COPYRIGHT NOTICE:

Lorenz M. Lüthi: The Sino-Soviet Split

is published by Princeton University Press and copyrighted, © 2008, by Princeton University Press. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form by any electronic or mechanical means (including photocopying, recording, or information storage and retrieval) without permission in writing from the publisher, except for reading and browsing via the World Wide Web. Users are not permitted to mount this file on any network servers.

Follow links for Class Use and other Permissions. For more information send email to: permissions@pupress.princeton.edu

Introduction

Before Oleg Troyanovskii left his position as the last Soviet ambassador to the People's Republic of China, he met Wu Xiuquan for a chat about old times. The former vice-head of the Central Committee Liaison Department of the Chinese Communist Party remarked to the past adviser of Nikita Khrushchev: "When you now read the messages that our countries exchanged at a time not too long ago, you don't know whether to laugh or cry."[1] The pettiness and hyperbole of the Sino-Soviet polemics and their impact on the foreign and domestic policies of both countries, from the Great Leap Forward to the war scare of 1969, forces any contemporary observer to pause in incredulity. The Sino-Soviet Split was one of the key events of the Cold War, equal in importance to the construction of the Berlin Wall, the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Second Vietnam War, and Sino-American Rapprochement. The split helped to determine the framework of the second half of the Cold War in general, and influenced the course of the Second Vietnam War in particular. Like a nasty divorce, it left bad memories and produced myths of innocence on both sides.

Until very recently, much of the source material that could shed light on the dynamics of the Sino-Soviet Split was stashed away in inaccessible archives. While the literature on the topic is vast, much of it was written during the Cold War on the basis of selective published sources or tends to be speculative and theoretical. Since its slow opening in the early 1980s, China has produced a wealth of published primary and secondary sources and, recently, even made some archives accessible to foreign researchers. The collapse of the Soviet Union and communist East Europe threw open the doors of countless party and governmental archives.

The newly available documents point to the vital role of ideology in the Sino-Soviet Split. Both the Chinese Communists and the Soviets were true Marxist-Leninist believers. Discord between Beijing and Moscow arose over the method of establishing a socialist society domestically and over the direction of the joint policy of the socialist camp toward the capitalist world. Furthermore, while ideology was central, it increasingly became entangled in internal politics. Leadership conflicts led Mao

[1] Oleg Troyanovskii, *Cherez gody i rasstoyaniya* (Moskva: Vagrius, 1997), 348.

Zedong to exploit the worsening of Sino-Soviet relations for his goals abroad and at home.

The first point of ideological disagreement emerged in 1955 over the Stalinist socioeconomic development model. Facing a structural economic crisis, Mao replaced the development model that the People's Republic of China (PRC) had inherited from the late Iosif Stalin with a development strategy resembling earlier Soviet policies that had already been discredited in the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics (USSR). Despite its failure, Mao returned to their basic ideas in the Great Leap Forward of 1958–60, only to reap disaster.

De-Stalinization in the Soviet Union provided the second moment of ideological conflict. While Khrushchev's Secret Speech in February 1956 was rooted mainly in domestic necessities, it reverberated throughout the socialist world. As a result, over the course of 1956 and 1957, Mao and Khrushchev took up opposite positions on Stalin as a theoretician and practitioner.

Third, Sino-Soviet ideological disputes arose over the correct method of dealing with imperialism. Launched in early 1956 as well, Khrushchev's policy of peaceful coexistence with the United States did not cause immediate conflict with the Chinese Communists because they were preoccupied with de-Stalinization. From late 1957, however, tensions over this policy grew, and, by the mid-1960s, dominated Sino-Soviet relations.

Most other points of Sino-Soviet conflict were either the result of these ideological disagreements or of lesser importance. Security disputes—such as the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis in 1958—and economic disagreements—in particular trade and the sudden withdrawal of the Soviet specialists from China in 1960—arose as the consequence of ideological arguments. Similarly, territorial disputes that predated the Sino-Soviet alliance did not threaten the relationship until the two countries had developed their ideological disagreements. Finally, personality clashes contributed to but did not cause the existing ideological problems.

In the end, the new documents suggest that the Chinese side was far more active in pursuing ideological conflict. The PRC established itself through the alliance, in both positive and negative terms. Although China had sought the alliance in 1949 and 1950, Mao eventually pushed for its collapse after 1959, when he decided that it had run the full course of what he considered its usefulness to the country. Moreover, the Chinese leader increasingly linked Sino-Soviet disagreements with his internal disputes. In 1962, the struggle against domestic ideological revisionism merged with his battle against its counterpart in the policy of the socialist camp toward imperialism.

Previous Lines of Explanation

Before the end of the Cold War and the gradually increasing accessibility of new archival and documentary evidence, scholars offered four main explanations for the Sino-Soviet Split. First, some have argued that the split resulted from conflicts of national interest.[2] As early as 1952, one observer predicted the Sino-Soviet Split in light of the aspiration of Stalin's totalitarian regime to control its allies; inevitably, according to this line of thinking, this would violate their national interests.[3] Other authors identified nationalist conflicts, such as claims of fear of foreign domination or claims of cultural superiority, as a cause for the split.[4]

Second, the concept of the strategic triangle appealed to many observers, especially with the Sino-American Rapprochement since 1969. This theory posited that the United States, the Soviet Union, and China formed a triangular great power relationship; within this unique setup, the two weaker countries allied to balance against the strongest. Proponents of the strategic triangle tried to explain the Sino-Soviet Split as the result of relative changes in the military and political power of the three countries—changes that gradually questioned the rationale for the Sino-Soviet alliance and eventually triggered its collapse.[5]

Third, a small body of literature attempted to locate the source of the Sino-Soviet Split in domestic politics. Scholars have argued that unrelated Chinese domestic leadership conflicts had a negative impact on the Sino-Soviet alliance,[6] that Mao's anti-Soviet policies led him to undermine "the positions of all those [fellow] leaders who did not fully support

[2] Richard Lowenthal, "National Interests and the Orthodox Faith," Clement Zablocki, ed., *Sino-Soviet Rivalry* (New York: Praeger, 1966), 27–32. Richard Lowenthal, "The Degeneration of an Ideological Dispute," Douglas Stuart et al., eds., *China, the Soviet Union, and the West* (Boulder: Westview, 1982), 59–71.

[3] John Tashjean, "The Sino-Soviet Split," *China Quarterly* 94, 342–61.

[4] Klaus Mehnert, for example, made this argument, though not exclusively, in: *Peking and Moscow* (New York: Putnam, 1963).

[5] Donald Zagoria, "A Strange Triangle," Zablocki, *Sino-Soviet Rivalry*, 43–52. Michel Tatu, *The Great Power Triangle* (Paris: Atlantic Institute, 1970). Robert Scalapino, "The American-Soviet-Chinese Triangle," William Kintner et al., eds., *SALT* (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh, 1973), 141–66. Harry Schwartz, "The Moscow-Peking-Washington Triangle," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* 414, 41–54. William Griffith, "The World and the Great-Power Triangles," Griffith, ed., *The World and the Great-Power Triangles* (Cambridge: MIT, 1975), 1–33. Banning Garrett, "China Policy and the Strategic Triangle," Kenneth Oye et al., eds., *Eagle Entangled* (New York: Longman, 1979), 228–63.

[6] Richard Thornton, *The Bear and the Dragon* (New York: American Asian Educational Exchange, 1971).

his tough stance toward the USSR,"[7] or that the Chinese leadership attempted to use anti-Soviet policies to divert attention from internal legitimacy problems.[8] Others have focused on Soviet domestic politics by identifying factional infighting after Stalin's death as a source for the Sino-Soviet Split.[9]

Fourth, the role of ideology in the Sino-Soviet estrangement attracted scholarly attention as soon as public disputes started in 1960. In a seminal study published the following year, Donald Zagoria offered a multicausal interpretation that combined ideological with other causes (historical, personal, contextual, economic, and political).[10] Subsequent early authors saw the split as purely ideological,[11] or as the result of a mix of ideological and national interest factors.[12] Another interpretation promoted the idea that the split was not principally about ideology but merely articulated in ideological rhetoric.[13] Since the early 1980s, the "China under threat" interpretation garnered much academic interest; it promoted the idea that security concerns arising over an ideologically influenced threat perception shaped Chinese foreign policy behavior.[14] In a more general debate, early observers of the collapse of socialist unity after Khrushchev's Secret Speech argued that the intrinsic nature of Marxism-Leninism tended, over time, to create friction among its adherents. According to this argument, the absolute assertions of Marxism-Leninism (in the form of a dogma) and its promotion of hierarchical political structures (one leading communist party worldwide and one vanguard communist party within each country) made it liable both to degenerate into factional battles over the correct interpretation of Marxism-Leninism and, in the process, to increase competing claims to sole leadership of the international communist movement.[15]

The examination of the newly available evidence allows us to reconsider these arguments. Conventional wisdom defines national interest in terms

[7] Kenneth Lieberthal, "The Background in Chinese Politics," Herbert Ellison, *The Sino-Soviet Conflict* (Seattle: Washington, 1982), 3–28.

[8] Jürgen Domes, "Domestic Sources of PRC Policy," Stuart, *China*, 39–58.

[9] Vernon Aspaturian, "The Domestic Sources of Soviet Policy Toward China," Stuart, *China*, 59–72.

[10] Donald Zagoria, *The Sino-Soviet Conflict, 1956–1961* (Princeton: Princeton, 1962).

[11] Jean Baby, *La Grande Controverse Sino-Soviétique (1956–1966)* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1966).

[12] François Fejtö, *Chine-USSR: De l'alliance au conflit, 1950–1972* (Paris: Seuil, 1973).

[13] Franz Michael, "Common Purpose and Double Strategy," Zablocki, *Sino-Soviet Rivalry*, 15–16.

[14] Melvin Gurtov et al., *China under Threat* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1980).

[15] Richard Lowenthal, *World Communism* (New York: Oxford, 1964). Hans Morgenthau, *A New Foreign Policy for the United States* (New York: Praeger, 1969), 32–42.

of securing the physical survival of the country and developing its economic potential. There is no evidence that a clash of national interest emerged because one of the two partners entered the alliance with the intention of undermining the military or economic security of, or even of obtaining control over, the other. The major lines of Sino-Soviet conflict emerged over unrelated issues at a time, in 1955–57, when clashes of national interest, such as conflicts over unresolved territorial disputes, were irrelevant. Sino-Soviet debates over the correct handling of imperialism are the closest to a national interest interpretation, but they occurred only after ideological conflict had already emerged.

In any case, the discussion of the national interest interpretation must focus on China, since it was more active in pursuing the split. Starting in 1958, it was Mao who vigorously implemented policies that destabilized the alliance and eventually led to the country's self-imposed isolation from the world and its economic impoverishment by 1969. On the one hand, proponents of a national interest approach might object that this could have been the unexpected result of sensible, but ultimately unsuccessful, policies. However, belligerent self-isolation from the world and the insistence on ideological correctness rather than the pursuit of friendly external relations and economic prosperity were *conscious* policy choices by Mao. Barbara Tuchman called such a pursuit of policy contrary to the country's interest a "folly."[16] On the other hand, adherents of the national interest interpretation might argue that Mao misperceived China's national interest, but by doing so they merely acknowledge that national interest is dependent on another variable at the heart of the split. In essence, Mao's pursuit of what he considered to be China's global interests poses a methodological problem for existing academic definitions of national interest. Only if one accepts Mao's extreme conviction that China's national interest was its duty to spread world revolution aggressively or to follow his brilliant policy of withdrawing the PRC from a putrid world into the splendid isolation of a solitary model society, one might agree that Mao acted in the country's national interest.

Nationalism similarly seems not to have been a major contributing factor in the Sino-Soviet Split. Certainly, the Chinese Communists had been nationalists even before they became communists in the early 1920s, and Mao appealed to Chinese national feelings when he claimed that the PRC was the center of world revolution in the 1960s. These, however, were subsidiary aspects rather than central factors in his pursuit of policies that were designed to prove the ideological correctness of Chinese Communist—that is, his own—positions in the leadership conflict at home and in the struggle against Soviet ideological revisionism.

[16] Barbara Tuchman, *The March of Folly* (New York: Knopf, 1984).

Explanations that rely on the relative changes in the strategic triangle between the PRC, the USSR, and the United States also seem unsuccessful in explaining the Sino-Soviet Split. The vast majority of the literature focuses on the period after the late 1960s and thus is outside the scope of this book.[17] Although some authors have applied it to the post-1949 period,[18] others have suggested that the strategic triangle has limited or even no explanatory power because China was too weak to count as a great power during the years covered in this book.[19] I tend to agree with the critics of the triangular concept, though for different reasons. Despite its descriptive appeal, there is little evidence from the post-1949 period that can support its claims. While it is true that the Sino-Soviet alliance was directed against the United States, and that the Americans tried to drive a wedge into the partnership, no documentary evidence that the Chinese or the Soviets *thought* about their relationship within a triangular framework during the period covered in this book has surfaced. Maoist thinking from the 1940s to the 1960s proceeded from the assumption of a Sino-American conflict over the *intermediate zone*—basically, over the rest of the world.[20] Thus, when Mao's PRC turned away from the Soviet Union in the 1960s, it did not turn toward the United States but toward one of the two intermediate zones he had just redefined, claiming to be the head of, even the model for, the international movement of national liberation in the Asian-African-Latin American intermediate zone (the other intermediate zone, according to this idea, consisted of Europe and other developed countries). Similarly, in 1949, Moscow looked at Beijing as an asset in its world revolutionary enterprise that had fallen into its lap rather fortuitously. In the end, the triangular concept is, methodologically speaking, an ahistorical model that greatly limits the ability to explain the inner dynamics of the split.

[17] Schwartz, "Moscow-Peking-Washington Triangle." Griffith, "The World and the Great-Power Triangles." Garrett, "China Policy and the Strategic Triangle." William Hyland, "The Sino-Soviet Conflict," Richard Solomon, *The China Factor* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1981), 137–158.

[18] Zagoria, "Strange Triangle." Tatu, *Great Power Triangle*. Scalapino, "American-Soviet-Chinese Triangle." Richard Ashley, *The Political Economy of War and Peace* (London: Pinter, 1980). Harvey Nelson, *Power and Insecurity* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1989). Gordon Chang, *Friends and Enemies* (Stanford: Stanford, 1990). Lowell Dittmer, *Sino-Soviet Normalization and Its International Implications, 1945–1990* (Seattle: Washington, 1992), 147.

[19] Gerald Segal, *The Great Power Triangle* (Houndsmills: Macmillan, 1982). Chen Min, *The Strategic Triangle and Regional Conflicts* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1992). Chi Su even implied that China was too weak for most of the Cold War period to act as a true equal in such a triangular relationship: "The Strategic Triangle and China's Soviet Policy," Robert Ross, ed., *China, the United States, and the Soviet Union* (Armonk: Sharpe, 1993), 39–61.

[20] For an older, but still very good description: King Chen, *China and the Three Worlds* (White Plains: Sharpe, 1979).

In a related discussion, scholars have addressed the U.S. role in the Sino-Soviet Split. The focus on an outside factor, however, also tends to obscure rather than explain the inner dynamics of the split. There is no evidence that "the root cause of the Sino-Soviet dispute was . . . the fear of [a] potential [U.S.] nuclear attack that made the Soviet leadership ignore Chinese interests in favor of détente with the West," as one author maintained.[21] Similarly, the study of American policies toward the Sino-Soviet alliance tends to overestimate their effects on it.[22] In general, I contend that American policies—including the wedge strategy that attempted to split the alliance through a combination of punishments and enticements—only worked in the later stages of the Sino-Soviet breakup, thereby exacerbating a process that had started for independent reasons.

Those authors who have investigated the role of domestic politics in the split have pointed out important pieces of the puzzle. There is no doubt that Khrushchev's de-Stalinization, though launched mainly for domestic reasons, reverberated throughout the socialist world. The central question is why only Mao's China (together with Enver Hoxha's Albania) sought sharp conflict with the Soviet Union while most other socialist states and communist parties merely used de-Stalinization to enhance their autonomy. In my view, it was China's internal conditions that provided a ripe environment for ideological radicalism in the late 1950s and the manipulation of ideology for domestic aims throughout the 1960s.

The greater availability of primary documentation helps to refine the scholarly understanding of how domestic politics influenced Sino-Soviet relations. Roderick MacFarquhar's three volumes on the origins of the Cultural Revolution provided abundant evidence for the important role of Chinese domestic politics in the Sino-Soviet Split. While these tomes supplied many important details for this book, their focus was not primarily on the increasingly close links between internal and external Chinese behavior I identify during the 1956–66 period.[23]

Writing on Sino-American relations, Thomas Christensen asserted in the mid-1990s that Cold War powers manipulated foreign crises to mobilize their own citizens for domestic aims. In a case study on the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis, he argued that Mao exploited an international crisis in order to mobilize the Chinese people to support the launching of the

[21] Nelson, *Power and Insecurity*, 30.

[22] Chang, *Friends and Enemies*.

[23] Roderick MacFarquhar, *Origins of the Cultural Revolution*, 3 vols. (New York: Columbia, 1974–1997). Although the first two volumes are based on a wealth of public Chinese materials, only the third could take advantage of the greater availability of new Chinese sources.

radical Great Leap Forward.[24] More recently, Chen Jian has pushed this argument further, claiming that Mao's concerns over the revolution at home led him to create foreign enemies with the aim to keep the Chinese people mobilized.[25] Both thus argue that foreign policy was mustered for domestic objectives. Although my findings support both Christensen's and Chen's interpretations, I suggest that this process could work both ways. While domestic needs shaped foreign policy, as in the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis, events abroad, such as the Polish October or the Hungarian Revolution, greatly influenced Mao's thinking and his domestic policies. Even as Mao was willing to provoke crises in international affairs to mobilize the Chinese people—or at least to render pressure on internal opponents, real or invented—there were also instances where he mobilized domestic policies in order to influence international affairs. His attempts to create a model communist society during the Great Leap Forward were certainly supposed to underscore his claim to the leadership of the socialist camp.

The Role of Ideology

The story of the Sino-Soviet breakup cannot be told without a focus on ideology. I identify ideology broadly as a set of beliefs and dogmas that both construct general outlines—rather than a detailed blueprint—of a future political order, and define specific methods—though no explicit pathways—to achieve it. In line with this characterization, Marxism-Leninism envisioned the communist society as the final objective of history, and granted the communist party the exclusive vanguard role in this process, at the expense of all other political movements or even the democratic process itself. Although Marx and Lenin wrote in great detail about how communism would look like once it was achieved, they in fact left relatively few concrete cues on the exact path of transforming the bourgeois present into the communist future.

In daily politics, ideology functions both as a belief system and as a political tool. On the one hand, ideology is about the political commitments made by its adherents to its theoretical postulates. Consequently, ideological claims tend to be claims in principle. Similarly, ideological disagreements that arise within the general outlines or as the result of the contradictions within the theory often are disagreements in principle. The unsophisticated understanding of theoretical postulates by their believers can exacerbate ideological disagreements. On the other hand, ideology

[24] Thomas Christensen, *Useful Adversaries* (Princeton: Princeton, 1996).
[25] Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina, 2001).

may be manipulated for short-term political, or even personal, objectives. Such manipulation might happen inside the general outlines of ideology when, for example, a leader exploits theoretical ambiguities or contradictions to his political or personal benefit. However, ideological claims might also be cynically used for objectives incongruent with theoretical postulates. Methodologically, these two forms of manipulation are not always easy to distinguish.

The available evidence suggests that both the Chinese Communists and the Soviets genuinely believed that they were working toward the realization of the communist dream. For the most part, in my view at least, neither used the high-sounding promises of Marxism-Leninism in purely cynical fashion. However, the theoretical ambiguities of Marxism-Leninism, combined with each side's underdeveloped understanding thereof, provided the two sides not only with ample opportunities for disagreement over their long-term domestic and foreign policies—both of which were at the root of the Sino-Soviet conflict—but also with a tool to achieve short-term political gains either against each other or against internal dissenters. Thus, although the ideological objective of Marxism-Leninism—the creation of a communist society—was clearly defined, the theoretically correct path to achieve it was sufficiently indeterminate to create discord both in principle and in daily political life.

Most previous authors tended to underestimate the disruptive role of ideology in the Sino-Soviet Split. In 1961, without the hindsight of history, Zagoria attributed great binding force to the shared ideology of the Sino-Soviet allies.[26] Similarly, interpretations of the Sino-Soviet Split that stress the rhetorical role of ideology or the ideologically influenced threat perceptions of a defensive China also seemed to undervalue the role of ideology itself.[27] Those authors who pointed out the intrinsic potential of dogmatic Marxism-Leninism to create discord correctly identified the ideological roots of the collapse of socialist unity in the period after Khrushchev's Secret Speech.[28] However, since most communist parties continued to maintain satisfactory, though not always cordial, relations with each other, disagreements on ideological principles alone cannot adequately explain the reasons for China's (and Albania's) split from the Soviet Union and, by extension, from the socialist world. Only specific internal conditions, such as the manipulative use of ideology, can achieve this.

My view of the role of ideology in the Sino-Soviet Split differs slightly from other interpretations that have previously benefited from the new

[26] Zagoria, *Sino-Soviet Conflict*.

[27] Michael, "Common Purpose and Double Strategy." Gurtov, *China under Threat*.

[28] Lowenthal, *World Communism*. Morgenthau, *New Foreign Policy for the United States*.

archival evidence. For example, I tend to give more weight to ideology than O. Arne Westad, who argued that it was "not sufficient to explain the breakdown in Sino-Soviet relations."[29] Without the vital role of ideology, neither would the alliance have been established nor would it have collapsed. Chen Jian's recent claim that the domestic mission of the revolution shaped its international mission and that foreign policy—even to the extent that "Mao acted to create an enemy" in international relations—functioned as a "source of domestic mobilization" is closer to the view presented in this book.[30] However, I take his interpretation even further, arguing that either policy realm, foreign and domestic, could influence—or even mobilize—the other. Moreover, I argue that Mao created international crises, not merely foreign enemies, for his domestic needs.

By the same token, the roles of security and economics in the Sino-Soviet Split cannot be understood without reference to ideology. It is true that, since the fall of 1950, American military might threatened China on the Korean peninsula. Equally, the military situation in the Taiwan Strait during the 1950s and in Indochina starting in the mid-1960s changed to China's disadvantage. However, these security threats were not the result of an inherent U.S. imperialist aggressiveness, as Mao and his comrades believed, but were largely the consequence of Chinese Communist commitments to world revolution since the 1920s—that is, to the overthrow of the imperialist international system that happened to be headed by the United States since 1945—and of Mao's assertive security policies since the late-1949 establishment of the PRC. Once Beijing recognized Hanoi diplomatically in early 1950 and committed itself to Pyongyang even before the Korean War, Washington's military and political responses turned Mao's beliefs about imperialist aggression into self-fulfilling prophecies. Furthermore, the Soviet policy of peaceful coexistence with the United States, which Khrushchev had been promoting since early 1956, did not undermine Chinese security (with regard to American military support for the Republic of China in Taiwan), as some observers have argued, but it was a point of ideological dispute between Mao and Khrushchev. By the late 1950s, firmly persuaded by the supposed might of the Soviet missile that carried Sputnik into space in 1957 and uncritically applying crude Leninist interpretations on the inherent inability of capitalists to cooperate with each other, Mao was convinced that imperialism was weak and internally split. Given this ideological preconception of the world, the Chinese leader simply could not understand why Khrushchev sought Soviet-American rapprochement.

[29] O. Arne Westad, "Introduction," Westad, ed., *Brothers in Arms* (Washington: Woodrow Wilson Center, 1998), 4.

[30] Chen, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, 7–8, 180.

Likewise, it is true that the structural economic problems the PRC faced in 1955 were genuine and that they threatened the material health of China. However, the solutions Mao proposed—first the Socialist High Tide, then the Great Leap Forward—were highly ideological, and ultimately poisonous for Sino-Soviet relations. I thus disagree with those authors who believed that "economics was never at the heart of the Sino-Soviet dispute."[31] On the contrary, I support, and even extend, Lowell Dittmer's contention that ideological disagreements over the economic model were a cause of the Sino-Soviet Split.[32] Similar to the ideological underpinnings of the Sino-Soviet economic debates in the second half of the 1950s, Moscow's withdrawal of its specialists from the PRC seems to be, at least superficially, an example of Soviet great power attempts at coercive or punitive diplomacy; in reality, however, it occurred only after antagonistic ideological campaigns by Beijing. Economic disagreements had deep ideological roots.

The findings of this book strengthen various interpretations put forward by New Cold War Historians. Ideology was significant to the policies of the socialist states, at least in the first half of the Cold War.[33] Equally, the Sino-Soviet relationship confirms empirical findings that smaller Cold War allies were often able to set the agenda of their superpower patrons on both sides of the Cold War divide.[34] Many of the arguments put forward by Vojtech Mastny and Malcolm Bryne in a recent study on the Warsaw Pact also apply to this book. Like the Sino-Soviet

[31] Dwight Perkins, "The Economic Background and Implications for China," Ellison, *Sino-Soviet Conflict*, 91–111.

[32] Dittmer, *Sino-Soviet Normalization*.

[33] Vladislav Zubok, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1996), 4–8. Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War*.

[34] Abraham Ben-Zvi, *United States and Israel* (New York: Columbia, 1993). Robert McMahon, *The Cold War on the Periphery* (New York: Columbia, 1994). Hope Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall* (Princeton: Princeton, 2003). A small number of political scientists have tried to assess bilateral, unequal alliances, but rarely addressed the agenda-setting capabilities of the smaller ally, see: Paul M. Johnson, "The Subordinate States and Their Strategies," Jan Triska, ed., *Dominant Powers and Subordinate States: The United States in Latin America and the Soviet Union in East Europe* (Durham: Duke, 1986), 285–309. James Morrow, "Alliances and Asymmetry: An Alternative to the Capability Aggregation Model of Alliances," *American Journal of Political Science* 35/4, 904–933. Some scholars have addressed small states in multilateral alliances and international organizations, see: Mancur Olsen et al., "An Economic Theory of Alliances," *Review of Economics and Statistics* 48/3, 266–79. Baldur Thorhallsson, "The Role of Small States in the European Union," Christine Ingebritsen et al., eds., *Small States in International Relations* (Seattle: Washington, 2006), 218–30. In comparison, the theoretical literature on the behavior of small states in international relations in general is quite developed, as two collections of seminal texts reveal. See several articles in: Triska, *Dominant Powers and Subordinate States*, and Ingebritsen, *Small States in International Relations*.

alliance, the principal socialist pact system ultimately collapsed as a result of the failure of ideology to provide clarity of purpose and unity of means.[35]

Additional Factors

Apart from ideology, a range of other factors contributed to the Sino-Soviet Split. The PRC was more active in bringing about the breakup than the Soviet Union. Particularly in the 1960s, Beijing controlled the pace of the relationship's deterioration and its eventual collapse, while Moscow was often left having to react to recurring provocations.

This development was rooted in the nature of the Sino-Soviet relationship. The two countries never matched each other in real power or global influence, although Beijing claimed equality with Moscow in 1956–57. In truth, Khrushchev was heading a superpower with increasing commitments around the world, while Mao was running a regional power that was progressively getting poorer and more isolated as a result of his own blunders. For the PRC, the Sino-Soviet alliance it had sought in 1949–50 was *the defining moment* in its early history; for the Soviet Union, the partnership was just *another asset*, though an important one, in its world revolutionary mission. Little wonder that, once disagreements emerged, Beijing invested a lot of energy in reinventing and then divesting itself of the alliance, while Moscow became negligent in maintaining the partnership.

A number of other factors played notable, though less central, roles. The United States was not the immediate cause of the Sino-Soviet Split; its policies, while designed to strain the alliance, turned out to be effective only once Sino-Soviet disagreements had emerged over unrelated issues. Although territorial controversies predated the alliance, it was only the emerging ideological disputes that turned them into points of conflict and, eventually in 1969, into a cause for war.[36] Accidents, such as the U-2 Incident on May 1, 1960, or Soviet Defense Minister Rodion Malinovskii's drunken insult of Mao on November 7, 1964, wreaked havoc on the relationship, but it was the Chinese side that unduly exploited them for its own benefit. Finally, personality clashes contributed

[35] Vojtech Mastny and Malcolm Byrne, eds., *A Cardboard Castle?* (Budapest: Central European, 2005), 1, 73–74.

[36] The best current treatment of China's border problems: M. Taylor Fravel, *Strong Borders, Secure Nation* (Princeton: Princeton, 2008).

to but did not cause the Sino-Soviet Split.[37] Mao's and Khrushchev's strong personalities and their far-reaching, unchecked powers within their respective political systems had an undue, negative influence on the alliance.

Ideology and Alliance Theory

This book further provides an empirical challenge to the theoretical literature on alliances. Political scientists who have explored alliances have mostly concentrated on their formation, which is not the focus of this book.[38] In comparison, the literature on alliance cohesion is less well developed. Because the Sino-Soviet Split occurred when the PRC and the USSR were still weaker than the United States, the implicit Realist assumption that changes in the balance of global power will trigger transformations in alliance systems seems not to apply to the partnership between Beijing and Moscow. Stephen Walt, one of the leading Realist alliance scholars, saw the collapse of the Sino-Soviet alliance not as the result of ideological disagreements but as the consequence of China's security concerns that defied any ideological consideration.[39] Mark Haas argued that while Mao's ideological radicalization during the Great Leap Forward was the "root cause" for the Sino-Soviet disagreements, conflicts resulting from their geographical proximity—territorial disputes and the militarization of the mutual border during the period after 1960—were ultimately responsible for the split.[40]

Although they are not connected to ideology, I concur, though with some qualifications, with several of the internal causes Glenn Snyder has proposed as to why alliances collapse. While the PRC indeed feared entrapment by the Soviet Union, this fear predated the alliance. Snyder's claim that allies try to restrain each other applies to several moments

[37] William Taubman, "Khrushchev vs. Mao," *CWIHP Bulletin* 8–9, 243–48. Aspaturian, "The Domestic Sources." Several Chinese memoirs contain colorful accounts on the personality clashes between Mao and Khrushchev.

[38] Hans Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 6th ed. (New York: Knopf, 1985), 185–240, 360–91. Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Relations* (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1979), 127. Stephen Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca: Cornell, 1987). John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: Norton, 2001). Glenn Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell, 1991), 44. Snyder, "The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics," *World Politics* 36/4, 464. Dan Reiter, "Learning, Realism, and Alliances: The Weight of the Shadow of the Past," *World Politics* 46/4, 490–526. George Liska, *Nations in Alliance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1962), 61–69. Mark Haas, *The Ideological Origins of Great Power Politics, 1789–1989* (Ithaca: Cornell, 2005).

[39] Stephen Walt, *Revolution and War* (Ithaca: Cornell, 1996), 323–27.

[40] Haas, *Ideological Origins*, 168, 174.

in the Sino-Soviet alliance. While it is true that China incited the Soviet Union to demonstrate greater anti-imperialist commitments, it did so not in order to make it fight the United States alone, as Snyder would argue, but in order to force it to join the PRC in such a struggle. Similarly, although Beijing often accused Moscow of failing to live up to alliance commitments, this usually happened over territorial conflicts with third parties that had occurred as a result of Chinese provocations or clumsy diplomacy.[41]

In a twist on alliance theory, Thomas Christensen recently promoted an ingenious argument on the role of ideology in alliance cohesion. Looking at the Sino-Soviet alliance through the lens of U.S. containment, he argued that it was less radical in times of great cohesion (1954–58) because Moscow was better at managing the partnership. In times of internal competition (1958–69), however, the alliance was more revolutionary because both partners vied for the allegiance of other socialist states or revolutionary movements.[42] While I do agree with his counterintuitive insight that ideological conflict might have led to an unintended congruence with the original alliance goals, I also must stress the great destructive force of such ideological competition within the Sino-Soviet alliance even before 1969. The rivalry between Beijing and Moscow for Hanoi's allegiance during the Second Vietnam War complicated Washington's attempts to contain communist expansion in East Asia, but, in my view, it simultaneously demolished the last vestiges of the alliance by 1966.

The Structure of the Book

Chapter 1 explores the background of the Sino-Soviet dispute. It includes accounts of the historical roots of the theoretical debates that rattled the alliance in 1955–66, Sino-Soviet relations since 1921, and the first six years of the alliance. The chapter ends with the emergence of the first major ideological disagreement in the Sino-Soviet relationship—the Socialist High Tide of 1955.

The impact of Khrushchev's Secret Speech of February 1956 on the Sino-Soviet relationship stands at the center of chapter 2. Although the speech briefly checked Mao's preeminence in China's domestic politics, its catalytic effect on Poland and Hungary provided the Chinese leader with an opportunity to rethink the role of Stalinism in China's political and economic development. Over the course of 1957, political developments in the PRC—the failure of Mao's attempt at political liberalization—and

[41] Snyder, *Alliance Politics*, 307–71.
[42] Thomas Christensen, "Worse Than a Monolith," *Asian Security* 1/1, 80–127.

in the Soviet Union—the failure of the remaining Stalinist stalwarts in the Soviet leadership to stop de-Stalinization by overthrowing Khrushchev—set the two countries on paths of political development that were diametrically opposed to one another. Nevertheless, both Beijing and Moscow sought to obscure these disagreements at the Moscow Meeting of the world communist movement in late 1957.

Chapter 3 addresses Mao's double challenge to Khrushchev's leadership of the socialist camp in 1958. The Chinese leader rejected both the contemporaneous Soviet development model in favor of a more radical economic policy—the Great Leap Forward—and peaceful coexistence for a confrontational stance during the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis in August of 1958. Ultimately, the two events were closely linked; military conflict off the coast of the PRC was supposed to help Mao mobilize the Chinese people to participate in the radical policies of the Great Leap Forward.

The connection between domestic and foreign policy was less tangible in the following year (chapter 4). Mao's refusal to address the congenital problems of the Great Leap Forward and his suppression of criticism further radicalized China's political discourse, and thereby produced a negative context for the development of Sino-Soviet relations throughout the year. Although Beijing had not openly provoked the Tibetan Uprising, nor had it started the ensuing Sino-Indian Border War, its clumsy way of dealing with these crises alienated Moscow in the period before Khrushchev's seminal visit to Washington. At the end of the year, both the Chinese Communists and the Soviets reassessed their relationship. Each side nursed misgivings about the other.

Chapter 5 revolves around China's so-called Lenin Polemics and the collapse of economic relations. Mao's decision to make the ideological disagreements public on the occasion of Lenin's ninetieth birthday in April of 1960 reflected his mounting ideological disagreements with Khrushchev. The U-2 Incident on May 1 seemed to confirm his opinion of the inherent aggressiveness of U.S. imperialism. An ideological campaign against the Soviet Union, both within and outside of China, provoked Khrushchev into the punitive action of withdrawing all Soviet advisers from the PRC in July. Although, as a result, economic relations broke down, the eventual collapse of the Great Leap Forward in China and the failure of Soviet-American rapprochement forced Beijing and Moscow to seek reconciliation during the Second Moscow Meeting in late 1960. The ideological compromise reached at the meeting, however, was only temporary.

From early 1961 to mid-1962, Sino-Soviet relations experienced a period of ambiguity (chapter 6). The collapse of the Great Leap Forward had limited Mao's prerogatives to set China's domestic and foreign policies. The country's internal needs led to sound economic reform policies,

promoted by other Chinese leaders against Mao's desires, and even to related Sino-Soviet cooperation. At the same time, Mao tried to seize on Sino-Soviet disagreements over de-Stalinization and Albania in 1961 in order to keep pressure on Khrushchev. Ultimately, though, he was unable to prevent high-ranking party cadres from calling for a less radical foreign policy. While the PRC seemed to embark on moderate domestic and foreign policies in the first half of 1962, the sudden outbreak of ethnic conflict in Xinjiang and the mass flight of ethnic Central Asians and Russians to the Soviet Union taxed the relations between Beijing and Moscow.

The following two chapters cover the intertwined stories of the period from mid-1962 to mid-1963. Chapter 7 starts with Mao's political resurgence in the summer of 1962. After accusing his fellow leaders of propagating the reintroduction of capitalism in China's economy at the Beidaihe work conference, he was able to reclaim the preeminent position in daily policy making. Subsequently, he terminated the relaxation of Sino-Soviet relations and exploited Khrushchev's public humiliation during the Cuban Missile Crisis. By early 1963, Mao had decided to work actively for the Sino-Soviet Split, though he sought to achieve it in ways that would force Khrushchev to assume responsibility.

Chapter 8 deals with U.S. President John Kennedy's attempt to instrumentalize the rift for the conclusion of the Limited Nuclear Test Ban (LNTB) treaty that, among other aims, was supposed to prevent China from acquiring nuclear know-how or even isolate the PRC internationally. In the summer of 1963, Sino-Soviet reconciliation talks, requested by the Vietnamese Communists, and the Soviet–British–American test ban negotiations were held simultaneously in Moscow. While the former failed as a result of Mao's uncompromising position, the Soviet Union and the United States were able to make a sufficient amount of concessions to reach a minimal agreement.

The final two chapters address the collapse of Sino-Soviet party and military relations. Internationally isolated after the LNTB treaty, Mao increased the ideological attacks on the Soviet revisionists in propaganda and at the five communist party congresses in Europe in the period from mid-1963 to mid-1964 (chapter 9). The shrill and redundant anti-Soviet claims were related to his goal of pressuring domestic opponents, real and invented, into ideological and political acquiescence. Firm in his belief that Khrushchev's fall would mean a return of the Soviet comrades to correct—that is, to his own—theoretical positions, Mao misunderstood the October 1964 leadership changes in Moscow. When he realized that the new Soviet leaders had hardly modified Khrushchev's foreign policies, he knew that anti-Soviet propaganda had failed to cow his domestic opponents into political submission. Starting in early 1965, Mao thus used

anti-Soviet positions to prepare for a purge of what he called revisionists and capitalists within the party leadership. With that, the collapse of the Sino-Soviet partnership had become a function of domestic politics. The mid-1966 launch of the party purge in the Cultural Revolution thus required the complete abrogation of Sino-Soviet party relations.

This ideological development set the stage for the collapse of Sino-Soviet military relations over the early Second Vietnam War (chapter 10). The U.S. escalation of the Indochina conflict paralleled the leadership changes in Moscow. Khrushchev's hands-off policy toward Vietnam was among the few policies the new Soviet leaders revised completely and quickly. Although the U.S. escalation and the sudden Soviet willingness to provide massive military aid to North Vietnam created security problems for China in early 1965, Mao's unconstructive response was ideologically predetermined. The Sino-Soviet military relationship collapsed in 1965–66 not because of Moscow's failure to honor the alliance's anti-imperialist spirit, but as a result of Beijing's attempt to redefine it as a tool for radical policies that reflected Mao's distinct, ideological goals.