



# Patterns in the Dust

*Nancy Bernkopf Tucker*

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## **Patterns in the Dust** Nancy Bernkopf Tucker

Chiang Kai-shek's Chinese Nationalist government collapsed in 1949 despite United States support for the regime during the anti-Communist civil war. American policymakers were then forced to choose between rescuing the Nationalists or coming to terms with China's Communist government.

The Truman Administration, caught up in the calculations of cold war diplomacy, refused to make a rash decision. Secretary of State Dean Acheson likened the Nationalist collapse to a tree falling in the forest--the United States would have to wait for the dust settled before it could see ahead clearly.

*Patterns in the Dust* is a fresh look at a period overwhelmed by later events. Drawing on many previously unavailable sources, Nancy Bernkopf Tucker assesses the factors that influenced Washington policymakers during the critical few months in which the thirty-year estrangement between the two countries began. She examines the government's assessment of the chances for accommodation with the Chinese Communists, the careful efforts to ascertain American public opinion, and the effects of the Korean War which brought reasoned dialogue to an abrupt end.

*Patterns in the Dust* highlights the flexibility that Dean Acheson retained in American policy toward China. Acheson emerges as a highly pragmatic man determined to preserve contacts with China simply because, as events have proved, that was the realistic way to conduct international relations.

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