite from coastal cities to the mountainous interior in the 1960s. It is a groundbreaking research and an inspiring read for anyone interested in the history of war, technology, secretive state, and differentiated mobilization in China's long 20th-century."

- Wen-hsin Yeh, University of California, Berkeley

Best,

Covell