

Ecclesial Tension in the Catholic Church in China—Analysis based on the Conflict Resolution Model

Kim-Kwong CHAN ♦

Abstract: Through re-examining the ecclesial tension of the Chinese Catholic community developed during the Cold War with the interpretative lens of Conflict Resolution, this article offers another perspective that can supplement the traditional theological and the canonical perspectives in understanding the ecclesial conflict. The method which this article chooses is the Conflict Resolution Model developed by the Danish Centre for Conflict Resolution. This model suggests that conflict has an organic way of growth in seven stages of escalation: disagreement, personification, problem expands, dialogue stops, enemy images, open hostility, and polarization. Conflict can also de-escalate in the opposite direction depending on the availability of positive factors and the removal of escalating factors. Through examining the perceptions of two publications on the ecclesial events of the Catholic Church in China during the 1950s, this preliminary study suggests that the Cold War mentality in the 1950s facilitates the escalation of the ecclesial

♦ The author is an honorary research fellow of Universities Service Center for China Studies at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Rev. Chan is also an ordained minister of Christian National Evangelistic Commission.

tension of the Chinese Catholic Church from “disagreement” to “enemy images” in a decade. It is hoped that the results from this preliminary enquiry can provide new orientation for further studies to facilitate the resolution of conflict for the eventual normalization of the Catholic Church in China.

Keywords: Cold War, Conflict Resolution, Conflict de-escalation, Catholic Church in China

[摘要] 本文以「解決衝突」的詮釋角度，重新檢視冷戰時期中國天主教會的緊張局勢，為理解教會衝突提供了另一種角度，以補充傳統上以神學正統觀所作之討論。本文選擇的方法是丹麥衝突解決中心發展的「解決衝突模式」。這個模式提出衝突升級的七個階段：分歧、互相指責、擴大問題、停止對話、視對方為敵人、公開反對和兩極分化。一般衝突會作有機性的升級，但若創造積極因素和消除升級因素，衝突也可以降級。通過考察兩份反映 1950 年代中國天主教會的刊物，本文初步研究發現 1950 年代的冷戰思維主要推動中國天主教會內的緊張局勢，在十年內從「分歧」階段升級為「視對方為敵人」階段。期望這一初步調查結果能夠為日後的研究提供新方向，以「解決衝突」的詮釋角度協助促進教會內之和解，最終實現中國天主教會的正常化。

關鍵詞：冷戰、解決衝突、衝突降溫、中國天主教

1 Introduction

Tensions exist among the various fractions of the Chinese Catholic community at different periods of time. One side interprets the ultimate goal of Communism is to destroy all religion, thus, it is impossible to trust and to work with the Chinese Communist authorities. The other side argues for the viable option for Catholic life in China is to establish an autonomous ecclesial community independent from foreign domination and under the political leadership of the Chinese Communist Party. Such ecclesial tension can be traced back to the Cold War legacy.

Based on the analytical framework of the Danish Conflict Resolution model, this article analyzes the diametrical perceptions of two publications—*China Mission Bulletin/Mission Bulletin* and *Guangyang* magazine—over ecclesial events of the Catholic Church in China during the 1950s. These publications recorded the conflicts between the two opposing fractions of the Chinese Catholic community from 1948 to 1960 during which the ecclesial tension started. It is a preliminary enquiry of the Cold War mentality embraced by the stakeholders in relation to the dynamics of ecclesial conflict of the Chinese Catholic Church. Before conducting the analysis, the Cold War legacy and its impact on China and the Roman Catholic Church will be briefly discussed.

2 The Cold War and its Impacts in the West and Asia

Since the end of the Second World War (1939-1945), the two major ideological victors—USA and USSR—competed for geopolitical influence between Communism and Democracy, in other words, liberation from capitalistic exploitation versus living under capitalistic freedom and liberty. This confrontation began in Soviet liberated Eastern Europe, spread to other parts of the globe, and was later named as the Cold War. Globally the advancement of Communism gained momentum and the USA with her allies, referred themselves as the Free World, fought back. In the later 1940s European countries such as Hungary, Poland and Romania rapidly fell into the Soviet's sphere of influence and communist parties in Greece and Italy were gaining popular support. In Asia, China became a battle ground between the USSR backed Communist Party of China which established several Chinese Soviet enclaves, and the USA backed Chinese Nationalist Party who controlled most part of China under the Republic of China.

During the Pontificate of Pius XII (1939-1958), the Catholic Church aligned itself with the Free World and fought a spiritual war against Atheism/Communism—God's Arch-enemy. In 1949 the Vatican tried to stop the Italian Communist Party from taking over Italy by issuing specific decree mobilizing all Catholics to oppose and boycott any Communist influences or activities;¹ eventually the

1 Pius XII, *Decretum (Decree against Communism)*, July 1, 1949, in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 41 (1949): 334.

Communists failed to take over the government in Italy. As the Catholic Church firmly entrenched in an anti-communist stance, churches situating in the ideological contesting regions, such as in China and Indochina, were heading onto a collision course with the emerging communist forces of which many soon became the new governments.

In the case of China, in 1949, there was an exodus of the Nationalist government and army, merchants, common people and foreign expats, fleeing the Chinese Communists. Many Protestant Christian leaders and missionaries left China as the Nationalists portrayed communists as anti-Christians. However, as early as 1946, when the Apostolic Internuncio to China (1946-1951), Archbishop Antonio Riberi heard about the tragic experiences of the Catholic religious in Chinese Communist held areas, he intended to prepare the Catholic Church in China for a fight against the Chinese Communist Party. He established a centralized command—the Catholic Central Bureau, organized the Legion of Mary, commanded Catholic religious to stay in China to fight against Communism, and ordered all Chinese Catholics to resist or boycott any communist related groups and activities.²

The starting of the Korean War (called in PRC as

2 For details of Catholic experiences in China during the first two decades of the Cold War, see Kim-kwong Chan, *Struggling for Survival: The Catholic Church in China 1949-1970* (Hong Kong: Christian Study Center for Chinese Religion and Culture, 1992), pp. 20-24.

Anti-America Aid Korea War, and in DPRK as Fatherland Liberation War) in 1950 escalated the tension between China and the Western World as China fought the US-led UN forces, and regarded the countries to which these forces belonged as enemy states. The Chinese authority confiscated all assets of US and of many of these “enemy States,” including many Church operated institutions such as schools and hospitals. The authority also expelled most of remaining westerners, of which a significant portion were Catholic missionaries who had chosen to stay, since the authority feared that these people would become a “fifth column” serving the interests of China’s enemies.³

3 Responses of Christian Communities to the Chinese Communist Regime

The responses of Christian communities towards this new Chinese Communist regime varied from one group to another. The Protestants groups were torn between those who would desire to work with the authority by establishing a new platform popularly known as the Three-Self Movement, and those who refused to co-operate responded from passive non-cooperation to active resistance.⁴ The Catholic

3 In 1949 some Catholic missionary priests were arrested and under trials as spies for attempting to assassinate Communist leaders in Beijing. Later many US missionaries in China, mainly the Maryknoll Fathers, were arrested and stood trials as US spies. See Beatrice Leung and William Lau, *The Chinese Catholic Church in Conflict: 1949-2001* (Boca Raton: Universal Publishers, 2004), pp. 64-65.

4 One of the best studies on this period about the Protestant ecclesial responses was by Chee Nan-pin, *The Search for the Identity of the*

community at first basically adopted a confrontational stance⁵ and was gradually divided into two factions by external forces: Chinese authority and the Holy See. One group cooperated with the Communist regime in order to survive in the new socio-political reality contradicting orders from Rome that prohibited any Catholic to cooperate with Communist authority,⁶ whereas the others would follow directives from the Holy See to vigorously oppose this Atheist regime as a spiritual struggle against the Devil even at the cost of martyrdom. This intra-ecclesial tension rapidly escalated from disagreement on the following of Rome's order vis-à-vis the Chinese regime in 1950, to demonize the opponents following the encyclical *Ad Apostorum Principis*⁷ in 1958 threatening to excommunicate those who co-operate with the regime by participating in the illicit

Chinese Christian Church: Ecclesiological Responses of the Chinese Christian Church in 1948-1958 to the Political Changes (Hong Kong: WEC International of Hong Kong, 2016).

- 5 For the theological reflection on the relations between the Chinese authority and the Protestant community during the Cold War, see Kim-kwong Chan, "The Ecclesial Implications of the Political Attitude of the Chinese Authority Towards Christianity," in *Theo-Politics: Conversing with Barth in Western and Asian Contexts*, ed. Markus Hofner (Lanham, MD.: Lexington Books-Fortress Academic, 2021), pp. 89-106.
- 6 He reiterated the *Decree* of the Holy Office, which were meant to instruct the Italian Catholics to resist the increasing popularity of the Italian Communist Party, to the Chinese Catholics, see Pius XII, *Decree against Communism*. See also the *Monitum in Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 42 (1950): 553.
- 7 Pius XII, Encyclical *Ad Apostorum Principis, On Communism and the Church in China*, in *AAS* 50 (1958): 601-614.

episcopal consecrations promoted by the Chinese authority. The intra-ecclesial conflicts escalated rapidly during this decade, paralleling the global geopolitical tension of the Cold War. Since then the Holy See had no official link with the Chinese Hierarchy until the later 1970s when some forms of communication were established and orders, such as the provision for episcopal appointment in special circumstance, were issued and sent to China via Hong Kong.⁸ The Chinese Catholic Church had, in fact, turned against itself by external forces.

4 Continuity of Cold War Mentality

Currently the hostility between the polarized factions of the Chinese Catholic community has still heated arguments and strong sentiments often rooted from this Cold War period. One side interprets the ultimate goal of Communism is to destroy all religion, a Cold War legacy, therefore it is impossible to trust and to work with Chinese Communist authorities; citing Chinese Catholic experiences from the 1950s. Cardinal Joseph Zen Ze-kium of Hong Kong has presented a convincing argument for this position.⁹ Whereas

8 Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples or Propaganda Fide, *Facultates et privilegia fidelibusque in territorio sinarum degentibus concessa his perdurantibus circumstantiis* [The faculties and privileges granted to the faithful living in the territory of China during these circumstances], Prot. N. 3242/78 (Hong Kong: Catholic Central Office, 1979).

9 See one of his recent interview articles, CNA Staff, “Zen Challenges Parolin over China Deal Claims,” *Catholic News Agency*, 7th October 2020, <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/46131/zen->

Catholics of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association argued for the viable option for Catholic life in China is to establish an autonomous ecclesial community independent from foreign domination yet under the political leadership of the Chinese Communist Party as an authentic expression of indigenization or sinicisation, of Catholicism in the People's Republic of China.¹⁰

The Holy See and the Chinese authority had reached a provisional agreement in 2018 for episcopal consecration after years of secret negotiations. This form of negotiation based agreement is known in international community, or diplomatic circle, as the Traditional Approach which emphasizes precise legal terminology drafted by experts and enforced by authorities from signatory parties.¹¹ As for the applicability, sustainability and the long term communal impact of such agreement, they often lie in an extra-judicial area where the good will of both parties is equally important as the legal responsibility of both sides stated in the agreement.

Although this Agreement resulted in the hitherto full challenges-parolin-over-china-deal-claims [accessed 21st August 2021].

10 For example, see the official statement from the Chinese Bishop's Conference/Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association "Push Ahead the Five Year Plan of Firmly Upholding the Sinicisation Program of the Catholic Church in China," 18th February, 2018, at the Catholic Church in China official website, <http://www.chinacatholic.cn/html/report/18100224-1.htm> [accessed 21st August 2021].

11 Deborah F. Shmueli, "Approach to Conflict Resolution," in *Conflict Resolution*, vol. II, ed. Keith W. Hipel (UN: UNESCO, 2009), pp. 1-17.

communion between all Catholic bishops in China with the Bishop of Rome, it has not significantly de-escalated the intense inter-ecclesial conflict existing in the Chinese Catholic community as the rhetoric and sentiment of arguments from both sides are still basically framed in the mentality of the Cold War.¹² The extension of the Provisional Agreement in 2020 provides both sides for a breathing space to focus on the issue of episcopal appointment, as the implementation of the Agreement had been slowed down due to the pandemic of COVID-19. Perhaps it would be beneficial to examine this conflict from a framework of reference which is different from the Traditional Approach for fresh insights. It is hoped that such attempt can yield new insights contributing towards the resolution of this protracted ecclesial conflict.

5 Conflict Resolution Model and its Application

5.1 Conflict Resolution Model

A kind of study on the Conflict Resolution emerged since the 1950s to analyse and to seek ways to deal with the various human conflicts ranging from regional dispute, civil war, communal strife, organizational dynamics, human

¹² Kim-kwong Chan (Translated from English into Italian by A. Giovagnoli), “La soluzione del conflitto tra le comunità cattoliche ‘aperte’ e ‘sottrattanee’ in Cina,” [Conflict Resolution Analysis on the Tension between the Open and the Underground Catholic Communities in China] in *L’Accordo tra Santa Sede e Cina*, ed. Agostino Giovagnoli and Elisa Giunipero (Rome: Urbaniana University Press, 2019), pp. 211-224.

relations, to one's inner psychic tension. There are many models and practical guidelines already developed, and proven effective, to both analyse a conflict situation and to reconcile the differences between competing factions usually incorporating extra-legal factors such as emotions, desires, and group dynamics, and are commonly known as Alternative Dispute Resolution Methods.¹³

This article suggests to re-examine the ecclesial tension of the Chinese Catholic community developed during the Cold War through the interpretative lens of Conflict Resolution, supplementing traditional theological and the Canonical perspectives, for an understanding of this ecclesial conflict. The method which this article chooses is the Conflict Resolution Model developed by the Danish Centre for Conflict Resolution¹⁴ for it is simple, practical, proven in field work. The following will attempt to interpret this ecclesial conflict from this Danish model.

5.2 Publications to be examined

China Mission Bulletin/Mission Bulletin (CMB)

There are two sets of documents, recently available for on-line access from the Library of the Holy Spirit Seminary College,¹⁵ which record the conflict between the

13 Shmueli, "Approach to Conflict Resolution," p. 2.

14 B. Vestergaard, E. Helvard and A. Sorensen, *Conflict Resolution-Working with Conflicts* (Frederikberg: The Danish Center for Conflict Resolution, 2011). Hereafter refers to as the "Danish Model".

15 *China Mission Bulletin* (1949-53) /*Mission Bulletin* (1953-59) (CMB)

two opposing factions of the Chinese Catholic community from 1948 to 1960 during which the ecclesial tension started. The *China Mission Bulletin* (1949-53) / *Mission Bulletin* (1953-59) (*CMB*) was published under the Catholic Central Bureau by the Catholic missionaries and mission Orders in China and later by a committee of Catholic missionaries from different Orders and Congregations after it was relocated from China to Hong Kong.

In the beginning, it published the official directives of the Holy See, articles reflecting opinions and attitudes among missionaries on China and the Chinese Catholic Church, translations of news from the Chinese media, and news of the Catholic situation in different parts of China. It was a magazine originally intended for those missionaries in China, missionaries expelled from and concerned about China, and those currently working among the Chinese population. It provided a glimpse of China (generally referred to as Red China) and the Catholic communities in China during the 1950s as the Bamboo Curtain was rapidly drawn by the Chinese authority. As the news on the ecclesial situation from China decreased with almost all missionaries were expelled and mission emphasis shifted toward other Asian countries and populations, this magazine extended coverage beyond the China field into mission activities among Chinese Catholics in the Diaspora such as in Hong Kong, Taiwan and in other parts in Asia, and gradually included mission

in <http://archive.hsscol.org.hk/CMB/>; *Guangyang Magazine* in <http://archive.hsscol.org.hk/GuangYang/>.

activities in Asia in general with news on China along with many other Asian nations. Such changes in content reflected the changing dynamic of Catholic missions in Asia.

The contributors on articles relating to China were almost all foreign missionaries who once served in China bearing negative experience with the Chinese authorities as many were maltreated by Chinese officials, and all were expelled from China. They generally harbored hostility toward the newly established Chinese Communist regime as they regarded as illegitimate, resented the rapid social development of China under Communist ruling, and were rather unsympathetic to those Chinese Catholics who expressed their nationalistic affinity towards the new regime as apostasy. Understandably *CMB* held onto a strong anti-Communist stance as a religious-political correct position of the Catholics during the Cold War, and interpreted ecclesial events in China from this particular frame of reference as a battle between the Good and Evil.

Guangyang Magazine

Guangyang 廣揚 started as a monthly, later bi-monthly, magazine published in 1950 by the Tianjin Catholic Reform Committee which later evolved into the Tianjin Catholic Patriotic Association. It reported on the rapid transformation of both the Chinese sociopolitical landscape and most importantly the experience of the Catholic Church within this changing context not only those events taken place in Tianjin Diocese but also Catholic events nationwide. The

writers were Chinese Catholic laity, religious, clergy, and government officials, some under pseudonym, who were justifying the sociopolitical changes in China, advocating the co-operation with the civil authority as a civic duty of the Catholic Church, de-foreignization of the Chinese Catholic Church: such as the expulsion of foreign missionaries as a patriotic duty, rejection of ecclesial authority from foreign ordinaries, establishment of autonomous ecclesial authority, and the subjection under the political leadership of the civil authorities. It held a pro-Soviet Cold War stance denouncing the Western Free World.¹⁶ It justified the ecclesial transformation of the Chinese Catholic Church as a sociopolitical necessity for the Catholic community to live in this new socialist reality in the context of the Cold War when China regarded the western countries—where most of the missionaries originated from—as enemies.

Through the analytical framework of the Danish Conflict Resolution model, this article analyses the diametrical perceptions of these two publications over ecclesial events of the Catholic Church in China during the 1950s. It is a preliminary enquiry of the Cold War mentality embraced by the stakeholders in relation to the dynamics of ecclesial conflict of the Chinese Catholic Church. As with these two sets of hitherto hard to find publications of the Cold War era are now fully available, this article can undertake such historical enquiry. It is hoped that the results

¹⁶ China did not openly break with USSR until 1961. Therefore, the whole country took a pro-USSR stance till the end of 1960.

from this preliminary enquiry can provide new orientation for further studies to facilitate the resolution of conflict for the eventual normalization of the Catholic Church in China.

5.3 Application of the Danish Conflict Resolution Model in China

The Danish Model suggests that conflict has an organic way of growth in seven stages of escalation:¹⁷ *Disagreement, Personification, Problem Expands, Dialogue Stops, Enemy Images, Open Hostility, and Polarization*. Conflict can also de-escalate in the opposite direction depending on the availability of positive factors and the removal of escalating factors. In fact Conflict is dynamic and can escalate or de-escalate depending on the stakeholder's attitude and relations.

The first stage of tension is the *Disagreement* between both sides. This is a neutral stance without conflict between both parties as both side still focus on the issue and both are trying to deal with the issues without tempering the relation. Both sides have different ideas to deal with the same situation. For example Allies and the Soviet Union forces both had the same goal for Nazi-free Europe after the defeat of Germany. However both had different ideas to deal with it—sovietised or democratized the occupied areas.

Since both sides could not agree on the political future of Europe and they entered into a struggle to gain political

¹⁷ Vestergaard et al., *Conflict Resolution-Working with Conflicts*, p. 6.

domination for the newly liberated zones in Europe and later spreading to all parts of the world with China also included. So both sides crossed from *Disagreement* stage to stage of *Personification*, namely: “it is your fault, not mine.” Once this line is crossed, the two parties are entering into the conflict zone as often one party would blame the other and the other would follow suit resulting to pointing fingers from both sides towards each other. The Allies would blame the USSR of backing the local communists in capturing the political control in Eastern Europe and later in Korea and China, while the opposing camp would blame USA and its allies of sabotaging regimes that had popular supports. This *Personification* in conflict, us the good against them the evil, had already set the stage for the Cold War since the late 1940s.

At that time, there was no diplomatic relationship between the People’s Republic of China and the Vatican as the Vatican has hitherto recognized the Republic of China as the legitimate government of China. Therefore there was no direct communication between the Vatican and China during the Cold War. Whatever instructions from the Holy See was directly communicated to the Chinese Catholic Church first via the Inter-nuncio before Riberi was expelled in 1951, and later via various private channels such as foreign prelates not in China or to Chinese ordinaries with some already incarcerated; it caused tremendous amount of confusion. Technically both the Vatican and PRC had not agreed on anything as both sides had no direct channel of

communication due to mutual non recognition. Furthermore both sides had already blamed each other as the Vatican condemned Communism, and the new Chinese authority denounced all Capitalistic Reactionary forces including the Vatican. They were already on the *Personification* stage of the conflict from focusing on the issue to stressing on the relation. They escalate the conflict by fighting a proxy war over the Chinese Catholic community and the Catholic Church in China was divided against itself by others.

In the beginning of 1950 when the PRC was just established and the Nationalist Government had left for Taiwan, the Catholic Church was bracing for the advancement of Communism in Europe and in China, missionary circles were both apprehensive and ambitious towards the new Chinese Communist regime. A cursory reading of the *CMB* January 1950 issue included the desire of the Pope urging all missionaries in China to remain at their post,¹⁸ rethink of mission strategy in China modelling the outreach tactic of the Chinese Communist,¹⁹ Catholic Orphanage evicted by authority,²⁰ along with news on PLA soldiers were well disciplined with gratitude towards the Catholics, Bishop and Sisters who provided them with medical care.²¹ The editor of *CMB* also commented on a letter from a Chinese Catholic who disagreed with the

18 "The Catholic World Looks at China," *CMB* 2 (January 1950): 67.

19 Patrick Joy, "The Church in China-What Next?" *CMB* 2 (January 1950): 19.

20 Mission Chronicles, *CMB* 2 (January 1950): 97.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 101.

Church decision to excommunicate Communist and their sympathizers as politics mixed into religion as a piece of communist propaganda.²² Overall the general tone of the missionaries was apprehensive towards the future of the Chinese Catholic Church under the newly established Chinese Communist regime along with certain optimism on the collapse of this new regime in near future as the speculation of Third World War was looming over the horizon. Meanwhile, there was also a clear stance of anti-Communism; therefore the Church—the bearer of the Truth—would have no negotiation with Communist authority that it regarded as evil force, and praised those missionaries and Chinese Catholics who did not co-operated with and suffered under the new regime.²³ Furthermore, the *CMB* clearly rejected any attempt to develop an independent Church movement which was just initiated among Christian circles in China as part of the national Anti-American Aid-Korea Campaign.²⁴

Although the Vatican and the new Chinese Regime were already pointing finger towards each other at the *Personification* Stage, there was a brief window of opportunity as frictions within the Chinese Catholic community were still at the Stage of *Disagreement* over the issue of ecclesial autonomy. In 1950, Premier Zhou Enlai

22 Ibid., p. 55.

23 For example, see Albert Palmer, “Are Catholics Surrendering to Communism in China?” in *CBM* 3 (November 1951): 743-745.

24 Editorial, “The ‘Independent’ Church Movement,” *CMB* 3 (March 1951): 197-201.

had met with some Catholic leaders and some contemplated the idea of ecclesial autonomy. The first Catholic declaration of such was initiated by Father Wang Liangzuo 王良佐 (or Wang Guanyuan 王廣元) in Sichuan. In late 1950, two Vicars General of the Tientsin (Tianjin) Diocese suggested such an idea to Bishop Jean de Vienne de Hautefeuille of Tientsin and he vehemently rejected such idea. At this point both sides tried to deal with the tension drawn between the Chinese Government and the Holy See over the Catholic Church in China, and they disagreed on the method. The Bishop denounced these Chinese priests and these two Vicars General who regarded their superior as a condescending racist and an imperialistic aggressor of China. The conflict escalated from *Disagreement* to *Personification* as the focus was no longer over the issue of seeking of a solution but into the negative labelling towards each other which deteriorated the relationship and obstructed future dialogue.²⁵ Bishop Jean de Vienne de Hautefeuille was soon expelled, and some Chinese Catholics at Tientsin organized one of the first Catholic Reform Committees—later evolved into the Catholic Patriotic Association—as the competing Catholic authority against those Catholics loyal to Rome.

The tension escalated in this Stage of *Personification* as one side shifted the attention from issue to relation, and the focus was on the fault of the opposing party. Negative emotions such as anger, confusion, fear, etc. would easily interfere the communication focusing further away from the

²⁵ *Guangyang* 1 (23 January 1951), whole issue.

issue. The blamed side would also retaliate by finding fault in the other party. Both sides began to doubt the intention of the other. The original issue was soon overshadowed by mutual blaming. Hostility, self-righteousness and victimization became the main obstacle to prevent effective communication.

Conflict escalated as both sides entered the ***Problem Expands*** phase which embraced a view that it is always troublesome to deal with the opponent as the opposition party had always held an antagonistic position with no intention to compromise. The key word is *ALWAYS* to suggest that the opponent had no intention to resolve the conflict. Therefore any negotiation would fall into the tactical trick of the opponent who had no good faith in any dialogue. The general stance of the Catholic Church on Communism during the 1950s fell into this mind-set as reflected from Paul Destombe's 1953 article in *CBM* suggestion the futility to dialogue with a false ideology,²⁶ and those Catholics who were loyal to the Holy See's order, such as Bishop Ignatius Kung of Shanghai, refused to dialogue with the authority. Meanwhile, the Progressive Chinese Catholics regarded the Catholic Church in the West as always serving the imperialist undermining China via their agents hiding in the Chinese Church yet serving as spies for the interest of the Western powers.²⁷ This interpretation justified the Chinese

26 Paul Destombe, "La Conversion des Communistes est-elle possible?" *CMB* 5, no. 2 (February 1953): 110-114.

27 A typical example would be Stephen He Chun-ming (Apostolic Administer and later Metropolitan Archbishop of Kaifeng Diocese),

Government's purging campaigns in the Chinese Catholic community such as the dissolution of the Legion of Mary, and the massive arrest of the clergy in Shanghai who refused to cooperate with the authorities.

The next stage of conflict escalation is *Dialogue Stop*, and rumour continued. Once formal communication stops, both parties rely on informal channels which are often distorted, partial and with ambiguous contents providing fertile ground for even more distorted interpretations. Selective listening is prevalent and misinterpretations are common. At this stage, both sides may feel that any communication is futile and both may predominately interject negative meaning from any message conveyed; gossips, conjectures and rumours are the main source of information. There is little trust existing and few chance for clarification. The relation would further deteriorate.

This conflict escalation at the *Dialogue Stop* Stage can be seen from the example of "independent" or "illicit" consecration of Chinese Bishops in 1958 when two dioceses in China asked Pope Pius XII to grant permission of the two candidates to fill the episcopal vacancies. The issue was a canonical one and Rome might not have sufficient information to evaluate the candidates as well as on the socio-political reality in China due to the broken of relation between China and the Vatican. Unfortunately, not only

"Firmly Support of the Government's Prudent Policy, to Struggle and to Crush the Activities undertaken by Imperialist through the Catholic Church," *Guangyang* 47 (22 July 1953): 1-2.

was there no dialogue for both sides to clarify the issue, but also there were projections of malicious intends of Cold War animosity from both sides, intensified by gossips and rumours. A common belief in the Catholic circle is that the Chinese authority had a plot to domesticate the Chinese Catholic Church by deliberately arresting and jailing the pro-Roman Bishops, such as Ignatius Kung Pin-Mei 龔品梅 of Shanghai, or Dominic Tang Yee-ming (Deng Yiming) 鄧以明 of Canton, and coerced the local Diocese to elect a new one, one that the authority felt comfortable to deal with, and to consecrate them to replace the incarcerated, or expelled ones.²⁸ So the Holy See would interpret the request of consecration as a Communist plot to challenge the Holy See, to weaken the Catholic stance on ecclesial unity, and to eventually establish a schismatic Chinese Church independent from Rome. Soon the Holy See replied by citing a decree threatening to excommunicate those involved. Chinese Catholics went ahead with the Consecrations,²⁹ and Pope Pius XII issued the Encyclical *Ad Apostolorum Principis*³⁰ to those who were still in communion with the Holy See implying that some had been cut off from the ecclesiastical communion, and the Chinese Catholics replied with verbal protest against the Roman Curia.³¹ Both sides effectively terminated any means of direct communication

28 Mission Chronicle: China, *CMB* 10, no. 5 (May 1958): 501-501.

29 See the whole issue of *Guangyang* 162, no. 9 (1 May 1958).

30 Pius XII, Encyclical *Ad Apostolic principis*, in *Acta Apostolica Sedis* 50 (1958): 601-614.

31 *Guangyang* 162, no. 9 (1 May 1958) and 163, no. 10 (16 May 1958).

and escalated the conflict from *Dialogue Stop* to *Enemy Image*.

This stage *Enemy Image* demonizes the opposition party to be responsible for all the faults. One's perspective may become entrenched and restricted that it sees no positive value from the opponent; instead, one sees all the evil things of the opponent. This demonized process subtly transforms the opposition party not as human beings but as the evil incarnated and the source of all sins. Further, it dehumanizes the other so that one can treat others as non-human that justifies even physical violence without causing uneasy consciousness. Since the Independent Consecrations in 1958, the Catholic Church regarded Communist China as an enemy, like Satan, who tried to create a "schismatic" Chinese Church, the Church must fight against it,³² the Free World would work together for the collapse of Communism.³³ Therefore, there was no need to deal with those apostasies subjected under Satanic power as they were *ipso facto* ex-communicated, and the harsh persecution against the

32 Editorial, "A New Anti-Religious Battle," *CMB* 10, no. 7 (September 1958): 645-646. The term *Schism* is mentioned, probably the first time, in *CMB*. Pius XII in Consistory on the 15th December 1958 used this term on the Church in China.

33 Joseph Meiners, "Catholic Missionary Efforts in Asia," *CMB* 12, no. 10 (December 1960): 1042. He confidently predicted the collapse of Chinese Communist regime and suggested the preparation for massive influx of believers once this happened. He carried a tone of urgency which suggested his expectation of an imminent occurrence of such event.

faithful³⁴ would be ended one day to welcome the glorious resurrection of the True Church in China.

On the opponent side, the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association—established in 1957 representing the Progressive Chinese Catholics—kept in line with the Chinese Government’s stance of opposing American Imperialism and demonized the Vatican as a lackey of the American camp, as well as a tool of aggression on behalf of the American imperialistic invasion. It supported the Chinese Government’s trial of the prominent Catholic leaders, such as Bishop Ignatius Kung as counter-revolutionary traitor and American Bishop James Edward Walsh as spy, a necessary purification of evil and poison from the Chinese Catholic Church. Bishop Walsh was arrested in 1958 and sentenced to 20 years, and was jailed for 10 years in China. It went as far as proclaiming the Roman Curia and American imperialism as the die-hard enemy of the Chinese people—an interpretation that places the Vatican on the top list of enemies of China³⁵ rendering any dialogue or communication a non-option. From this point onward, the Chinese Catholic

34 Persecution against Chinese Catholics by the Communist authorities were published in almost every issue under different sections during these twelve years of publication, for example, see Editorial, “Religious Persecution in China,” *CBM* 11, no. 9 (November 1959): 871-873.

35 On the 30th March 1960, *Guangyang* issued a special edition dedicating to denounce those “anti-revolutionary and traitors” within the Church, as well as to have an appendix of 10 articles to “expose” the political and reactionary nature of the Vatican in colluding with American Imperialistic forces undermining the Progressive (Communist) forces in the world. See Special Edition (30th March 1960).

Patriotic Association kept on assaulting the Vatican in words; a typical article would be “Roman Curia is an accomplice of the colonialist aggressors, and a vanguard of imperialistic cultural invaders.”³⁶ Meanwhile, the Catholic Church outside of the Bamboo Curtain just waited and prepared for the imminent collapse of the Chinese Communist regime,³⁷ and any further dealing with the opponent would be useless and futile.

The conflicts of the Chinese Catholic community had not escalated since then as both sides did not enter the *Open Hostility* stage in which the conflict opens for opportunities for physical and psychological violence, and “the end justifies the means” overtakes reason. It would also show hostility to those who may express sympathy toward the opponents. Gradually the hostility will increase in intensity and frequency, and widening to include those associated with the opponents leading to the final stage of *Polarization* as both sides feel that it is impossible to co-exist with each other. All dialogue stops and all channels cease. The relation becomes a negative one and conflicts transform to warfare.

Since the 1980s to 2018, the Vatican and the Chinese authorities had actively engaged into negotiations resulting into the historical *Provisional Agreement* on episcopal nominations and Papal authority over the Chinese Catholic

36 Cao Daosheng, “Roman Curia is the accomplice of the colonialist aggressor, and a vanguard of imperialistic cultural invader,” in *Guangyang* 195, no. 6 (25th June 1960): 22-27.

37 Meiners, “Catholic Missionary Efforts in Asia,” p.1042.

Church. This Agreement only focuses on a couple of issues and both sides had dealt with it with a solution under trial. They have changed from the *Enemy Image* stage 1960 to *Disagreement* Stage and successfully came up with a partial agreement on particular issues. Perhaps to the disappointment of many, this Provisional Agreement had not addressed many other pressing issues, such as the civil status of Underground Bishops, Diocesan Boundaries, or the ecclesial status, if any, of the Patriotic Association. However, one can see that even the reaching of an agreement on a couple of issues from the *Disagreement* stance had been a herculean effort. There are many forces within both camps that may escalate the conflict towards further tension to prevent further dialogue and discussion, for example, the compelling argument from Archbishop Savio Hon Tai-fai which interpreted the Chinese authorities' ultimate objective is to destroy the Church may rapidly escalate the current conflict into the *Enemy Image* Stage seen during the Cold War mentioned above.³⁸ There may be forces within the Chinese Government that view this Agreement as the giving up of sovereignty to a foreign power, and want to reverse such stance of surrender vis-à-vis the rising Chinese nationalistic sentiment. Conversely there can be forces to deescalate the tension for both the space of the trial under the current Agreement and for laying

38 Catholic News Service, "Chinese Archbishop: Three Stages to 'Drama' involving church, Communist," *National Catholic Reporter* (18th August 2021), in <https://www.ncronline.org/news/vatican/chinese-archbishop-three-stages-drama-involving-church-communists> [accessed 22nd August 2021].

foundations to negotiation on other issues under contest.

6 Conclusions

Based on the Danish Conflict Resolution Model, and the availability of two sets of original ecclesial documents with diametrical positions, this preliminary study suggests that the Cold War mentality in the 1950s facilitates the escalation of the ecclesial tension of the Chinese Catholic Church from *Disagreement* to *Enemy Images* in a decade. It is hoped that this preliminary enquiry can provide a platform to examine the conflict of the Chinese Catholic Church during the Cold War, and possible insights to not only to avoid further escalation, but also to find elements for de-escalation, of current ecclesial conflict of the Chinese Catholic Church in the Post-Cold War geopolitical reality. After all, the Vatican II spirit of dialogue with other religions and ideologies should prevail over the former ecclesial position of confrontation and triumphalism vis-à-vis other non-Catholic entities.