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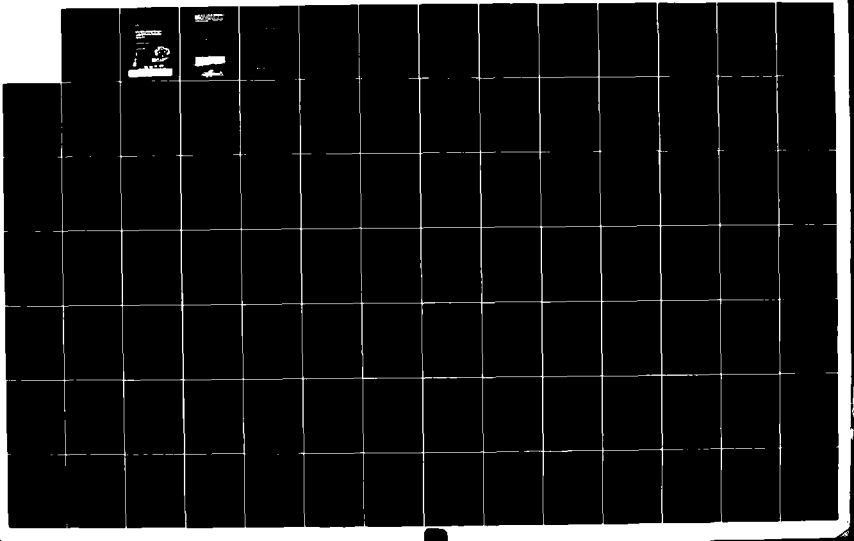

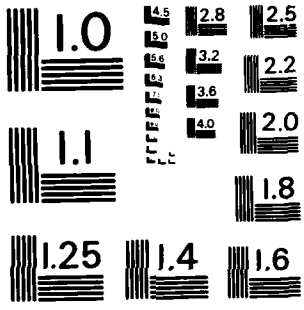

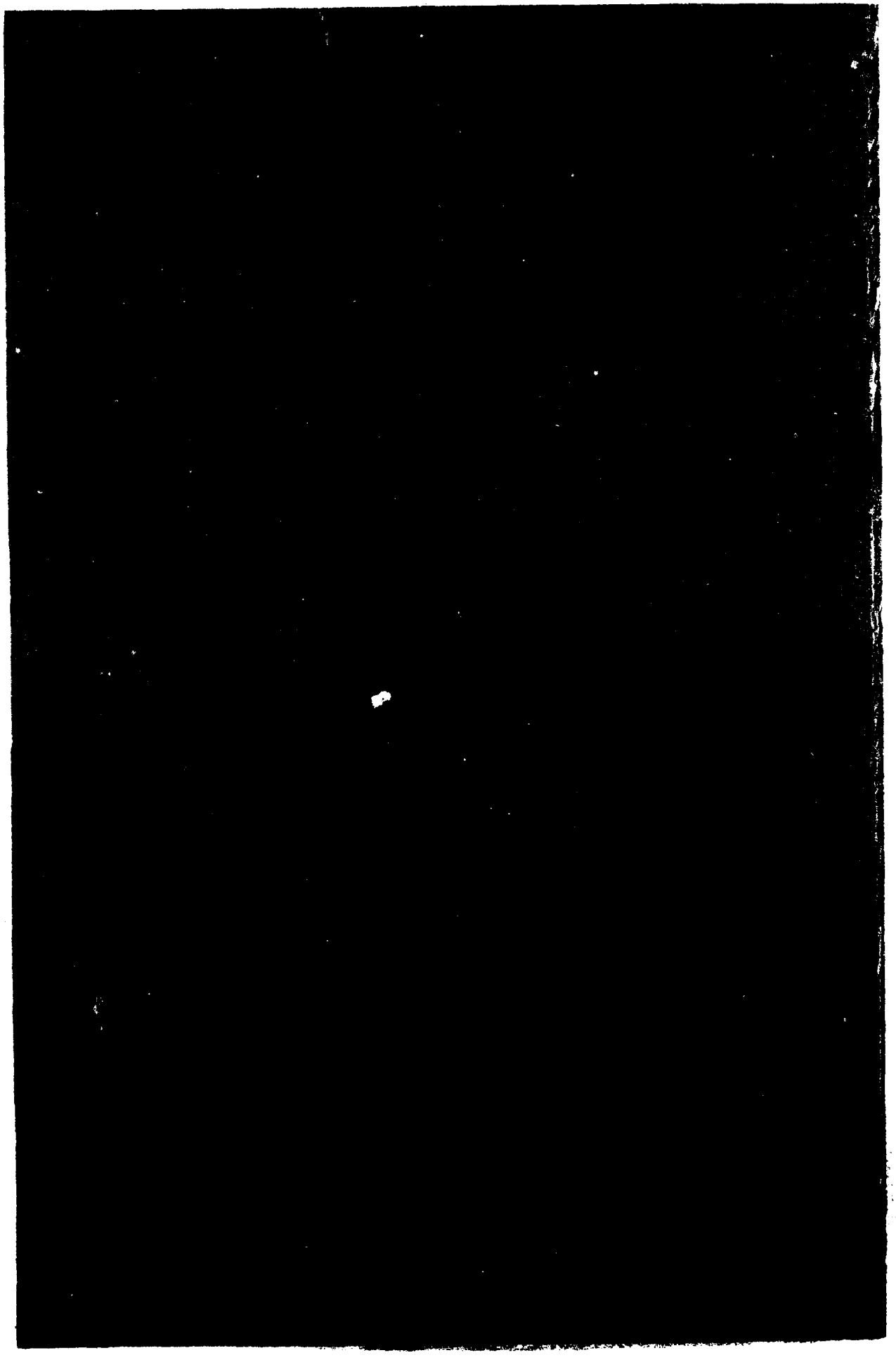

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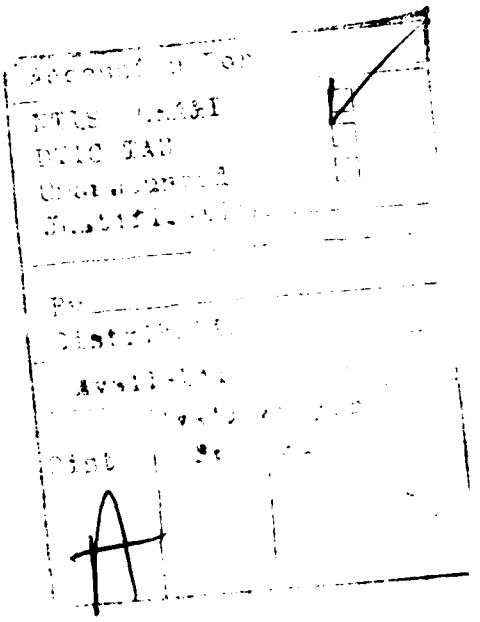
The Sino-Soviet Rivalry and Chinese Security Debate

Jonathan D. Pollack

October 1982

A Project AIR FORCE report
prepared for the
United States Air Force



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PREFACE

This report is one of a series of studies on China's strategic and regional roles in Asian security undertaken at The Rand Corporation in a project sponsored within Project AIR FORCE. Additional support was provided by the concept formulation project of the National Security Strategies Program in Project AIR FORCE. The former project traced various political, economic, technological, and strategic factors that are likely to affect Chinese national security policy and how such factors will influence U.S. policy. Other publications in this project include:

- Jonathan D. Pollack, *Defense Modernization in the People's Republic of China,* N-1214-1-AF, October 1979.
- Lucian W. Pye, *The Dynamics of Factions and Consensus in Chinese Politics: A Model and Some Propositions,* R-2566-AF, July 1980 (also published as *The Dynamics of Chinese Politics,* Oelgeschlager, Gunn & Hain, Inc., Cambridge, Mass., 1982).
- ——, *Chinese Commercial Negotiating Style,* R-2837-AF, January 1982 (also published by Oelgeschlager, Gunn & Hain, Inc., Cambridge, Mass., 1982).

This report describes and analyzes the policy implications of the shifting security and foreign policy concerns among China's leaders since the mid-1960s. Among these concerns, none has more profoundly affected Chinese policymaking than the deterioration and militarization of Sino-Soviet relations. This study traces the course of the conflict between Moscow and Beijing to indicate the increasing emphasis that both leaderships have placed on the national security aspects of their rivalry. For an additional Rand report focusing more on Soviet leadership calculations, see Harry Gelman, *The Soviet Far East Buildup and Soviet Risk-Taking Against China,* R-2943-AF, August 1982.

Beijing's predominant security concern is to reduce (or at least to stabilize) the Soviet political and military threat to China. Several key policy considerations continue to be contentious issues within the Chinese leadership, including (1) China's effort to construct an anti-Soviet security coalition with the United States and other major powers; (2) a burgeoning pattern of economic, technological, and political links between China and the noncommunist industrialized world in-

tended to facilitate China's modernization; and (3) periodic overtures to the Soviet Union that test Moscow's willingness to negotiate key bilateral issues.

This study should be of interest to U.S. decisionmakers who now must weigh the "China factor" very carefully in their policy deliberations. It also merits the attention of analysts responsible for monitoring and interpreting trends in Chinese policymaking and of students of communist elite communications more generally.

This report was completed in July 1982, before the convocation of the Chinese Communist Party's Twelfth National Congress. The exploratory Sino-Soviet talks at the vice ministerial level in Beijing during October 1982 provided a forum for airing bilateral concerns (for example, trade issues and heightened scientific and cultural contacts), while allowing each side to offer its views on the more intractable elements of their rivalry. The consultations also provide Beijing with an opportunity to detect any evidence of flexibility in Soviet positions beyond Moscow's public declarations of seeking improved Sino-Soviet relations. But Chinese officials continue to emphasize that no major changes in Sino-Soviet relations will occur unless Moscow undertakes a serious, substantial effort to reduce its multifaceted threat to the security of China.

SUMMARY

This study focuses principal attention on Chinese security calculations with regard to both the Soviet threat to China and the PRC's evolving relationship with the United States. Deng Xiaoping and his political allies seek the general goal of a long-term peaceful international environment. Under these circumstances, they would be able to avoid devoting vital manpower and fiscal resources to military preparedness and be able to concentrate on overall economic development, which they consider essential to true national security. **Deng's strategy is, therefore, to**

- **Emphasize nonmilitary approaches to reducing PRC vulnerability to Soviet power, and**
- **Maintain sufficiently positive relations with the West to diminish Soviet pressure and to facilitate the borrowing of Western technology.**

However, Deng's strategy is opposed by certain elements of the PRC leadership who are less optimistic about the Soviet threat. This opposition, recent problems in U.S.-Chinese relations, and the possibility of increased Soviet pressure on the Chinese to negotiate make it impossible to determine exactly how the PRC will balance its relations with the two superpowers in the future.

From the earliest months of the People's Republic of China (PRC) as a state, the Sino-Soviet relationship has substantially influenced both regional and global politics. With the formation of the Sino-Soviet alliance in early 1950, the full extension of the Cold War to East Asia became certain. U.S. defense planning throughout the decade assumed that China and the Soviet Union would jointly oppose American actions and interests in the region. The deterioration of interparty and interstate relations first publicly evident in the late 1950s shattered the supposedly "unshakeable unity" of the Moscow-Beijing alliance. The polemics of the early 1960s marked a further and far more visible degeneration in the relationship, contributing to widespread divisions within the international communist movement. With the total rupture between them when U.S. involvement in Vietnam was growing, and the subsequent militarization of the Sino-Soviet border, Moscow-Beijing relations became the great power rivalry that persists to the present day.

Both the character and consequences of the Sino-Soviet conflict have been substantially altered by:

- **the death of Party Chairman Mao Zedong,**
- **the downfall of Mao's more ideologically inclined political allies, and**
- **the subsequent discrediting of many of Mao's political and ideological commitments.**

Leaders in China as well as the Soviet Union now emphasize the long-term political-military rivalry, both in global and bilateral terms.

Although historical memories, racial antagonisms, and other such factors should not be discounted, Sino-Soviet relations are better understood in terms of the national security concerns that preoccupy leaders in both Moscow and Beijing. The Chinese security agenda is concerned more with broad issues of political, economic, and strategic assessment than with questions of force planning and the military posture.

In view of the continued imbalance of forces along the Sino-Soviet border and the lack of any meaningful "quick fix" option to rectify these disparities, China's security policy must concentrate principally on nonmilitary approaches to reducing Beijing's vulnerability to Soviet power. Such considerations are readily evident within PRC policy debate. Since his return to power in the summer of 1977, Deng Xiaoping and his political allies have devoted substantial effort to securing a long-term peaceful international environment so the PRC can concentrate on goals of economic development.

Although Deng has opposed a formal improvement in Sino-Soviet relations, he clearly understands the need to diminish the Soviet threat, releasing budgetary, technological, and manpower resources that would otherwise be devoted to military preparedness. The advocates of economic readjustment, led by Vice Chairman Chen Yun, have argued this point even more forcefully. Yet some within the military leadership have tried to depict the Soviet threat in more urgent, immediate terms. They have also sought to confront Deng on various domestic policy issues where he may be vulnerable to challenge or criticism.

Deng remains optimistic on the prospects for reducing the Soviet threat to China. He sees the Soviet Union as a beleaguered if not enfeebled power, whose capabilities cannot possibly match its global ambitions. The far-flung Soviet "burdens of empire," continued economic and ethnic problems at home, and the impending succession constrain Moscow from acting more provocatively or aggressively

toward China. Yet Deng feels that the PRC must not offer any major concessions without changes in Soviet behavior toward China.

China's relations with the United States, Japan, and Western Europe assume vital importance in Deng's political calculations. Deng has sought to justify these ties on the following bases:

- Shared interests in restraining the exercise of Soviet power,
- The possibility of diminishing China's vulnerability to Soviet pressure and encirclement, and
- The need for Western technological assistance to rebuild China's defense industrial infrastructure.

Yet heightened U.S.-Chinese tensions over the Taiwan issue and the modest results to date in the building of a "global anti-hegemony united front" have called into question Deng's strategy for dealing with the Soviet challenge. Soviet pressure on the PRC could well increase or new inducements might emerge for the Chinese leadership to negotiate Sino-Soviet differences. In addition, as problems with the United States mounted in late 1981 and early 1982, Deng sought to dissociate himself from his earlier assertions of closely shared U.S.-Chinese interests. The Soviet leadership noted these signs of growing instability in U.S.-Chinese relations, which can be expected to affect future Soviet calculations on the prospects for improving ties with the PRC. How leaders in Beijing seek to balance their delicate relations with both superpowers will remain a pivotal issue, with trends closely followed in both Washington and Moscow.

Discussions of U.S. options and strategies toward the Sino-Soviet conflict must remain sensitive to how U.S. policy can affect the Sino-Soviet future. The U.S. capacity for steering the rivalry in one or another direction will nevertheless remain limited and indirect. The future course of Sino-Soviet ties will be determined principally by the complex leadership forces within Beijing and Moscow, whose workings are beyond the effective control of U.S. policymakers.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report tries to reduce China's national security decisionmaking to a manageable research topic. Throughout the research and writing Rand colleague Richard H. Solomon provided vital encouragement to enter the murky realm of Chinese security debate. Although problems of evidence and methodology were frequently perplexing, his belief in the study was essential to its completion.

Numerous colleagues and professional associates have helped clarify my thinking on this topic. I do not expect any of them to agree fully with my findings, but their suggestions and criticisms have compelled me to reconsider many of my views. In addition to Richard Solomon, I especially want to thank Rand colleague Harry Gelman and consultants Steven Levine and Kenneth Lieberthal, who provided searching, detailed critiques of earlier drafts of this study. I also owe special thanks to Lyman Miller of the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, whose studies of Sino-Soviet relations as a political issue in China are both provocative and original.

Discussions with Rand colleagues Paul Langer, Norman Levin, James Thomson, and K. C. Yeh have also proved very helpful in shaping this study, as have exchanges with Rand consultant Lucian Pye. A. Doak Barnett (The Johns Hopkins University), June Dreyer (University of Miami), Banning Garrett (Harold Rosenbaum Associates), Paul Godwin (The Air University), Harry Harding (Stanford University), Harlan Jencks (The Naval Postgraduate School), Robert Scalapino (University of California), and Allen Whiting (University of Arizona) have all given freely of their time and thoughts. None should be held accountable for my opinions and arguments.

I also want to thank Anna Sun Ford and Janice Hinton for their invaluable assistance in locating research materials and making the tasks of compilation and organization far more manageable. Finally, Helen Turin subjected me to the humbling but necessary process of editorial revision and review.

CONTENTS

I. THE EVOLVING SINO-SOVIET RIVALRY

INTRODUCTION

Three decades after Joseph Stalin and Mao Zedong signed a treaty testifying to the "unshakeable unity" of the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China (PRC), the world's two largest communist states confront one another on a vast scale—politically, diplomatically, and militarily. The lines of division and the nature of the conflict have progressed well beyond the debates of the early 1960s. Contemporary Sino-Soviet differences are not attributable only to personal antagonisms or historical grievances among rival leaders in Moscow and Beijing. Rather, the cleavages reflect profound differences in national power, political-military strategy, and leadership goals.

Calculations of power and national security have long influenced Sino-Soviet relations. Within four months of the establishment of the People's Republic, Beijing and Moscow had signed a 30-year Treaty of Friendship, Alliance, and Mutual Assistance—an agreement expressly based upon shared security and economic needs. The turbulent course of the alliance during the 1950s was marked by the frequent intrusion of national security considerations for both states, with differences over alliance obligations, territorial sovereignty, and war and peace in the nuclear era severely straining these ties. And at the high point of the Sino-Soviet polemics of the early and mid-1960s—with both sides asserting "principled stands" in the "struggle between the two lines" in the international communist movement—relations with the capitalist world and the prospects for peaceful coexistence with the West were always among the important issues.[1]

The breakdown of the Sino-Soviet alliance and the militarization of the Sino-Soviet border were fueled by the centuries-old rivalry between Moscow and Beijing. Two contiguous continental powers, with racial animosities, ethnic tensions, and competing territorial claims, are a natural power rivalry. That China and the Soviet Union ever had close ties seems more notable than that they are again locked in a long-term conflict.

The enduring quality of this rivalry has obscured the altered character of the Sino-Soviet conflict and its changing political and strate-

[1]These judgments are amply supported in the major works on the early years of the Sino-Soviet conflict. See, in particular, Zagoria, 1962; Griffith, 1964; and Gittings, 1968.

gic consequences for the West.[2] Especially since the death of Party Chairman Mao Zedong in September 1976, China has undergone an extraordinary transformation in both its internal and external policies, with major departures from the autarkic strategies of the Maoist era. Many of these changes have been justified precisely because of China's economic, technological, and military weakness, resulting in vulnerability to external pressure and threat. The challenges to Chinese security have emanated principally from the Soviet Union and will to continue to do so throughout the 1980s.

The Chinese leadership has increasingly stressed the global rather than bilateral context of the Sino-Soviet rivalry. Such a reorientation reflects concern about the steady growth in Soviet military power deployed in Asia, coinciding with an expansion of the Soviet global role. With the retrenchment in U.S. military power deployed in East Asia and the tortuous process of Sino-American accommodation, Deng has sought to further China's strategic, economic, and political collaboration with the United States and other Western powers, stressing a shared interest in restraining the exercise of Soviet power. The character and consequences of the Sino-Soviet relationship have therefore changed markedly, even from the logic of a "strategic triangle" fostered by the Nixon Administration's simultaneous cultivation of Moscow and Beijing in the early 1970s.

For Chinese policymakers, the departures from the dogma of the Maoist era have unleashed long-suppressed pressures for political, economic, and institutional change. The repercussions have been felt in the realm of state-to-state relations with the USSR. The ideological critique of the Soviet system, a hallmark of China's Soviet policy under Mao Zedong, has all but ceased. For example, the major theoretical statements of 1963 emanating from the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Central Committee, long regarded as the authoritative Chinese view on the entire spectrum of Sino-Soviet differences, are now attributed largely to the "ultra-leftist" thinking prevalent in that era, and barely receive any mention.[3] Similarly, the long-awaited CCP resolution on Party history barely mentions the deterioration of Sino-Soviet relations and its effects on the evolution of Chinese internal politics.[4] Such historical revisionism indicates China's

[2]For two recent volumes assessing such changes and their consequences, see Ellison, 1982; and Stuart and Tow, 1982.

[3]For a full text of these documents, see CCP Central Committee, 1965. Discussion of this issue is still extremely sensitive within the CCP and remains a "nonissue" at a public level. For articles in the Hong Kong press describing such internal debates, see *Cheng Ming*, 1979; and *Ming Bao*, 1980.

[4]CCP Central Committee, 1981, pp. K20-K21.

disinclination to fight old ideological battles with the Soviet leadership, a past strategy that had poisoned interstate as well as interparty relations.[5]

Although Chinese writings still occasionally assert that contemporary Sino-Soviet relations remain based on "the laws governing relations between classes," such claims have an increasingly hollow ring. The most ambitious attempt at doctrinal justification of China's increasing foreign policy alignment with the West negates the Marxist-Leninist principles it was supposedly seeking to uphold, concentrating instead upon the "intricate and volatile" struggle among the various political, economic, and military forces in the international system.

> In waging the struggle in the international arena, the proletariat must unite with all those who can be united in light of what is imperative and feasible in different historical periods. . . . Therefore we can never lay down any hard and fast formula for differentiating the world's political forces. . . . The transition from the capitalist to the socialist system on a global scale is a very long and tortuous process, full of complicated struggles, and it is inevitable that . . . there will be different alignments of the world's political forces in different periods.[6]

In such fashion, the post-Mao leadership has implicitly conceded the sterility of past ideological controversies for understanding the probable future directions of Sino-Soviet relations or of Chinese foreign policy more generally.

Such developments are not lost upon leaders in Moscow. Soviet assessments of China's contemporary political-military strategy almost uniformly assert a continuity in the trends in PRC policymaking since Mao's death. Although observers as well as officials in Moscow have noted the far-reaching changes in Chinese *domestic* politics, they see no departure from the "Maoist great power course" in China's external affairs, especially in Sino-Soviet relations. The long-term Soviet nightmare of China colluding with the "forces of militarism and reaction in the West" under the shared banner of anti-Sovietism seemed much closer to reality at the close of the 1970s than at any previous time. Deng has made a determined and highly successful effort to rout his opponents on the left, and seeks to combine technology and eco-

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[5]In an interview with Siegmund Ginzberg, the Beijing correspondent for *L'Unita* (the newspaper of the Italian Communist Party), CCP Vice Chairman Li Xiannian described the deterioration of Sino-Soviet ties in the 1950s and 1960s as principally an issue of interstate relations. While acknowledging that "there was also the ideological controversy," he conceded, "it cannot be said that one side or the other had the absolute truth." See Ginzberg, 1982, p. G1.

[6]*Renmin Ribao* Editorial Department, 1977. The specific quotation is from pp. 11-12.

nomic assistance from abroad with strategic consultation with the West.

Soviet leaders had hoped that Mao's death would produce policy changes favorable to Moscow, but such changes have yet to materialize. For both Moscow and Beijing, there is no single, undifferentiated "Sino-Soviet relationship." Leaders in both capitals are understandably reluctant to reveal too much about their appraisals of the Sino-Soviet future, but the broad outlines are apparent. These include judgments about (1) the stability of leadership alignments and political-military postures in both systems; (2) the constraints and incentives influencing the future of U.S.-China relations; (3) the prospects for sustaining an anti-Soviet security coalition that limits the exercise of Soviet power; and (4) the economic, political, and military capabilities that each state is able to devote to countering the other's power. Such issues are distinct from the cumulative weight of history, personality, and ideology that long governed Sino-Soviet relations. To understand how these interrelated policy calculations have supplanted the earlier sources of Sino-Soviet conflict, some historical observations are appropriate.

FROM IDEOLOGY TO NATIONAL SECURITY

Searching for a Label

Sino-Soviet relations since 1949 have hardly followed an orderly or predictable course, but they at least indicate some distinct patterns.[7] The progression from ally to ideological antagonist to military rival and global political competitor suggests a considerable broadening of the issues under dispute, with successively greater strategic and political implications.

The sensitivity of various questions (especially those connected with national security and foreign policy) has made full and frank disclosure all but impossible.[8] For example, only since late 1981 have the Chinese begun to raise the question of Stalin's role in early

[7]The definitive history of modern Sino-Soviet relations remains unwritten. Notwithstanding the constraints on information, there is a substantial and worthwhile body of Western literature, much of it somewhat dated. For an excellent review article, see Treadgold, 1982.

[8]For a thorough rendering of the various Sino-Soviet grievances aired through the mid-1960s, see Gittings, 1968. With the growth of Soviet China studies as an academic and policy-related discipline, there is a substantial outpouring of Soviet writings on the history of the Beijing-Moscow relations. For one quasi-official history, see Borisov and Koloskov, 1975. Officials and scholars in both the Soviet Union and China are now somewhat more forthcoming about their past differences, but their disclosures and observations do not yet permit comprehensive treatment of this topic.

Sino-Soviet relations. Stalin has certainly never been exempt from Chinese criticism,[9] but past CCP evaluations have sought to portray him in a positive light, in contrast to the blanket condemnations of Khrushchev and Brezhnev. In late 1981, however, China was increasingly stressing Stalin's "overemphasis on the role and interests of the great Russian nation" and his "chauvinist mistakes in handling foreign relations."[10] His advocacy of "big nation chauvinism among the various countries of the so-called socialist camp" and interference in the internal politics of other communist parties have both been attacked.[11]

By asserting continuity between Czarist and Soviet power and ambition (with Lenin being the sole exception), the Chinese have sought to further slight the past ideological character of the Sino-Soviet rivalry. In view of China's continuing efforts to depart from the dogma and ideological orthodoxy of the Maoist years, such reappraisals seem altogether appropriate. Mao himself recognized the consequences of posing the issue of "Soviet revisionism" in an international context. Although his earliest critiques of the "restoration of capitalism" in the USSR largely emphasized Khrushchev's tampering with internal political and economic orthodoxy, Mao also foresaw how such internal changes could ultimately result in the transformation of Soviet external conduct as well.

The late Chairman's sensitivity to these questions was initially reflected in speeches to various internal Party forums delivered in the late 1950s and early 1960s. As Kenneth Lieberthal has argued,

> Mao . . . seems to have concluded by late 1959 that the Soviet Union had become an advanced industrial society; that this in turn had skewed the USSR's foreign and domestic policies; that the Soviet leadership had become ideologically deviant; and that the Soviet Union had [thus] attempted to meddle in the [affairs of the] Chinese Communist Party.[12]

During 1962, Mao deemed the relationship between "Soviet revisionism" and "international capitalism" an increasing feature of the contemporary international system; by 1964, he noted "collusion" between the United States and the Soviet Union. At the same time, he raised the prospect of Soviet territorial designs against China.[13]

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[9]See, in particular, the *People's Daily* editorials of 5 April 1956 and 29 December 1956 issued in reaction to Khrushchev's attacks on Stalin, in Bowie and Fairbank, 1962, pp. 144-151, 257-272. See also CCP Central Committee, 1965, pp. 115-138.

[10]Li, 1981, p. 42.

[11]Yin, 1981, especially p. 56.

[12]Lieberthal, 1976, pp. 5-6.

[13]Ibid., pp. 10-12.

By depicting the Soviet Union in a progressively more threatening light, Mao was raising new items on the Chinese political agenda. Mao's judgments further reflected his determination not to mend fences with the Soviet leadership: His injection of issues exploiting Chinese nationalistic sensitivities appealed to all Chinese, official and nonofficial alike. Matters pertaining to "the international class struggle" would concern not only politics *within* socialist systems, but the interaction between such systems and their relationship to capitalist states as well.

The Soviet Union was being cast increasingly in the role of an imperial power. In September 1963, the Chinese aired grievances about alleged Soviet involvement in disturbances in the Xinjiang autonomous region in 1960.[14] Even more ominously from the perspective of Soviet leaders, in July 1964 Mao raised the question of Soviet occupation of territories supposedly belonging to other states, including both Japan and China. Speaking to a delegation from the Japanese Socialist Party, Mao argued that such abnormal circumstances had yet to be rectified:

> The Soviet Union has an area of 22 million square kilometers and its population is only 200 million people. It is about time to put an end to this allotment. Japan occupies an area of 370,000 square kilometers and its population is 100 million. About a hundred years ago, the area east of Baikal became Russian territory, and since then Vladivostok, Khabarovsk, Kamchatka, and other areas have become Soviet territory. We have not yet presented our account for this list. In regard to the Kurile Islands, the question is clear as far as we are concerned—they must be returned to Japan.[15]

Not surprisingly, such irredentist claims provoked a clear response at the highest levels of the Soviet leadership. Only a month before his dismissal from power, Khrushchev warned that "the peoples of the Soviet Union do not want others' land, but they will permit no one to encroach on their own land.... Existing boundaries must be respected."[16]

The public raising of the border issue further removed the Sino-Soviet dispute from an ideological plane to one involving historic great power rivalries. No less an exponent of doctrinaire Marxism-Leninism than the Albanian leader Enver Hoxha dates his initial unhappiness with the Chinese from precisely this time. In an August

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[14]See the discussion in Gittings, 1968, pp. 158-161. Soviet sources have never denied that ethnic unrest occurred at that time but place full responsibility on the Chinese side.

[15]Mao's remarks are cited ibid., p. 167.

[16]Ibid., pp. 167-168.

1964 entry from his lengthy chronicle on international communist politics, Hoxha asserted that the PRC's focus on the border question revealed the Chinese "in national chauvinist positions." As Hoxha further argued:

> Regardless of whether or not mistakes [on national boundaries] may have been made, to raise these things now, when we are faced, first of all, with the ideological struggle against modern revisionism, means not to fight Khrushchev, but on the contrary to assist him on his chauvinist course.... [The Chinese] forget that raising territorial claims at this time ... leads to the creation of a situation of military conflict.... The ideological and political struggle against Khrushchev must not be diverted into delicate questions of territorial claims.... Rais[ing] the question of territorial claims [not] simply as a tactic, but as an issue of principle ... [is based on] a nationalist position ... [that] has nothing in common with the struggle against Khrushchevism and Khrushchev.[17]

As an additional Albanian statement has charged, China's actions "provided the Soviet leadership with a powerful weapon against China ... in order to neutralize the effect of the ideological struggle ... [by] present[ing] our struggle as a border dispute on territorial claims."[18] It was only a small series of steps, therefore, to the militarization of the conflict, to "the trap of warmongering plots through military alliances," and finally and most ignominiously, to "China's intention to become an imperialist superpower":

> With Nixon's visit [to China], China joined the dance of imperialist alliances and rivalries for the redivision of the world, where China, too, would have its own share. This visit paved the road to its rapprochement and collaboration with U.S. imperialism and its allies. At the same time, the inauguration of the alliance with the United States of America also marked the abandoning on the part of the Chinese leadership of the genuine socialist countries, the Marxist-Leninist movement, the revolution and the national liberation struggle of the peoples.[19]

The Albanian arguments reveal a certain consistency and logic. By shifting attention away from the ideological competition to a broader range of national security issues, Mao laid a political basis for the Sino-Soviet rivalry to assume its present form. Mao's contribution to Chinese foreign policy remains among the very few areas where the

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[17]The above citations are from Hoxha, 1979, pp. 11-12.

[18]The citation is drawn from Albanian Labor Party Central Committee, 1978, p. B12.

[19]Ibid., pp. B8, B16-B17.

late Chairman's political role is still praised by the current Chinese leadership. As the resolution on the history of the CCP reaffirmed:

> In his later years, he still remained alert to safeguarding the security of our country, stood up to the pressure of the social imperialists, pursued a correct foreign policy, firmly supported the just struggles of all peoples, outlined the correct strategy of the three worlds and advanced the important principle that China would never seek hegemony.[20]

The Global Context

Mao's actions, in conjunction with Soviet efforts to heighten political and military pressure upon China, had begun to impart a very different character to Sino-Soviet relations. Many of the policy conflicts and debates in Chinese security strategy well into the 1970s emphasized this issue.[21] Was the escalation of the Sino-Soviet conflict principally a war of ideas, best met through ideological struggle in the international communist movement and domestic harnessing of nationalistic and sometimes xenophobic sentiments? Or did the growing Soviet challenge compel China to engage more fully and unequivocally in the global power competition that ideological purists found so loathesome? The intermittent insertion of these choices in China's domestic political conflicts, particularly the leadership succession issue, made them even more contentious.[22] Mao's own ambivalence about this issue—at various times he was closely identified with both schools of thought—did not make the resolution any easier.

The dramatic changes in China's domestic politics since Mao's death have dispensed with most of this equivocation and ambivalence.[23] The removal from power of large numbers of Cultural Revolution era officials and the expansion of China's involvement in the international system have combined to resolve the issue posed earlier: China cannot be expected to compete effectively against the Soviet Union as an isolated, vulnerable, and economically backward state. A strong and secure China depends upon a realistic assessment of the opportunities and constraints affecting Chinese power and

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[20]CCP Central Committee, 1981, p. K19.

[21]See, in particular, Gottlieb, 1977; Lieberthal, 1978; Harding, 1980; and Pollack, 1982a.

[22]Pollack, 1978; Lieberthal, 1978; and Lieberthal, 1982.

[23]For two contrasting perspectives on China's internal transformation of recent years and its potential consequences, see Garside, 1981; and Dutt, 1981. For a comprehensive assessment of China's economic needs and probable future directions, see Barnett, 1981.

security, beginning with the PRC's relations with both the Soviet Union and the United States.

EVALUATING THE SUPERPOWERS

The Concept of Superpower

Moscow and Washington can substantially influence Chinese national security policies. China's leaders have never wavered in their belief that the United States and the Soviet Union were in a category apart from all other nations. Although it was not until 1970 that Chinese statements began to refer regularly to both states as "superpowers," the thought was always implicit in Chinese political-military assessment. According to Chinese pronouncements, however, this label is not meant to describe the economic, industrial, and military capacities of either nation, but how and why each exercises its power. Use of the term "hegemony" (*baquan*), now so widespread in Chinese assessments of Soviet power and policy, is not a recent development. Until well into the 1970s, U.S. global policy was cast in the same light, and recent strains in U.S.-Chinese relations have led to its reappearance. In both cases, the connotation is one of overweening ambition, control or coercion of other states, and an imperious attitude in international politics. Attaching this label to the Soviet Union, implicit in earlier attacks on Soviet "great nation chauvinism," occurred only in the context of Moscow's increasing political and military assertiveness since the mid-1960s.

It is not a state's military or economic strength that defines its international position and role, but the purposes to which such power is put. As one Chinese analysis has observed, hegemonism denotes

> any one country trampling on any other country's sovereignty by political, economic, and especially military means, occupying foreign territories, interfering in any other country's internal affairs, plundering others' wealth, threatening the security of other countries and world peace, intending to control, manipulate or dominate other countries or a certain region or even seeking domination over the whole world.[24]

According to Chinese strategic analysts, to varying degrees all other states (including China) are constrained by the superpowers. When less powerful states undertake actions (especially military) within their own regions, Chinese writings generally view such behavior as taken either in concert with or in reaction to one or both superpowers.

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[24]*Hongqi* Commentator, 1979b, p. C2.

Even states considered major powers cannot initiate wholly autonomous actions. Despite Chinese leaders' expressed contempt for a world dominated by two superpowers, they have long acknowledged that only the United States and the Soviet Union have the capacity and will to decide whether war or peace will prevail.

Notwithstanding Beijing's professed identification with the third world, PRC security planners have always been highly attentive to the superpower relationship, toward each other and toward China. The nightmare for Chinese planners would pit the Soviet Union and the United States against China. Before the formalization of the Sino-Soviet alliance and during its more active phase through the 1950s, this argued for periodic overtures to the United States. Scholarly opinion remains divided on the seriousness of the attempted Chinese overtures, but the United States proved unresponsive to PRC moves or engaged in behavior in Korea, Taiwan, and Indochina that threatened Chinese security.[25]

1965: Upheaval, Division, and Realignment

Since the mid-1960s, the importance of U.S.-Soviet relations in Chinese strategic assessment has grown vastly. In 1965, major domestic and external developments unraveled the remaining strands of the Sino-Soviet alliance. Mao's outright rejection of Brezhnev and Kosygin's proposals for "united action" in Vietnam helped set Sino-Soviet relations on a course still evident today. Despite a direct U.S. military challenge in Southeast Asia, Mao foresaw "a period of great upheaval, great division, and great realignment [among] the world's political forces."[26] Although remaining China's major military adversary, according to Mao, the United States was not rash or foolish enough to provoke a war with China.[27] Hostilities in Southeast Asia could be confined to Vietnam, enabling Mao to concentrate on ferreting out his political opponents at home in the incipient Cultural Revolution. Few issues rankled the Vietnamese leadership more than its belief that the PRC sought to use Vietnam as "a buffer between China and imperialism."[28]

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[25]For rival interpretation of these overtures, see Hunt, 1980, and Goldstein, 1980. See also Sutter, 1978.

[26]The phrase first appeared publicly in a major document issued in November 1965. *Renmin Ribao* and *Hongqi* Editorial Departments, 196[r], p. 31; it reappeared in 1977 in *Renmin Ribao* Editorial Department, 1977, p. 17.

[27]On this issue, see Mao's January 1965 comments transcribed in Snow, 1972, pp. 215-216.

[28]As Political Bureau member Truong Chinh has caustically observed: "While loudly denouncing U.S. imperialism, Beijing had in fact given the green light to the United

The Vietnam conflict coincided with a major Chinese reappraisal of the Soviet Union's political and military position in relation to the world's political forces. To Mao, the more ominous international developments in the mid-1960s were under way in the Soviet Union, not in Vietnam. A major Chinese essay argued that the Soviet Union could no longer be included among the world's anti-imperialist forces. The publication of this article marked the first occasion when the United States and Soviet Union were deemed "superpowers" (*chaoji daguo*). "Soviet-U.S. collaboration for the domination of the world" had become a hallmark of the contemporary international situation; the "socialist camp" no longer had any meaning for China. Communists should "draw a clear line of demarcation between themselves and the revisionists . . . and . . . liquidate Khrushchev revisionism in order to welcome the high tide of revolutionary struggle against U.S. imperialism and its lackeys."[29]

This highly politicized atmosphere contributed substantially to the "plague on both your houses" strategy toward both superpowers characteristic of Defense Minister Lin Biao. The global upheaval corresponded with similar developments in China, as Mao sought to oust many of his long-time colleagues from power.[30] Yet as quickly as a "dual adversary" conception toward Moscow and Washington had emerged as the dominant foreign policy line, events began to undermine it. By late 1965, perhaps in response to Mao's raising the territorial issue, Soviet troop strength increased along the previously lightly defended border,[31] transforming the war of words into a potential war with guns. Whatever Khrushchev's limitations in Chinese eyes as either an alliance partner or political antagonist, the onset of a major Sino-Soviet military confrontation began only under his successors.[32] At a time of acute domestic conflict and extreme diplomatic isolation, the Chinese found themselves confronting a hostile military or political presence in all four directions: Taiwan to

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States to launch a direct war of aggression in both parts of Vietnam with Mao Zedong making his notoriously reactionary statement: 'If you do not harm us, we will not harm you.'" Truong, 1982, p. K4.

[29]All the above quotations are drawn from *Renmin Ribao* and *Hongqi* Editorial Departments, 1965, pp. 20-21.

[30]See, for example, the available excerpts of Lin Biao's talk, "Issue of China's Revolution and World Revolution," 26 October 1968, as cited in Zhang, 1980, especially pp. 42-46.

[31]Robinson, 1970, pp. 27-28.

[32]Deng, 1980d, p. L19. It is no doubt true that had Khrushchev continued in power beyond October 1964, he would also have had to confront the Sino-Soviet border question. But he may have proven far less pliant to pressure exerted on Brezhnev and Kosygin by the Soviet military leadership, whose political hand had been strengthened by his ouster.

the east, the United States in Vietnam to the south, India from the west, and the Soviets from the north.

1968: Czechoslovakia and Its Aftermath

The augmentation of Soviet troop strength along the Chinese border prompted a strategic reappraisal in Beijing, but Moscow's invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968 and the subsequent doctrine of "limited sovereignty" for socialist states greatly accelerated this process.[33] These two steps raised the real prospect that China might also be subject to Soviet intimidation or punitive military attack, perhaps directed against the PRC's infant nuclear weapons capability.[34] Indeed, in the aftermath of the Czech invasion, Premier Zhou Enlai and other Chinese leaders for the first time described the USSR as a "social-imperialist state"—that is, socialist in name but imperialist in deeds—capable of initiating a surprise attack against the PRC.[35] With the outbreak of bloody border clashes in 1969, Chinese leaders had to weigh the prospect of full-scale Sino-Soviet war.

The militarization of the Sino-Soviet conflict compelled the Chinese leadership to assess the consequences of adhering rigidly to a "dual adversary" conception of PRC relations with the two superpowers. Beyond the immediate need to control tensions and limit further armed conflicts along their northern border, leaders in Beijing had to address the long-term Soviet threat and the political and diplomatic opportunities for countering the presence of the "new czars" along China's northern borders. To Lin Biao and many others in the Chinese high command, the Soviet military presence represented an opportunity as much as a problem. Both the United States and the Soviet Union were imperialist powers; both threatened China; both had to be opposed, politically as well as militarily.

A threatening external environment plus continuing domestic instabilities strengthened the case for heavy military representation in party councils. Lin's predominance in the CCP hierarchy was demonstrated by his designation at the Ninth Party Congress in April 1969 as Mao's constitutionally appointed successor, and his followers enjoyed exceptional strength at the Politburo level and on the newly elected CCP Central Committee. The armed forces also garnered a large share of the state budget. Despite the serious disruption of the Chinese economy during the Cultural Revolution, PRC defense ex-

[33]These events are traced in great detail in Gottlieb, 1977.

[34]For an exhaustive analysis of Sino-Soviet relations at the time of the Czech invasion, see Wich, 1980.

[35]Ibid., pp. 56-60.

penditure continued to grow steadily throughout the late 1960s, with average annual growth rates of 10 percent. Between 1967 and 1971 alone, aggregate growth exceeded 60 percent.[36]

To other Chinese officials, the consequences of the Soviet force buildup were quite different. Zhou Enlai, in particular, viewed the conjunction of China's military vulnerabilities and diplomatic isolation as an enormous danger. Although the quantity, quality, and disposition of Soviet forces were obviously insufficient for Moscow to occupy all of China, they were capable of inflicting great harm, especially against China's industrial heartland.[37] The Soviets were familiar with the terrain of potential military operations (from the Manchurian campaign of 1945) and aware of the weaknesses of China's military forces.[38] No matter how distant and attenuated the Eastern Military Districts were from sources of resupply, over time Soviet logistic capabilities could only improve. Unlike the United States, which relied principally on air and naval assets deployed thousands of miles from home to "contain" China, the Soviet Union had a geographic advantage. Its soldiers, including large numbers of ground forces, were on Soviet soil.

Chinese calculations about Soviet troop deployments were from the first qualitatively different from earlier reactions to the U.S. military presence in Asia. Since the Sino-American hostilities in Korea, U.S. military forces had avoided armed conflict with China. China's opposition to U.S. policy was almost always political rather than military. Although the United States had maintained a major military presence in East Asia for two full decades, Zhou and Mao had apparently concluded that the U.S. challenge to China was diminishing over time.[39] Both viewed U.S. actions in Vietnam as the final, futile gasps of an overcommitted imperialist power in its "deathbed struggle."

These views were not yet fully reflected in Chinese strategic assessment. At the close of the 1960s, PRC statements still remained wedded to the notion of "collusion" between the United States and the USSR. The two major world powers were supposedly "working hand in glove" in pursuit of "common counterrevolutionary interests." Gradually, however, the implications of the USSR's increasing emer-

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[36]Central Intelligence Agency, 1980, pp. 2-3. Although estimates on PRC defense expenditure encompass three separate categories of expenditure (investment, operating costs, and research, development, testing and evaluation), weapons procurement accounts for two-fifths of this figure, reflecting the new equipment needs created by the growth in forces deployed along the Sino-Soviet border at that time.

[37]Middleton, 1978, pp. 141-162; Hunt, 1982; and Green and Yost, 1982.

[38]Dzirkals, 1976; Despres, Dzirkals, and Whaley, 1976.

[39]For a more detailed discussion of Chinese assessments of U.S. political-military strategy in Asia in the 1950s and 1960s and its consequences for PRC security, see Pollack, 1982b, especially pp. 13-35.

gence as a global power began to receive fuller consideration. In April 1970 (the centenary of Lenin's birth), an authoritative Chinese statement took full stock of the changes in Soviet strategy since Khrushchev's ouster. The USSR's role as rival and intermittent partner of the United States had never before been as fully or candidly assessed:

> The essence of the Khrushchev-Brezhnev renegade clique's rise to power lies in the transformation of the socialist state created by Lenin and Stalin into a hegemonic social imperialist power.
>
> The Soviet revisionist renegade clique . . . is trying hard to bring a number of these countries [in Asia, Africa, and Latin America] into its sphere of influence in contending with U.S. imperialism for the intermediate zone. . . .
>
> In order to redivide the world, Soviet revisionism and U.S. imperialism are contending and colluding with each other at the same time.
>
> Since Brezhnev came to power, the Soviet revisionist renegade clique has gone farther and farther down the road to militarism. It has taken over Khrushchev's military strategic principle of nuclear blackmail and . . . redoubled its efforts to expand conventional armaments, comprehensively strengthening its ground, naval, and air forces, and carried out the imperialist "gun-boat policy" throughout the period.
>
> With Soviet revisionist social-imperialism joining the company of world imperialism, the contradictions among the imperialists have become more acute. All countries and people subjected to aggression, control, intervention or bullying by U.S. imperialism and Soviet revisionism are forming the broadest united front.[40]

Having further deemed the Brezhnev Doctrine an "outright doctrine of hegemony," the editorial's authors argued that a pattern of Soviet global reach and interests had begun to develop.

1971: Contradictions and Opportunities

Left undetermined in this assessment was the degree of threat that Moscow and Washington posed to Beijing and the corresponding Chinese opportunities and imperatives. Two weeks after Henry Kissinger's secret visit to Beijing in July 1971, an authoritative article on this issue appeared in *Red Flag*, the theoretical journal of the CCP Central Committee. According to this evaluation, the competition between the world's two leading imperialist states would provide China with the breathing space it so urgently required. Although ostensibly

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[40]*Renmin Ribao, Hongqi*, and *Jiefangjun Bao* Joint Editorial, 1970, pp. A8, 9, 13, 16.

a discussion of CCP strategy in the war of resistance against Japan, there were obvious distinctions between "Japanese imperialism which is now committing aggression against China and the imperialist powers which are not doing so now." The proletariat therefore needed to grasp the opportunities afforded it by the "many contradictions" among the imperialist powers, in particular "to force our principal enemy into a narrow and isolated position." As the article observed, "the tactical principles formulated by Chairman Mao for struggling against the enemy represent a dialectical unity of firm principles and great flexibility." Mao's analysis "still provides good guidance for us to know the present international situation correctly."[41] It hardly required a master dialectician to apply these arguments.

Chinese leaders (in particular Zhou and Mao) were increasingly willing to distinguish between "the primary enemy and the secondary enemy" and between "the temporary allies and the indirect allies." A "united front" combining both "alliance and struggle" would far better serve China's interests than "any erroneous left or right tendencies,"[42] a veiled allusion to the views of Defense Minister Lin Biao. For both political and budgetary reasons, Lin was reluctant to pursue such a profound shift in direction; indeed, he may have expressly opposed these steps.[43]

Despite this possibility, all Chinese accounts of Lin's growing estrangement from Mao and Zhou emphasize domestic power rivalries. In 1970, Lin saw his political position endangered by Zhou's effort (with Mao's blessing) to reinstitute Party leadership in China; becoming increasingly desperate, he attempted to unseat them. Differences with respect to foreign policy strategy have been ignored in the lengthy bill of particulars documenting Lin's efforts to "usurp power." Nor has the PRC ever alleged any Soviet foreknowledge or complicity in the planning or execution of Lin's abortive "counterrevolutionary coup."[44]

Even if these changes endangered China's ties with Albania and strained her relations with Vietnam and North Korea, the immediate advantages were indisputable. As Henry Kissinger has noted, Beijing's "American connection" yielded substantial gains for Chinese security strategy in three distinct areas: It relieved China of the threat of a two-front war; the USSR had to reconsider attacking or unduly

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[41]All the quotations are drawn from Writing Group, 1971, pp. 1-9.

[42]Ibid., pp. 4, 6, 7.

[43]According to Stanley Karnow, Lin opposed the invitation extended to President Nixon to visit China, allegedly charging that "if Zhou can invite Nixon, I can invite Brezhnev." Karnow, 1971.

[44]For the most comprehensive account of the circumstances leading up to Lin's death, see Kau, 1975. For more recent Chinese documentation, see Hua, 1980.

pressuring the PRC; and there would be no Soviet-American "collusion" at China's expense.[45] When coupled with private U.S. pledges to provide China with political support at the time of the Indo-Pakistani crisis in November 1971, the returns on what was now termed "Chairman Mao's revolutionary diplomatic line" seemed both tangible and substantial.[46]

1973: Betwixt and Between the Superpowers

The PRC leadership moved rapidly to consolidate these gains. Yet a dualistic quality continued to characterize Chinese security strategy for much of the 1970s. Beijing sought to deflect Soviet pressure by building political and economic links to the West and Japan, providing China its badly needed "breathing space." In previous circumstances, defense preparations had been necessary along three fronts—the Sino-Vietnamese frontier, opposite Taiwan, and the Sino-Soviet border. Within months of Lin Biao's death, Chinese defense expenditure was severely curtailed, notably in aircraft production.[47] In May 1973, Zhou stated publicly that a Soviet surprise attack on the PRC had been deterred.[48]

Zhou's assertions were not without substantiation. Although Soviet troop strength now totalled 45 divisions, the rate of increase in Soviet border forces had abated,[49] and no recurrence of the threat of full-scale war was evident after 1969. Zhou therefore argued that the Soviet military threat to China was a diversionary tactic, with the principal threat posed to more vulnerable states.

The underlying logic of PRC policy was to depict China as largely outside the sphere of superpower competition and hence immune to pressures and threats from abroad. China did not wish to be exploited to help America in its rivalry with the Soviet Union—described by Mao as "standing on China's shoulders to reach Moscow."[50] But there was a parallel Chinese effort to ridicule the prospects for superpower detente. Soviet-American competition was portrayed as a reflection of both nations' "hegemonic ambitions," which existed "independent of man's will" and were "bound to lead to world war someday." Conveniently left out of this formulation was the People's Republic. China, being neither imperialist nor the "focus of superpower

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[45]Kissinger, 1979, p. 765.
[46]Ibid., pp. 906, 910-911.
[47]For fuller details, see Central Intelligence Agency, 1980.
[48]Childs, 1973.
[49]International Institute of Strategic Studies, 1974, p. 6.
[50]Kissinger, 1979, p. 763.

contention," could stand at the side of various oppressed and threatened nations, but as observer, not participant.[51]

China's position in the strategic competition constituted a pivotal issue. In Zhou's view, China was a less than central factor in the global power balance and a secondary or even tertiary target of potential Soviet attack. Taken to its logical conclusion, however, such thinking ran the contrary risk that China might be judged so marginal as to be taken largely for granted, especially by the United States.

Zhou conveyed these paradoxical concerns to the Tenth CCP National Congress.[52] He noted that the two superpowers "contend as well as collude with each other" but that competition and antagonism were considered the dominant characteristics: "Contention is absolute and protracted, whereas collusion is relative and temporary." Moreover, "strategically the key point of their contention is Europe," which Zhou further sought to substantiate with contemptuous references to Kissinger's promulgation of 1973 as "the year of Europe."

The PRC was far more secure than it had been several years before. Earlier in the 1970s, Chinese officials had spoken ominously (if erroneously) about the presence of "a million Soviet troops massed on China's borders and threatening China's security." Soviet strength was now described as a "mere million troops"—obviously insufficient to invade and occupy China.[53] The presence of these troops, Zhou contended, was to lull the West into a false sense of security, because Moscow was only "making a feint to the East while attacking in the West." China, he argued further, although "an attractive piece of meat coveted by all," had proven "too tough even to bite," let alone "devour."

For all the alacrity with which Zhou attacked the United States and Soviet Union for their "contention for hegemony," it was obvious that China stood to gain in a world with two antagonistic superpowers. The disparity between Chinese warnings of "the visibly growing danger of war" and the efforts of the PRC to reduce its defense expenditures during the early and mid-1970s was no contradiction at all: China was simply judged apart from the fray.[54] Zhou even suggested the possibility of a long-term period of peace that would enable China to resurrect its shattered polity and economy. Quoting Mao that "the danger of a new world war still exists," Zhou also asserted that "it will be possible to prevent such a war, so long as the peoples who are becoming more and more awakened keep the orientation clearly in

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[51]See, in particular, Deng, 1974a.

[52]All quotations in this paragraph are drawn from Zhou, 1973, pp. 24-25.

[53]Burns, 1974.

[54]For a particularly telling example of this view, see Wu, 1973.

sight, heighten their vigilance, strengthen unity, and persevere in struggle."[55]

The retrenching American political and military role in Asia also substantiated earlier assertions by Zhou and Mao about the decline of American power. Yet such a diminished U.S. role had both positive and negative implications for Chinese security. With the Soviet Union now deemed a global power whose ambitions equalled or exceeded those of the United States, Beijing ironically had a growing stake in the continued exercise of American power.

Yet the Chinese saw evidence of continuing American decline. As a lengthy article in *People's Daily* argued at the close of 1973:

> U.S. imperialism is finding the going tougher and tougher from year to year. It has been unable to surmount difficulties at home, and all its endeavors abroad have failed to turn the tide which shows all the characteristics of a decline. It has been compelled to withdraw its forces from Vietnam.

By contrast, the Soviet Union seemed more potent and active:

> In this all-round striving for hegemony, Soviet revisionist social imperialism shows a greater momentum and has extended its reach farther and wider than the U.S. . . . It concentrates its greatest attention in Europe . . . it has also made reckless inroads in other parts of the world. In a word, it has committed penetration wherever there is a chance. In some countries or regions, it arrived at the heels of the United States; in some others, it took the United States' place as soon as the latter left; and in still some other areas which the United States has not been able to lay hands on, Soviet revisionist social-imperialism took the advantage to step in.[56]

Thus, the depiction of two superpowers locked in ceaseless competition was subject to important modifications. Deng Xiaoping in particular used this assessment both to lecture the United States on what he deemed American illusions about detente and inadequacies in the U.S. military posture with regard to the USSR.

1974-75: The More Dangerous Superpower

Deng was also the first Chinese leader to argue that the expansion of Soviet power justified an increasingly benign view of the United States. In an August 1974 conversation with a visiting Japanese delegation, he argued that "of the two superpowers, the United States is

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[55]Zhou, 1973, p. 28.

[56]All the above quotes are from Zhung, 1973, pp. 30-34.

not as dangerous as the Soviet Union up to a certain point. The United States is rather on the defensive in order to maintain its rights and interests throughout the world. On the contrary, the Soviet Union has gone onto the offensive with a view to intruding on U.S. vested rights."[57] Deng's views were not immediately accepted as authoritative. When Zhou gave his final speech at the National People's Congress in January 1975, the United States and Soviet Union (listed in that order) were deemed co-equal threats to peace. He made no reference to their momentary collusion, and unlike his Party Congress address of 1973, this speech failed to note any possibility of preventing or even postponing their eventual conflict.[58]

Such changes and discrepancies were no doubt linked to China's domestic political climate. Even as Zhou and Deng sought to expand upon their success in carrying out "Chairman Mao's revolutionary diplomatic line," they faced severe challenges from leftist forces in the Chinese leadership. Zhou, fully aware of his own terminal illness and of Mao's increasing decrepitude, saw the growth of Soviet power and the consequent shifts in the U.S.-Soviet balance as urgently requiring a redirection in China's long-deferred goals in economic development. Such steps required a degree of leadership consensus; it also entailed the return to power of numerous officials disgraced in the Cultural Revolution—anathema to China's radical leaders.

It was not altogether clear whether (and how) assertions of American decline and Soviet ascendancy strengthened or weakened the political hand of those seeking to expand China's economic and political links with the outside world. Such assessments had a double-edged quality. An absence of American resolve in Chinese eyes, underscored by immobility during the prolonged Watergate crisis, diminished the attractiveness of the United States as a partner. The continuing inability to resolve the Taiwan question sufficiently to achieve full diplomatic relations, President Ford's chilly visit to China in December 1975 (contrasted with the signing in the Soviet Far East of the SALT II accords), and continued attacks by China's political left on the initiatives of Deng and Zhou all boded ill for the future of Chinese ties to the West.

If global strategic trends were as worrisome as Deng claimed, such developments could well be used to *accelerate* the pace of China's relations with the United States and Western Europe. The collapse of the Saigon government in the spring of 1975 provided the opportunity to pose the strategic situation in even more worrisome terms. A *People's Daily* editorial on May 9 argued that "the Soviet social imperial-

[57]Deng, 1974b, p. 2.
[58]Zhou, 1975.

ists . . . are leaving no stone unturned in their efforts to replace the U.S. imperialists at a time when the latter are becoming increasingly vulnerable and strategically passive."[59] Deng was the first Chinese leader to draw additional implications from the American defeat. In separate audiences in June and July with President Ferdinand Marcos of the Philippines and Prime Minister Khukrit Pramoj of Thailand, he warned both leaders "to beware of the tiger coming from the back door while pushing out the wolf from the front door." In the latter conversation, he further warned that "a superpower is trying to impose hegemony" in South Vietnam and that "a superpower may request the use of bases in South Vietnam."[60]

Weeks later, a Xinhua correspondent detailed in almost alarmist tones the increasing expansion of Soviet power not only in Europe but on a global scale.

> U.S. imperialism . . . though it has long since toppled from its pinnacle, . . . is making desperate efforts to preserve its foothold. . . .
>
> Soviet social-imperialism . . . has been doing everything it can to squeeze into and take over the U.S. spheres of influence. . . . As a breeding ground of a new world war, Soviet social-imperialism is far more dangerous.[61]

At the end of July, Deng's metaphor of tiger and wolf was discussed by Ren Guping, presumably a pseudonym for a writing group and since the mid-1960s a principal source of key Chinese strategic assessments. Ren's warnings about the growing Soviet presence in Asia, although directed to Southeast Asian nations, had inescapable implications for China's security as well:

> Soviet social-imperialism, like a hungry tiger coming out from its lair in the mountains, poses an even greater danger to the states and peoples in Southeast Asia than decaying U.S. imperialism. That is why it is far more important to heighten vigilance against the Soviet Union . . . [which] is trying its best to replace the United States as the overlord in Asia.[62]

Despite Europe's supposed centrality as the "focus of superpower contention," Chinese strategic analysts had begun to concede that Soviet power was shifting toward more promising opportunities in Asia. Past assertions that the Soviet-American rivalry in the West reduced China's vulnerability to Soviet pressure seemed much less

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[59]*Renmin Ribao*, 1975, p. 8.
[60]Xinhua, 1975a, pp. A9-A10; *The Nation*, 1975, pp. A10-A11.
[61]Xinhua, 1975b, p. 6.
[62]Ren, 1975a, pp. 11-12.

certain under altered geopolitical circumstances. As early as March 1974, an article in *People's Daily* had argued that the Soviet Union was casting a "covetous eye" on the Strait of Malacca in order to link its Vladivostok-based Pacific Fleet forces with those deployed in the Indian Ocean. Should the Strait be subject to Soviet control, Moscow could then link its Asian-based navy with its forces in the Mediterranean to achieve "hegemony in this vast expanse of water."[63]

Such trends gave far greater urgency to the implications of the growth of Soviet power for the security of China. By the end of 1975, Ren Guping (still insisting that the core of superpower contention was in Europe) saw this struggle as moving increasingly into the third world; Ren now saw the tiger at the front door rather than the rear.[64] If trends were this worrisome, then the growing Soviet threat to China necessitated major redirections in Chinese policy. Past fixations on ideologically uncontaminated politics in relation to the West seemed a political luxury that China could ill afford. Deng's increasingly bold efforts over the course of 1975 to spur China's modernization were directly related to the PRC's external vulnerabilities and outright backwardness.[65]

1976-1977: Leadership Succession and Policy Change

The coalescence of China's leadership around this alternative approach to China's long-term Soviet problem occurred only in the aftermath of the convulsive internal political events of 1976. The death of Zhou Enlai in January, Deng's second (if momentary) fall from political grace in April, Mao's death in September, the subsequent purging of the "gang of four," and Hua Guofeng's elevation to the Party Chairmanship finally broke China's political logjam. In retrospect, only such major political realignments permitted the recasting of the Sino-Soviet rivalry away from ideology and into the realm of national power and global strategy. Deng in particular challenged long-sacrosanct policies, encouraging leaders at all levels to "emancipate the mind" and depart from the rigid, personalized politics of the Maoist era. From the time of his formal reinstatement to power in July 1977, Deng viewed foreign and security policy as pivotal elements in China's political reorientation. The assessment of the future of the Sino-Soviet rivalry, therefore, begins with an evaluation of the political, economic, and military issues confronting the post-Mao leadership.

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[63]Xiang, 1974.
[64]Ren, 1975b.
[65]Lieberthal, 1982, especially pp. 20-26.

II. CHINESE SECURITY STRATEGY IN THE 1980s

The profound changes in Chinese politics since 1976 have substantially altered the framework of debate over all issues confronting the leadership in Beijing. Security strategy is no exception. The issues generally associated with national security policy are now more openly and candidly addressed than at any time in the past three decades. This phenomenon is not limited solely to an increased flow of documentation in the Chinese press. External observers, including officials of foreign governments, have gained access to Chinese leaders and institutions that would have been unthinkable only a few years ago.

The use of the term "security" conveys more fully than "military policy" or "national defense" the range of external imperatives impinging upon a state's decision process. As Wolfers noted in his classic essay on this topic, national security remains a decidedly ambiguous symbol, laden with a range of objective and subjective connotations.[1]

The record of the past three decades suggests a set of recurring concerns to PRC decisionmakers. From the earliest months of the new regime, Chinese leaders have had to respond to major force deployments directed against China by militarily superior adversaries. Many of the episodic conflicts involving Beijing's armed forces have been beyond territory the PRC physically controlled. Leaders in Beijing have repeatedly sought to reduce their vulnerability and (at times) isolation in international politics, without unduly mortgaging Chinese sovereignty or political control to any outside power. In addition, they have had to address China's security needs within a framework of resource scarcity, the needs of national defense being one among several competing budgetary and manpower priorities.[2]

Although the allocation of such resources is a problem for all nations, China's range of policy choices has been more circumscribed than most other major powers. Prevailing sentiment has favored a security strategy that depends on political, diplomatic, and even psychological factors as much as on military calculations. A comprehensive approach to Chinese security in the coming years must pay close attention to the political and institutional framework of such policy debate. Three issues are likely to dominate Chinese security plan-

[1]Wolfers, 1962.

[2]For a synthesis of this historical record, see Pollack, 1980, 1981a.

ning: the containment of Soviet power, the question of defense versus development, and the modernization of military power.

CONSTRAINING SOVIET POWER

The long-term Sino-Soviet political and military rivalry is the central issue on China's security and foreign policy agenda. In a major speech delivered in January 1980 to 10,000 ranking cadres in Beijing, Deng Xiaoping argued that "opposing hegemonism and defending world peace" would serve (along with the return of Taiwan and the development of the national economy) as one of three key policy goals for the coming decade.[3] In the wake of the realignment of China's upper leadership at the Sixth Plenum of the Eleventh Central Committee in July 1981, Deng reaffirmed these goals.[4] The task of policy assessment, however, remains that of identifying the elements of this competition and mobilizing resources to constrain Soviet power and diminish pressure against China. Both China and the Soviet Union have an interest in specifying the terms of their rivalry.

China's increasing preoccupation with the long-term trends in the growth and exercise of Soviet power compare to PRC assessments of U.S. strategy when the United States was the principal military adversary.[5] PRC evaluations now delve far more deeply into the constraints and choices in Moscow's security planning. Numerous Chinese analyses deem Moscow's conduct in various regions of instability as part of an underlying strategy of global conquest. Some voices in the leadership still see the Soviet military threat to China in directly menacing terms. An alternative view stresses the constraints and limitations on the exercise of Soviet power. The USSR is described as an increasingly beleaguered (if not enfeebled) military power, faced with difficult choices on the allocation of its armed forces and the application of its military power. These contrary judgments reflect disagreements within the Chinese leadership pertaining to the degree and nature of the threat of Soviet hegemonism to global and regional security and the most appropriate means of deflecting such a threat.

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[3]Deng's speech was not released officially, but it has circulated widely outside of China. For an unofficial text, see Deng, 1980a. For an officially published article covering many of the same ideas, see *Renmin Ribao* Commentator, 1980, especially p. L8.

[4]See Deng, 1981c, p. W5.

[5]On the latter issue, see Pollack, 1982b.

Such assessments pertain directly to underlying issues confronting Chinese decisionmakers and strategic planners alike.[6] Will international imperatives compel Beijing to enter into an increasingly broad range of security arrangements with the outside world, particularly the industrialized nations of the West? Are the tasks implicit in the "international united front against hegemonism" divisible? Do these tasks presuppose active collaboration, coordination, and consultation with the West, or are they simply assertions of shared concerns? To what extent can Soviet preoccupations in other regions and with other more immediate security concerns (for example, Afghanistan and Poland) diminish the more direct Soviet threat to China? And is the Soviet threat most appropriately viewed as an immediate, frontal military challenge to the territorial integrity of China?

The answers to these questions are far from obvious. Closer assessment of these writings reveals considerable ambiguity, contradiction, and fluctuation. Strategic assessment, as always, concerns judgments about time, political consequence, and the dialectic between short-run imperatives and long-run political, military, and economic trends. The substance and style of such assessment reflect China's tradition of strategic thought and the centrality of military power in the Chinese revolution and in the effort to protect Chinese security since 1949.

Chinese research institutes assessing issues of global policy include the recently established Beijing Institute for International Strategic Studies, nominally headed by a Deputy Chief of Staff (Wu Xiuquan) and staffed principally by former active duty military personnel. Whether this institute in any sense offers a military viewpoint for security tasks remains to be seen. At a minimum, it addresses the need for an intellectual and institutional framework to examine issues previously less subject to sustained inquiry and political assessment.

To the extent that a direct Soviet military threat to China is deemed a lesser (or at least less pressing) consideration than events in either Indochina or Afghanistan, the expressly military component of Chinese security strategy becomes less important on the Chinese political agenda. Deng and his allies have sought to avoid the debilitating effects of a costly and draining military competition with the USSR in the context of China's broader developmental objectives and where the PRC cannot possibly hope to match the Soviet armed forces deployed against China. Yet the PRC's rivalry with Moscow involves calculations much more varied and complex than assessing the order

[6]For an especially candid overview of China's requirements for an anti-Soviet coalition and its overall prospects, see Si, 1981.

of battle along the Sino-Soviet border. As one authoritative Chinese pronouncement has observed: "Compared with wars in the past, a large-scale modern war is even less a purely military question. Its preparations cannot but be closely interwoven with such factors as domestic, financial, and economic affairs and external relations."[7]

Chinese analyses reveal the PRC's attention to deterring major armed conflict rather than preparing for an impending full-scale Sino-Soviet war. The Chinese entertain few illusions about their capabilities to repulse a major Soviet attack. War avoidance must therefore be based on three considerations: (1) undertaking defensive preparations that greatly raise the potential costs of war for the USSR; (2) avoiding needless provocation of the USSR at times of heightened Sino-Soviet tension, thereby reducing the attendant dangers to China; and (3) fostering an effective security coalition that tempers rather than provokes Soviet actions. The intricate and delicate balance among these three factors is pivotal to China's economic, political, and security directions for the foreseeable future.

DEFENSE VERSUS DEVELOPMENT

The relationship between the international environment and the priority of China's defense effort within the modernization program is the second key issue in Chinese security strategy. From the perspective of other newly industrializing societies, the choices and constraints confronting the Chinese are far from unique, yet there are major differences. No matter how underdeveloped China might seem, the PRC's military effort already dwarfs that of all but a handful of states. A largely agrarian, labor intensive economy, China possesses an indigenous defense industrial system second only to the superpowers; this system can produce large quantities of armaments across the entire range of defense needs.[8] The sophistication of the technological and manpower base, however, is not highly advanced. Breakthroughs in defense design, innovation, manufacture, and quality control remain the exclusive preserve of the advanced industrial states. Moreover, economic and political dislocation over the past two decades has made China continue to lag behind.

Chinese defense planners acknowledge that the PRC's ability to narrow this gap depends principally on the mobilization of indigenous financial, technological, and managerial resources. Nevertheless, the disparities in numerous categories of weapons systems are so great

[7]*Renmin Ribao* Editorial Department, 1977, p. 34.
[8]For additional discussion, see Pollack, 1979.

that technological and managerial assistance from abroad could prove enormously beneficial. The nature of the international situation—or, rather, how the international situation is viewed and depicted by Chinese leaders—will affect defense modernization mainly in three ways: (1) the priority accorded national defense in relation to other budgetary, manpower, and investment needs; (2) the political and budgetary opportunities for Chinese defense industries to gain sustained access to advanced defense items or defense-related technology from abroad; and (3) the terms and extent of technology acquisition and absorption, especially the degree of indigenous control over this process.

From the time of the Korean War, the priority accorded "defense construction" over "economic construction" has been a recurring issue in Chinese policy debate. Although this issue has often been posed in somewhat unidimensional terms, the relative tranquility of global and regional politics has been a recurrent consideration for determining the direction and pace of China's modernization effort. If major armed conflict was judged likely or even imminent, then "preparations against war" had to assume paramount importance. In less threatening circumstances, when war was judged unlikely, attention has turned to agricultural, industrial, and scientific development, with defense modernization a beneficiary of progress at other levels.

This basic issue in resource allocation has at times been subject to extreme politicization. Particularly when China's politics have veered leftward, "war preparedness" has emphasized the mobilization of the Chinese populace rather than raising the level of China's military capabilities and combat readiness.[9] Since Mao's death, however, the debate has avoided such politicization. From the earliest attacks on the "gang of four" in late 1976, discussions of economic development strategy and its relationship to the international situation as a whole have assumed considerable importance in Chinese leadership debate. The late December publication of Mao's seminal speech of April 1956, "On the Ten Major Relationships," signalled this trend, especially because Mao's remarks derived from what is generally regarded as the halcyon era of Chinese economic planning.[10]

Although the link between economic development strategy and the Sino-Soviet military rivalry has not always been made explicit, the underlying relationships are apparent. As Mao outlined in his address, the strengthening of China's national defense could best be achieved by "faster growth of economic construction." A "new war of aggression against China or another world war" both seemed unlikely; Mao therefore predicted a period of peace for a decade or more. The

[9]See, in particular, Jencks, 1982, especially Chap. 3.
[10]Mao, 1956.

most important issues in defense modernization concerned proportion and time. When the threat of war had receded, rapid acquisition of modern military capabilities could be deferred; China's development could therefore achieve better results. Nor would defense construction suffer, because economic progress would permit a sophisticated military program at a later date.

Mao's arguments were challenged by advocates of military modernization. Having played a vital role in the arrest of the "gang of four" and the concurrent promotion of Hua Guofeng to the Party Chairmanship, the Army high command enjoyed its most powerful position since the tenure of Lin Biao. The professionally oriented commanders had a rare opportunity to air their views and resource preferences. In particular, they disagreed that defense preparedness could be deferred. For the first time since the early 1970s, Mao's rhetoric about "the danger of war visibly growing" was accompanied by allusions to the "threat from the North":

> The Soviet social imperialists have not given up their ambitions to subjugate China.... We must therefore heighten our vigilance, strengthen preparedness against war and do military training well. We should be prepared in mind and material to deal with a surprise attack on our country by imperialists and social imperialists.[11]

Such views were both strengthened and challenged in subsequent months. A January 20 article in *Guangming Ribao* argued that the "considerable independence and initiative" of the defense industries would permit military modernization to proceed at its own pace, possibly outstripping progress in other areas.[12] Although proponents of economic growth conceded the inevitability of war and mentioned the Soviet Union's "wild ambition to subjugate China," these conditions necessitated heightened agricultural and industrial preparations *before* the outbreak of such a conflict.[13] When Ye Jianying, China's senior military leader still in the public eye, supported the latter position, the tide of opinion may well have begun to shift. As Ye argued at a conference on industrial development in early May:

> Chairman Mao said in 1964 that we have two fists and one rump. One fist is agriculture, the other defense industries. If we want the fists to pack a wallop, our rump must be firmly anchored. The rump is basic industries....

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[11]Theoretical Group, 1976, p. E7.
[12]Theoretical Group, 1977, p. E2.
[13]See CCP Central Committee, 1977.

> So long as imperialism and social-imperialism remain in the world . . . we must ceaselessly strengthen national defense capabilities. . . . This requires support from industry, particularly the basic industries. Without powerful basic industries, we will not have adequate modern arms and equipment, means of transportation and supply, means of reconnaissance and highly developed communications and command systems—in a word, we will not be able to modernize our national defense.[14]

Even if the inevitability of war meant that China had to "race against time," slighting the tasks of basic economic development threatened to skew the entire "four modernizations" program.

With Deng's return to power before the Eleventh Party Congress in early August, another of the periodic defense versus development debates had run its course. In Hua Guofeng's political report to the Congress, the possibility of delaying the outbreak of the "inevitable world war" was mentioned for the first time since Zhou's passing reference at the Tenth Congress in 1973. As Hua argued:

> So long as the people of all countries heighten their vigilance, close their ranks, get prepared and wage unrelenting struggles, they may be able to put off the outbreak of war, or will find themselves in a favorable position when war does break out.[15]

Even if (as Hua also asserted) the USSR was still "bent on subjugating our country," the appropriate strategy was to emphasize China's long-term scientific, industrial, and technological development, not an abrupt "quick fix" to compete with the Soviet Union.[16] China needed to buy time rather than race against it.

Such steps could be justified only by discriminating unambiguously between the rival hegemonic powers. The November 1 issue of *People's Daily* was devoted entirely to justifying this proposition. The underlying judgments in this lengthy defense of China's foreign policy were unequivocal and explicit and marked the further triumph of Deng Xiaoping's views:

> Of the two imperialist superpowers, the Soviet Union is the more ferocious, the more reckless, the more treacherous, and the most dangerous source of world war. . . . All [U.S. imperialism] can do at present is to strive to protect its vested interests and go over to the defensive in its overall strategy. . . . The Soviet Union has decided to employ an offensive strategy to encroach on the sovereignty of all other countries and weaken and supplant U.S. influence in all parts of the world. . . .

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[14]Ye, 1977, p. 18.
[15]Hua, 1977, p. 41.
[16]Ibid., pp. 53-54.

> The people of China and the people of the rest of the world firmly demand peace and oppose a new world war. Faced with the gigantic task of speeding up our socialist construction . . . we in China urgently need a long period of peace. . . . It is not only the common wish of the people of the world to put off the outbreak of war by stepping up the struggle against hegemonism and spiking the war plans of the Soviet Union and the United States, but it is also practical and possible to do so. World war, though inevitable, can be postponed.[17]

International conditions—in particular the growing accommodation between the PRC and the West—allowed a far more measured approach to the tasks of defense modernization. As then Minister of National Defense Xu Xiangqian argued in the fall of 1979:

> The modernization of national defense cannot be divorced from the modernization of agriculture, industry, science, and technology and, in the final analysis, is based on the national economy. . . . Blindly pursuing large-scale and high-speed development in building national defense will invariably and seriously hinder the development of the national economy and harm the base of the defense industry. Subsequently "haste makes waste."[18]

Because current international conditions enabled China to conduct "economic, scientific, and technological exchanges with other countries," and because "we believe that it is possible to delay the outbreak of war," China "should build and develop the defense industry step by step."[19]

Some Domestic Implications

As subsequent events have demonstrated, the economic expectations generated in the immediate aftermath of Mao's death and the purge of the "gang of four" were greatly exaggerated.[20] The opportunities for a "quick fix" solution to China's military deficiencies were similarly overblown. The PRC's "great leap outward"—replete with expectations of extensive Chinese purchases of technology abroad—had outstripped China's capacity either to pay for or successfully absorb a major infusion of modern arms and machines.

China's policies of "economic reform and readjustment" (in particular the latter) have injected an unusual degree of candor into the Chi-

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[17]*Renmin Ribao* Editorial Department, 1977, pp. 22, 23, 33, 35.
[18]Xu, 1979, p. L13.
[19]Ibid., pp. L14, L18.
[20]One commentary on the "leftist line in economic work" has asserted that "in 1978 another 'Great Leap Forward' nearly took place." Wang and Wu, 1980, p. L19.

nese leadership debate. The ominous talk of 1976 and 1977 stressing the urgent need to "race against time" has disappeared. Although international conditions are not judged benign, they are now considered sufficiently stable to permit greater proportionality and economic balance.

> Ours is a country with a population of nearly one billion, 800 million of whom are peasants. We have a poor foundation to start with, our economic development is uneven and the level of our labor productivity and per capita national income is very low. After ensuring the livelihood needs of the nearly one billion people, few financial and material resources are left for accumulation. If we divorce ourselves from this basic fact and arbitrarily try to increase accumulation and go after excessively high speed, we are bound to . . . aggravate the economic imbalances left by history. . . . Although we may not be able to achieve quite so high a speed for the time being, in the long term point of view . . . we will have a solid foundation.[21]

There could be few better descriptions of why China's need for a "peaceful international environment" is so urgent. All steps to establish greater normalcy in economic planning and organization reflect at least a hope that the immediate security threats to China have waned, or are manageable.[22] On such a basis, the defense budget can remain a principal area for reducing China's mounting deficits,[23] and the defense industries can turn to production of goods for civilian use.

The economic changes of recent years constitute part of a larger political program—one in which the political fortunes of Deng Xiaoping and his political allies are intertwined.[24] Deng's effort to oppose Soviet power through coalition-building with the West is another element in this strategy. His efforts at domestic economic and organizational reform are closely related to his "united front" campaign abroad. China's reallocation of resources away from the defense sector was justified on a belief in a stable, mutually beneficial long-term relationship with the United States. With this relationship now unsettled, the policy commitments of Deng's coalition may also be threatened.

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[21]*Hongqi* Commentator, 1981, p. L9.

[22]See Yao, 1981, especially pp. L10-L11.

[23]According to China's announced budget figures, military expenditure for 1981 totalled 16.9 billion yuan, a substantial decline from the original estimate of 20.2 billion yuan. The reductions reflected the budget revisions undertaken early in 1981 when the leadership was fully apprised of China's mounting trade deficits. *China Trade Report*, 1982. In May 1982, however, Finance Minister Wang Bingqian announced that the "speedy modernization" of the PLA required a reversal in this policy, with defense expenditure for 1982 totalling 17.87 billion yuan, 1.7 billion yuan above the fiscal 1981 figure. Wang, 1982.

[24]On Deng's political strategy, see FBIS, 1979, and Miller, 1981.

Deng not only has to keep his political opponents at bay, he must also satisfy the diverse political and organizational constituencies that have supported his initiatives. If his new policies and programs fail to yield their promised results or if his political strategy is called into question, other areas of Chinese policymaking could also be affected.

THE MODERNIZATION OF CHINESE MILITARY POWER

The PLA and Chinese Policy Debate

Despite China's increasing concern with issues of national power and global strategy, the PRC's military leadership occupies a curiously ambiguous status in Chinese national security policy. For much of the 1960s and 1970s, the armed forces were thrust into the political limelight, often to the detriment of cohesion and morale in China's high command.[25] In the aftermath of Mao's death and with the pivotal role of the People's Liberation Army leadership in the ouster of the "gang of four," China's professional military commanders were afforded their best opportunity in several decades to address long-neglected issues of military modernization.

As China's military leadership readily understands, the tasks of modernization extend well beyond the acquisition and utilization of newer weapons. Modernization entails institutional changes related to military doctrine and organization, leadership recruitment and socialization, and the cultivation of skills appropriate to the use of more modern techniques and equipment. The sheer size and complexity of China's military institutions make such tasks—even in the most supportive of political circumstances—achievable only through a sustained, long-term effort at organizational reform.

In the post-Mao political climate, there were unparalleled opportunities for the PLA to focus on national defense. Yet the complicated course of Chinese internal politics has continued to confound such efforts, largely because of Deng's troubled dealings with the high command. The resource allocation preferences of China's military leaders have repeatedly been turned aside, the domestic political role of the armed forces has been greatly curtailed, and China's senior generals have been disgruntled witnesses to what they view as the breakdown of social order and discipline within China's cities. It is also ironic

[25]The evolution of Chinese military politics is traced in Jencks, 1982.

that the growth in China's security ties with the West has reduced military leverage in the political process. Defense sector activities remain largely the subject of conjecture by outside analysts. There is no available comprehensive statement of how modern military power and organization are intended to serve the goal of a strong and secure China. Even as China's links with the international strategic system have increased, the military has been called upon to forgo opportunities for technological advancement.

The PLA has been expected to agree to a continuation of the long-standing disparities between Chinese and Soviet military capabilities. Leaders in the high command have also had to make disproportionate sacrifices in China's continuing economic retrenchment and reappraisal—even as the PRC's political leadership defines the international environment of the 1980s as one of increasing turbulence and danger.[26] As a result, the needs voiced by the PLA leadership at the height of their political prominence in early and mid-1977 are now regarded as expendable or at least deferrable.[27]

The reduction in the PLA's voice in Chinese policy debate has had a concomitant reduction in the military's political and institutional prerogatives. The March 1981 appointment of Vice Premier Geng Biao as Xu Xiangqian's successor as Minister of National Defense, purportedly in the face of severe resistance within the military ranks, testified to this lessening in political power.[28] For the first time in the history of the People's Republic, China's ranking defense official was someone whose principal post-1949 career had not been in the military. The spectacle of some of Lin Biao's surviving confederates standing trial for their alleged role in the attempted coup of September 1971 was not particularly uplifting to veteran commanders, inasmuch as the proceedings impugned the loyalty and reputation of the army. The diminution of Hua Guofeng's political role and power further testified to the declining political power of the military leadership to whom Hua had appealed for support.[29] The high command

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[26]For several explicit and detailed discussions, see Qi and Zhou, 1981a; and Qi, Zhou, and He, 1981.

[27]Compare, for example, *Jiefangjun Bao* Editorial, 1977, especially pp. E7-E9; *Renmin Ribao* Editorial Department, 1977, especially pp. 22-23, 33-35; and Xu, 1978.

[28]The CCP's Twelfth National Congress in August 1982 resulted in a reversal of the PLA's sagging political fortunes and a reassertion of the military's political prerogatives. Most of China's aged military leaders refused to relinquish their high party posts, enabling the PLA to retain a major share of the leadership positions within the Central Committee and the Politburo. At the same time, Geng Biao lost his membership on both the Central Committee and the Politburo. These developments suggest that Deng must still contend with powerful, restive leadership forces capable of mustering serious opposition to his policies.

[29]For various Western accounts, see Parks, 1980; Butterfield, 1980b; Butterfield, 1981; Sterba, 1981.

has also been unhappy about the severe downgrading of Mao Zedong's historical role and the corrupting influence of the West.[30]

The task of defining an appropriate security strategy cannot be separated from issues of political position and institutional influence. The PLA has been among the principal losers in the diminished expectations of recent years, and it has been instructed to accept this lesser role uncomplainingly.[31] This decreased status has been particularly apparent since the shift from "blind expansion" of capital construction and expectations of rapid gains in industrial productivity to a better balance among the various economic sectors and increased attention to "the entire social economy and the people's material and cultural levels."[32] With the continued influence of political leaders over professional military development, the scope, pace, and direction of institutional change will remain a contentious issue.

Deng's Quest for Institutional Reform

Deng is not oblivious to military concerns. His efforts at revamping the armed forces in 1975, aborted by his political eclipse the following year, were extremely ambitious.[33] Yet any serious effort to heighten military readiness and streamline the command structure threatens entrenched interests. Deng has appealed to those who stand to gain by a thorough overhaul of the military system. By encouraging new generations of leaders to devote increased attention to the development of a much more professionally oriented officer corps, he hopes to persuade the military leadership of the necessity to defer any rapid upgrading of the PLA's technological and resource base. Even on this basis, all sectors of the Chinese armed forces are already beginning to examine a wider and more technically demanding range of missions.[34]

Many veteran officers resent intrusions into their professional prerogatives, but Deng's actions reveal that the political leadership is suspicious of military autonomy. His appointment as Chairman of the CCP Military Commission in mid-1981 and reappointment in mid-1982 underscore these concerns. Yet he cannot risk slighting the

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[30]Bonavia, 1981.

[31]*Jiefangjun Bao* Commentator, 1980; Hu, 1981; Wei, 1981; and Yang, 1981.

[32]See Xue, 1980.

[33]For the fullest description of Deng's 1975 military modernization program, see Harding, 1980, pp. 114-121.

[34]For a preliminary appraisal of these trends, see Pollack, 1981b; see also Segal, 1982.

broad range of tasks associated with military modernization. His conspicuous presence at China's combined arms exercises in 1981—the largest such maneuvers ever undertaken by the PLA—bespeaks his personal commitment to a professionalized, highly trained military force.

> This exercise . . . demonstrated the characteristics of modern warfare. . . . Our army has gained some experience in coordinated fighting with various arms of the service, has improved its military and political qualities and raised its levels of engaging in actual combat.[35]

Such comments reflect the realization that the only effective long-term solution to China's defense needs is to rebuild Chinese capabilities from the bottom up, emphasizing infrastructural development, the cultivation of basic technical skills, improving combat readiness, and training a new generation of military officers. However superficially appealing the notion of major arms purchases abroad or the infusion of newer technologies into China's defense industrial system, these must be coordinated with a major effort to transform the structural and doctrinal characteristics of China's armed forces.

The Relevance of Maoist Military Doctrine

The revision of military doctrine is a pivotal element in this process, because the needs and characteristics of modern warfare will determine how available resources will be allocated. A careful reading of post-1976 writings on the requirements of modern combat—what the Chinese term "people's war under modern conditions"—hardly indicates that the entire edifice of past military doctrine will be rapidly dismantled.[36]

An exposition of Mao's military thinking by Song Shilun, Commandant of the Academy of Military Science, makes clear the enduring nature of many of his contributions, both before and after 1949. Song nevertheless conceded, "It was a pity that Comrade Mao Zedong had no time to make a systematic summation of large-scale wars . . . in the same way as he had summed up the experiences . . . of the anti-Japanese war." Yet, according to Song, the Korean War provided the opportunity for Mao to "put forth a series of theories, policies, principles

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[35]*Jiefangjun Bao*, 1981, p. K2.

[36]Detailed Chinese publications on this topic are scarce, and discussion and debate may be far more heated than these few articles suggest. For three assessments by several of China's most senior military strategists, see Su, 1977; Ye, 1978; and Xu, 1978.

and tactics in operation in waging an international war under modern conditions." Acknowledging that such thinking had to be supplemented with new situations and revised accordingly, Song did not slight the range and breadth of Mao's attention to the requirements of warfare.[37]

Outside analysts should resist the temptation to impose a model of force structure and doctrine upon the PRC. As in the past, the Chinese will define strategies and practices attuned to their opportunities, constraints, and strengths. Most Chinese defense policies have been devised in light of indigenous experience. Many of these approaches have worked well in the past and are still relevant. For example, the Chinese are prepared to live with far greater uncertainty and vulnerability in their security planning than people in the West would find acceptable. Visitors to China have noted the low level of Chinese military preparedness in the face of the USSR's mobilization of an impressive array of forces. The order of battle on the Sino-Soviet border is no more balanced today than it was a decade ago; if anything, the disparity has grown. Yet during the 1970s armed conflicts were limited to a handful of border skirmishes.

On the few occasions when Chinese officials discuss the possible characteristics of a Sino-Soviet war, they insist that such a conflict must be fought largely on Chinese terms. In a paper prepared for the May 1981 meeting of the Trilateral Commission held in Beijing, Xu Xin, Vice Chairman of the Beijing Institute for International Strategic Studies, asserted that any Soviet attack on China would require "a minimum of four to five million modernized troops . . . prepared to fight for ten years or even more." Even the occupation of all of China north of the Yellow River "would only mean the beginning rather than the end of the war," because two-thirds of China's land and population lie to the south. Any belief that Moscow might attempt a limited punitive attack or a surgical strike on Chinese nuclear capabilities was deemed "unrealistic . . . from an overall strategic perspective, since it would result in the outbreak of a full-scale Sino-Soviet war whose limits could not be controlled."[38]

Such thinking is widely disparaged in the West, but in fact it accords with both the disposition of Chinese military forces along the border and the character of war for which PLA units continue to prepare. Close to 1.5 million Chinese soldiers—three times the present Soviet troop strength—are deployed in the Shenyang, Beijing, and

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[37]Song, 1981. Song's essay originally appeared in *Junshi Xueshu* [*Military Science*], but that journal is not available outside of China. Song has since disclosed the publication for use within the armed forces of Mao's scattered works on military affairs written between 1927 and 1958, most of them previously unpublished. Xinhua, 1982a.

[38]Xu, 1981.

Lanzhou Military Regions.[39] They are augmented by more than half of China's available air defense assets and other related defense preparations. However outmoded they might be judged in relation to available Soviet forces, prevailing leadership opinion continues to deem them adequate to deter any hypothetical attack.

This strategy (with which Deng is closely identified) entails substantial risks. Can such a continued imbalance of forces effectively meet the needs of Chinese security planning for the indefinite future? Or will such disparities ultimately compel China to prove more pliant to Soviet overtures or demands? Can Deng still safely assume that the USSR is so preoccupied elsewhere that it cannot enhance either its political or military pressure against Beijing? In the context of growing uncertainties in Sino-American relations, can Deng still assert that the United States will provide both the political and the security assistance to reduce China's vulnerability to Soviet power? Or will events abroad enable an already restive high command to demand and receive an increasing share of budgetary and manpower resources, to the detriment of China's broader economic strategy?

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[39]Japan Defense Agency, 1981, p. 11.

III. THE STRATEGIC TRIANGLE REVISITED

At the close of the 1970s, a series of events helped cement a major political realignment among the United States, Soviet Union, and China, with Beijing and Washington drawing together out of shared concerns about the growth of Soviet power. In December 1978, Beijing and Washington reached agreement on the establishment of full diplomatic relations; in the same month, the ascendance of Deng Xiaoping in the Chinese political hierarchy and his policy of aligning with the West were both endorsed by the Third Plenum of the Eleventh CCP Central Committee. At the same time, Soviet-American relations seemed in increasing jeopardy as Soviet involvements in the third world continued unabated. Moreover, the USSR and Vietnam increasingly drew together (signing the equivalent of a treaty of alliance) to counter Chinese influence in Asia. In mid-February 1979, China launched a brief punitive border war against Vietnam, testifying to the profound deterioration of Beijing-Hanoi relations. A communist coup in Afghanistan in April 1978 heightened Soviet involvement in civil strife in Southwest Asia, followed in late December by a full-fledged Soviet invasion, the first time that Soviet regular forces had intervened on such a scale outside the socialist camp. Weeks later, Defense Secretary Brown visited Beijing, lending further weight to shared U.S.-Chinese strategic interests, both in Asia and globally.

Thus, the logic of the "strategic triangle," with the United States positioned between the world's two leading communist powers, enhancing American leverage in dealings with both, no longer seemed an appropriate description of international political trends.[1] But what the Chinese term the "united front against hegemonism" remains the subject of both controversy and ambiguity in both Washington and Beijing, not to mention serious doubts about the long-term prospects for such a security coalition effectively opposing the expansion of Soviet political-military influence.

Neither the Chinese nor the Soviets seem fixed (or wholly agreed among themselves) on their policy orientations toward the other in the coming decade. Instead both seem intent on defining ground rules for their long-term competition, even as they mobilize forces else-

[1]For an official U.S. statement signalling the formal end of "triangular diplomacy," see Holbrooke, 1980.

where to counter adverse political and military trends. Both the USSR and the PRC deem the other's conduct as "hegemonic," yet principally directed at other states and regions rather than at each other. Equally important, strategic analysts in both capitals perceive weaknesses, vulnerabilities, or contradictions in their antagonist's political, military, and economic strategies. Some Chinese and Soviet leaders view these complications as leading to a redefinition of the Sino-Soviet competition in a less antagonistic direction.

Few, if any, in either capital see the likelihood of major armed conflict along the Sino-Soviet border. To the extent that Soviet officials express more worrisome assessments, they concern China's growing alliance with "the forces of militarism and reaction," leading to a far more powerful China threatening its weaker neighbors to the east and south. Chinese anxieties focus on the political consolidation of Soviet military gains in southeast and southwest Asia if less determined states permit the USSR a political *fait accompli,* reward aggression, and heighten Soviet pressure on China.

The Chinese occasionally raise the prospect of collusion between Washington and Moscow, even as Moscow sees unabashed anti-Sovietism as the cornerstone of the U.S.-Chinese relationship. Neither the Soviets nor the Chinese discuss in much detail what steps they might take if one of their staple nightmares occurs. Both recognize that American policy can affect their calculations, even if the Chinese and Soviet leaderships retain a far greater capacity to influence the future directions of the Sino-Soviet relationship.

Despite the increased importance of such long-term political and geostrategic calculations since the mid-1970s, Moscow and Beijing seem to pay most attention to the relationship of these external developments to political and economic trends *within* the two systems. Both leaderships assert that inherent, unresolvable contradictions in their adversary's strategy will ultimately compel major policy reassessment. Each state remains acutely aware of the other's choices and constraints in the allocation of scarce resources; neither rules out mutually beneficial political changes and security arrangements (whether tacit or formalized). Both realize that neither stands to gain by an open-ended, debilitating military confrontation along their borders, because both economies confront acute pressures and challenges in the coming decade. The stability of the Sino-Soviet border since the bloody clashes of 1969 has surely not escaped the attention of military planners in either capital.

Leaders in both China and the Soviet Union, however, realize that none of these issues can be conclusively resolved in the near future. Both view strategic assessment less as a means of arriving at a policy

objective and more as a process that captures the often contradictory patterns of international relations. This section, therefore, will examine three issues: (1) the evolving lines of policy debate within the PRC on Soviet political-military strategy and its implications for Chinese decisionmaking, (2) Soviet views on the near future evolution of Chinese politics and foreign policy and its possible relationship to Sino-Soviet ties, and (3) the potential effects of changes in Sino-American relations on the Sino-Soviet rivalry.

HEGEMONY IN THEORY AND PRACTICE: SOVIET POWER IN THE 1980s

Chinese strategic analysts have turned their principal attention to the analysis of Soviet military power, its relationship to specific political objectives in Soviet policy, and the consequences of both for global and regional security. These are not idle questions, but matters pertaining centrally both to Chinese security and to the allocation of political power within China. As noted earlier, one of Deng Xiaoping's singular achievements (and boldest risks) has been to use matters of global strategy as a political resource in internal policy debate. Deng has convinced his political colleagues that China's political, economic, and military vulnerabilities no longer permit splendid isolation. The issues are the degree of interdependence between China and its putative coalition partners, the nature of their interaction and cooperation, and the corresponding framework of internal policy opportunities and constraints.

Naturally, the assessment of Soviet power and policy figures centrally in this process. The requirement is for an objective analysis of Soviet strengths and weaknesses, not unthinking attacks on Soviet behavior. Chinese strategic analysts have already demonstrated a capacity for such discriminating analysis. Soviet capabilities and conduct are now assessed in discerning, analytical fashion; there is nothing foreordained or mechanistic in these judgments. Even as Chinese writings refer to the "laws governing imperialism" possessing a logic and direction that are independent of man's will, the actual exercise of state power is very much affected by a range of objective and subjective considerations. As Xu Xiangqian once noted: "When we say that a new world war is inevitable, we are talking about an objective law and a tendency. We do not mean that a war is imminent." Every great power, Xu further contends, has its own weaknesses and difficulties; in the absence of strength commensurate with its ambitions,

any state—no matter how powerful—is likely to be constrained from acting aggressively.[2]

The degree of threat posed by the Soviets (whether to other states or to China) will reflect an assessment of Soviet capabilities and calculations, as affected by the forces arrayed in opposition to Soviet power. For example, although the Chinese insist that Moscow seeks no less than global hegemony, they further assert that "the war schemes of the hegemonists" can be frustrated by appropriate and timely reactions on the part of the "forces opposing hegemony." This juxtaposition of pessimism and optimism is often confounding to the outside observer. In late 1978, for example, Chinese writings increasingly asserted that Soviet actions had begun to assume a far more threatening form, especially in Asia. Nevertheless, the *Hongqi* Commentator expressed confidence that the struggle against the USSR was "reaching an unprecedented level. Soviet social imperialism is being placed in an increasingly isolated position." The USSR, rather than marching inexorably toward global conquest, was besieged and beleaguered on various fronts. In such circumstances, the author concluded, the prospects for delaying the outbreak of world war and safeguarding world peace could only improve, thereby helping provide China with the peaceful international environment essential to the modernization effort.[3]

Soviet Global Strategy

The Chinese deem the USSR's military power and strategy as the cornerstone of a supposed Soviet effort to achieve "global hegemony." A detailed assessment published in *People's Daily* in early 1980 under the byline of Special Commentator provided a framework for analyzing Soviet military behavior that seems likely to govern Chinese strategic evaluation for the foreseeable future. It is deserving of careful scrutiny.[4]

According to this assessment, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan "established a precedent for the Soviet Union to send its troops directly into a Third World country. This portends the continued momentum of Soviet military expansion in the 1980s." The capacity of the Soviets to intervene reflected a 12-year-long effort to surpass (rather than seek parity with) the United States, characterized by

[2]Xu, 1978, pp. 7-8.

[3]*Hongqi* Commentator, 1978.

[4]All the citations that follow are drawn from *Renmin Ribao* Special Commentator, 1980. The article derives almost entirely from Cheng and Yao, 1979. Both Cheng and Yao were then affiliated with the Institute of World Politics of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

"huge investment" (average annual increases of 8 percent) and "rapid development," both quantitatively and qualitatively. Although the United States was still judged to hold superiority in certain areas, Soviet weapons acquisition "basically has no foreign or domestic interference and can fully concentrate on its own arms expansion program and quickly achieve results."

The Soviet Union had adopted a strategy of preemptive attack and stressed above all "the decisive role of a strategic offensive." A full decade of weapons development in all defense sectors had produced "a global armed force capable of initially meeting the varied needs of Soviet expansion"—one where traditional Soviet ground force superiority was maintained, but with previous shortcomings in the strategic nuclear, naval, and air forces also being rectified. Moreover, over the course of the 1970s the Soviets had demonstrated impressive air- and sea-lift capabilities, enabling them to intervene rapidly, efficiently, and with ample force. The Soviet capability to plan and initiate surprise attacks (for example, fully subduing all of Czechoslovakia in less than three days) revealed Soviet doctrine as "virtually a replica of the German blitz strategy," lending further credence to "the offensive nature of Soviet military strategy and the aggressiveness of its foreign policy."

Equally revealing was the Soviet capacity to wage different types of war. Unlike the Khrushchev era, when "the Soviet Union had . . . regarded nuclear war waged by means of rockets as the only type of war," the Brezhnev period saw the development of capabilities to engage in both "nuclear world war" and "limited nuclear war" as well as "conventional war." An emphasis on actual preparations "for wars that use any type of weapon" was strikingly different from "the emphasis on deterrence in Khrushchev's time."

In addition to issues of development and doctrine, Soviet strategists also have to deal with the deployment of forces to various fronts, not only to the east and west, but to the south and into the oceans. Most Soviet forces (according to Chinese figures, approximately 70 percent) were concentrated on the European front, but the USSR still had 1.1 million soldiers (approximately one-quarter of its total military strength) deployed in Asia. Although the expansion of these forces continued (especially in the naval area), "the Soviet military strength in Asia is smaller in numbers, weaker as a shock force, and slower in arms replacement than that in Europe." Notwithstanding the widespread view that such deployments were directed principally against China, they were also directed against the United States and Japan, especially in the naval area. "Extremely brisk" expansion was under way to the south and in naval activities more generally.

It is characteristic of all such Chinese writings to state that "Europe remains the Soviet Union's main strategic target and Asia constitutes a secondary one." The principal opportunities for Soviet advance, however, were in the south:

> Under the present circumstances, when the state of military confrontation and stalemate in the European and Asian regions is difficult to break, the major move on the part of the Soviet Union has been to intensify its expansion southward. By using its vassal countries of Cuba and Vietnam to wage proxy wars and through direct military aggression, the Soviet Union has gradually expanded its spheres of influence and grabbed strategic points in an effort to establish a comparatively systematic network of covert military bases abroad. All this is aimed at closing in on the European and Asian continents from the sea and threatening strategic raw material supplies to the west and maritime traffic, so as to put the Soviet Union in a more advantageous position in its present contention and future war with the United States.

Such a "global offensive strategy of expansion" will continue in the 1980s, thereby increasing the possibility of major war. The Soviets could nevertheless be expected to use a combination of detente and military power for political effect, thus striving "to achieve its objective of expansion without entering into a war." Given the increasing levels of international tension and conflict, however, "the Soviet Union will probably embark on naked and direct war adventures on a larger scale if there is a profitable opportunity."

Yet the path to such expansion was not clear or easy. The Soviet Union had "major weak points strategically." Its capabilities were not equal to its "wild ambitions"; its battle fronts were too numerous and dispersed to all be dealt with at once; it confronted major domestic difficulties, in particular declining economic growth rates and "deepening contradictions between nationalities"; and its activities were encountering mounting resistance and opposition abroad, all the more so with the creation of a global anti-hegemony united front. Thus, the outlook for frustrating "Soviet strategy and . . . safeguarding world peace and security" was encouraging, provided the appropriate efforts at vigilance, defense preparedness, unity, and deterrence of aggression were upheld.

As the above observations suggest, Chinese assessments of Soviet political-military strategy frequently do not permit clearcut judgments on the prospects for Soviet power. In the best tradition of Mao's theory of contradictions, the Chinese see Soviet strategy embodying strength and weakness, potency and passivity. Moreover, the pursuit of strategic goals can have consequences of a more immediate and complicating sort that often are not foreseen in grand strategy. Chinese writings have generally sought to adhere to the strategic concep-

tion outlined above, but other strains of thought are also discernible. Although not discrediting the general interpretation of Soviet strategy, these disclaimers suggest elements of uncertainty within the Chinese leadership over the nature of the Soviet threat.

Afghanistan as a Test Case

Such differences have been amply revealed in varied assessments of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and its strategic consequences. Since the earliest indications of an invasion, some Chinese analysts have interpreted Soviet actions as a key component of a larger strategic design to acquire warm water ports on the Indian Ocean and gain control of Persian Gulf oil, thereby securing a stranglehold on the economic lifeline of the West. Such reasoning was conveyed in a January article written by Observer, a seldom used but highly authoritative byline.[5] The author avoided a highly detailed account of the sequence of events leading to the decision to intervene. Rather, the invasion was attributed to a combination of domestic instability in Afghanistan and the fact that the United States, preoccupied by events in Iran and "having [in recent years] flinched in the face of Soviet expansionist offensives," would do nothing to counter such an action. The significance of the invasion was deemed very great:

> The Soviet Union's global strategy of seeking hegemony in the world has taken another large step forward.... Its occupation of Afghanistan has made it possible to adopt a strategic posture of marching toward western Iran and eastern Pakistan at any time. Once its military forces have reached the warm water ports of the Indian Ocean or the Strait of Hormuz, it will complete its pincerlike encirclement of Saudi Arabia ... [to be] coordinated with its offensive in Southeast Asia.... The whole Indian Ocean will then be a place in which the Soviet Navy can dash around madly.

To be sure, Observer conceded that such steps remained hypothetical: "*If* the Soviet Union makes this move ... the Soviet Union *may* force Western Europe and Japan to obey its orders, thus isolating and weakening the United States." But in no sense was Afghanistan regarded as more of the same.

Yet other writers posed the Afghanistan situation in much less ominous terms. Though generally acknowledging the potential strategic importance of the invasion, these analysts viewed this step as a sign of weakness, bankruptcy, and desperation. Moreover, by committing

[5]All citations are from *Renmin Ribao* Observer, 1980a (emphasis added).

regular forces in strength, the Soviets would encounter problems comparable to those of the United States in Vietnam. Ten days before the invasion, as evidence of a major Soviet intervention began to mount, an article in *People's Daily* foresaw precisely this prospect:

> If the Soviet Union goes further in its intervention in Afghanistan, it will find itself caught . . . in the same awkward situation as the United States found in Vietnam. Afghanistan will thus become the Soviet Union's "Vietnam." . . . By continuously stepping up its aggression and intervention . . . the Soviet Union can only sink deeper and deeper into the quagmire until it meets its doom.[6]

These contrasting views of the Soviet invasion and its consequences have appeared intermittently in the Chinese press. The belief that Soviet actions are part of a global strategic design has always received much more emphasis in the Chinese media. Moreover, such divergent opinions may simply reflect a long-favored Chinese belief that "imperialists and all reactionaries," being only "paper tigers," have "fatal weaknesses" in their strategy that can never be overcome. Yet undercurrents of debate suggest ongoing uncertainties in the evaluation of Soviet actions. They also seemed linked to overtures under way toward the USSR before the Afghanistan invasion. Such discussions are frequently found in attacks on "some people in the West" less anxious about the strategic significance of Soviet moves; these divergent assessments suggest a range of opinion within China about the scope and extent of security cooperation to be fostered with the West.

The Domestic Context

The relationship between the international environment and China's domestic economic strategies is certain to remain a pivotal factor in Chinese security strategy in the 1980s. China's need for a "long-term peaceful international environment," first voiced by Deng in September 1977,[7] is potentially subject to a range of opinions and interpretations. Thus, no matter how "hegemonic" Soviet ambitions, prevailing opinion within the Chinese leadership (beginning with Deng) ranks China as a lesser priority in Soviet strategic designs, compared with other more immediate and penetrable "targets of opportunity." By imparting a somewhat diminished urgency to the Sino-Soviet rivalry, China might hope to avoid the debilitating effects

[6]See *Renmin Ribao*, 1979; *Renmin Ribao* Editorial, 1979.
[7]Deng, 1977.

of a heightened military confrontation with the USSR, especially since Beijing cannot hope to compete with vastly superior Soviet forces.

Deng's effort to defer the acquisition of more modern military capabilities has rested heavily on China's efforts to join politically with various states to "oppose Soviet hegemonism." But periodic political overtures to Moscow may appear to others as an additional option. If the Soviets were judged less an international juggernaut embarked on world conquest and more an overextended great power seeking to manage its multiple commitments more effectively, then an exploration of tension reduction measures might well seem worth the risk.

Such thinking was evident within the leadership in the spring of 1979. Even if Deng personally opposed any serious effort to test Soviet intentions toward China, the logic of his argument about the need for a peaceful international environment did not preclude such an attempt. There is evidence that the overtures to Moscow initiated at this time were proposed at a time of momentary political eclipse for Deng.[8] Notwithstanding his crowning success at the CCP's Third Plenum in December 1978, events at home and abroad in the winter and spring of 1979 placed Deng on the defensive. China's unexpectedly costly border war with Vietnam, the growing recognition of the depths of her domestic economic difficulties, and mounting unease within the leadership about political dissent voiced in the "democracy movement" had all redounded to Deng's disadvantage. In these circumstances, Deng's determined efforts to rout his opponents on the left were put momentarily in abeyance; he may also have had to assent to foreign policy moves that undercut his effort to construct a security coalition with the West to oppose Soviet power.

The Sino-Vietnamese border war and its aftermath may have been particularly important in Chinese decisionmaking.[9] Although there was no public evidence of internal debate over the initiation of the hostilities, Deng's public remarks in both the United States and Japan clearly identified him with the decision to "teach Vietnam a lesson." All accounts suggest that the war was far costlier in lives and equipment than the Chinese had expected. The Chinese troops ultimately accomplished their stated objectives—and without provoking Soviet retaliation—but the results were no doubt somewhat chastening to the PRC leadership.

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[8]This discussion draws extensively on two highly provocative papers by Miller 1979, 1980.

[9]On the Chinese attack and its aftermath, see Jencks, 1979; and Tretiak, 1979.

The Negotiating Option

The creation of a major military front along China's southern borders and the heightened Soviet presence in Vietnam in the aftermath of the war both represented new problems. Hanoi's growing ties with Moscow may have made even Deng feel the need for a modest reduction of tensions with the USSR. At a minimum, he could not object to efforts of other leaders—notably veteran economic planner Chen Yun, appointed a Party Vice Chairman at the Third Plenum, but also including Li Xiannian and Ye Jianying—to stabilize China's security situation through new negotiations with Moscow.[10]

The somewhat sketchy information available on the Chinese negotiating proposal sheds additional light on PRC leadership calculations. On April 3, Foreign Minister Huang Hua officially notified J. S. Shcharbakov, the Soviet Ambassador to China, that the PRC intended to let the 1950 Treaty of Friendship, Alliance, and Mutual Assistance expire on April 11 and would not seek to extend the expiration date. At the same time, however, he

> reiterated the consistent stand of the Chinese Government that the differences of principle between China and the Soviet Union should not hamper the maintenance and development of their normal state relations.... To this end, the Chinese Government has proposed ... that negotiations be held ... for the solution of outstanding issues and the improvement of relations between the two countries.[11]

The Chinese proposal was different from past PRC negotiating offers in several respects. Not only had the initiative for the talks come from the PRC—to the apparent surprise of Moscow—but no preconditions were specified before negotiations could begin. Moreover, by proposing discussions related to broader issues of interstate relations, the PRC kept the new talks distinct from the border negotiations held intermittently since 1969.[12]

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[10]Lyman Miller argues that Chen Yun was probably the strongest advocate of renewed negotiations. The posthumous rehabilitation of Foreign Ministry official Wang Jiaxiang, who in 1962 had advocated reduction of tensions with China's external adversaries so as to permit increased attention to the internal economic crisis, occurred within days of the proposal to initiate negotiations; Chen had previously been linked to Wang's foreign policy line of *sanhe yishao* [the three reconciliations and one reduction]. As Miller also notes, the initial public acknowledgment of the depths of China's economic problems and the need for "reform and readjustment" also occurred in March-April 1979, immediately following the attack on Vietnam. For further discussion, see Miller, 1979, especially pp. 12-17.

[11]*Beijing Review*, 1979.

[12]On the border negotiations, see Lieberthal, 1978, pp. 49-56; and Gelman, 1979, pp. 57-60. For the Chinese view of the border talks, see Li, 1981; for the Soviet view, see Dalnev, 1981.

In view of China's oft-repeated preference for deeds rather than words as the best evidence of Soviet intentions toward China,[13] the PRC's willingness to propose and pursue negotiations in the absence of any evidence of accommodating Soviet behavior seems curious. Moscow had occasionally made proposals to China to negotiate Sino-Soviet differences since the clashes of 1969, but no such proposals were forthcoming at this time. Yet China's interest in opening a new channel of communication clearly provoked Soviet interest. According to a subsequent Chinese account, between the initial PRC proposal and the opening negotiations in the fall, "the two sides . . . exchanged notes and memoranda, expounding their respective views on the aims, contents, and tasks of the negotiations." Even before the Chinese delegation's departure for Moscow, it was clear that the Chinese had proposed a very broad agenda—not limited simply to bilateral issues or discussions of declaratory principles. It was then that the PRC accused Moscow of questioning Chinese motives, pursuing an "unchanged" and "consistent" anti-Chinese policy, and "unilaterally" placing "limits to the negotiations."[15]

The Chinese undertook the talks with no assurance that the Soviet side would even discuss a broader set of issues. From later Soviet commentaries, it is apparent that these included what Beijing saw as evidence of Soviet hegemonic behavior, if not globally then at least toward the PRC.[16] Yet the Chinese negotiators continued to meet with their Soviet counterparts. Moreover, several days after the conclusion of the first round of negotiations Deputy Foreign Minister Wang Youping, head of the PRC delegation, met with Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko, at Wang's request. (This meeting was reported only by Tass and was never noted in the PRC press.)[17] At that point, the PRC was not only amenable to a resumption of negotiations in Beijing the following spring, there was also no objection to the USSR's submitting a draft declaration on the principles of relations between them, with the Chinese submitting some of their own proposals and positions.[18]

Given China's willingness to talk in the absence of any preconditions, the Soviets may well have felt obliged to negotiate. Even

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[13]See, for example, *Renmin Ribao* Commentator, 1977, 1978.
[14]Xinhua, 1979b.
[15]Xinhua, 1979a.
[16]These included the Soviet military presence in Mongolia and the Soviet-Vietnamese Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation. Rebuttals of China's negotiating problems are found in Aleksandrov, 1979, especially p. B2.
[17]Tass, 1979.
[18]Aleksandrov, 1979, pp. B3-B4.

though Moscow recognized that Vietnamese suspicions would immediately be raised by such talks, the presence of Chinese discussing Sino-Soviet relations on any basis seemed a distinct plus. By the time negotiations were actually initiated, Deng was again ascendant within China. His outright opposition to any suggestion of compromise with Moscow is difficult to reconcile with the conduct of the negotiations. It may be that Deng was initially prepared to acquiesce to such talks precisely because it would reveal Moscow to be obdurate and unyielding. Others, however, may not have agreed.

It was not until January 19, 1980, more than three full weeks after the invasion of Afghanistan, that the Chinese finally informed the Soviets that the talks could not continue. A Foreign Ministry spokesman argued that the invasion "threatens world peace and China's security. It creates new obstacles for normalizing relations. . . . Under these circumstances . . . it is inappropriate to hold these Sino-Soviet talks."[19] Chinese sources had earlier indicated only that the Soviet invasion had reduced the possibility of signing a declaration of principles by the April expiration of the Sino-Soviet treaty. There was no suggestion of postponing further negotiations.[20]

The Afghanistan invasion had thus enabled Deng to shift attention away from the negotiating option and toward fuller implementation of an anti-Soviet united front. Immediately following the Foreign Ministry announcement, the *Renmin Ribao* Commentator published four front page articles on the "lessons of Afghanistan."[21] The events of late December could not be understood in a local or regional context; Soviet moves were part of a coordinated strategy of global expansion. In such circumstances, Moscow could not be expected to negotiate in good faith, nor should states threatened by Soviet actions permit Moscow any respite from pressures to reverse its course.

1980: The New United Front

The January 19 announcement followed by less than a week the completion of Defense Secretary Brown's visit to Beijing, marking the formal initiation of a U.S.-Chinese security relationship. Brown's call for "complementary aims in the field of defense as well as diplomacy," in conjunction with the lifting of restrictions on the sale of nonlethal military technology to the PRC, gave far greater momentum to the

[19]Quoted in Butterfield, 1980a.
[20]As reported by Kyodo, 1980.
[21]The four articles are summarized in *Beijing Review*, 1980a.

development of an anti-Soviet security coalition than to the prospects for Sino-Soviet negotiations.

The actual expiration date passed without official PRC comment. An editorial in the Hong Kong communist press indicated how the Afghanistan invasion had influenced the decision to defer further negotiations:

> Last autumn the Chinese and Soviet vice foreign ministers held talks on improving relations . . . but these talks were broken off as soon as military action began in Afghanistan. . . . If the talks continued, would they not just serve to cover up the Soviet Union's path of aggression? How could China stand apart when the whole world has condemned the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan? It seems that there will be very little hope of reopening these talks as long as Soviet troops occupy Afghanistan.[22]

Events following the publication of the editorial substantiated this opposition to further negotiations. As Deng's internal position grew stronger, he was able to pose any alteration in Sino-Soviet relations in terms so wildly improbable as to make substantive change impossible. In a revealing interview with Earl Foell, chief editor of the *Christian Science Monitor*, in November 1980, Deng drew an uncharacteristically explicit link between Moscow's goal of "global hegemony" and its threats against China:

> Some people have alleged that Brezhnev is comparatively moderate. I think that people have been deceived. . . . In seeking hegemony against China, the Soviet Union has not only stationed one million troops along the Sino-Soviet border but also dispatched troops to invade Afghanistan. It has also stationed troops in a neighboring country, such as Mongolia, in order to threaten us. . . . What the Soviet Union has done in our neighboring countries is not only aimed at countering China. . . . All this is only part of Soviet global strategy. Soviet ambition is to dominate the world.

Deng then directly addressed the question of the Sino-Soviet future:

> The Soviet Union must prove with concrete actions that it has changed its global strategy and abandoned its hegemonism by reducing its one million troops to at least the same number as that under Khruschev. . . . The Soviet Union must prove itself with concrete actions by withdrawing all its troops from Afghanistan, Mongolia, Southeast Asia, and of course from other areas. It must also abandon its hegemonist policy. If it can do all this today, 15 November, we can change our relations tomorrow, 16 November. Otherwise, Sino-Soviet relations cannot be improved even after 10 or 20 years.[23]

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[22]*Wen Wei Bao*, 1980, p. V1.

[23]The citations are drawn from Deng, 1980d, pp. L19-L20.

The total lack of ambiguity in Deng's remarks raises some question about their intended purpose. Their timing is suggestive—approximately two weeks after the election of a new American president whose campaign rhetoric and long-term sympathies with Taiwan were enormously unsettling to Beijing. Deng may well have felt that an utterly unyielding Chinese stance toward the USSR would help persuade the incoming Reagan administration that China could be a reliable partner. Indeed, Deng further asserted that "the United States alone is not [strong] enough to deal with Soviet hegemonism. The United States must strengthen its cooperation with its allies as well as all forces that stand against the Soviet Union.... Only thus can the Soviet challenge be controlled."[24]

Viewed more broadly, there are several reasons for raising doubt about such blanket assertions. First, they are the stated views of one Chinese politician (albeit the most powerful one), not the entire leadership. Different views have continued to surface, suggesting less than total unanimity in Beijing. Second, the Sino-Soviet relationship involves a broad range of dealings whose form and content vary considerably. As such, "change" in the Sino-Soviet relationship (whose indicators Deng failed to specify) might well assume a variety of forms and *would not presuppose a formal, explicit acknowledgment by either the Soviets or the Chinese.* Third, and perhaps most important, several imperatives continue to push China to better define the political boundaries of its rivalry with the Soviet Union.

The last factor is the most readily apparent and the least ambiguous: China's need for a stable, reasonably predictable security environment within which to pursue her development goals. In the summer of 1979, an article in *Cheng Ming* (the Hong Kong publication that reflected Deng's opinions) sought to justify the negotiating offer to Moscow on precisely this basis. Warning that China had "no extravagant hopes for the negotiations," its author nevertheless saw important reasons for holding discussions:

> Why did China take the initiative? Obviously, the Beijing authorities hope to improve Sino-Soviet relations through negotiations to benefit the realization of the four modernizations and to build China into a powerful modern state. Chinese leaders have always said that to realize the four modernizations, China needs a peaceful international situation. To create peaceful circumstances and to acquire foreign aid for realizing the four modernizations, it is necessary for China to do everything in its power to "turn enemies into friends."... Generally speaking, since China can normalize relations with the United States and develop trade relations and technical cooperation with the

[24]Ibid., p. L18.

> United States under certain circumstances, it is therefore possible for China to normalize relations with the Soviet Union and improve Sino-Soviet relations under certain circumstances.

Further asserting that "unless the Soviet Union discards hegemonism and changes its hostile policy towards China, Sino-Soviet relations cannot be greatly improved," the author also saw China's recent diplomatic successes and heightened international visibility as compelling a positive Soviet response to the PRC proposal:

> All Soviet schemes for encircling China militarily and isolating China politically have failed. In fact, the Soviet Union has encountered counterencirclement and sunk deeper and deeper into isolation. Under these compelling circumstances, the Soviet Union cannot but express its agreement to China's proposal for reopening the talks and cannot but slightly express its goodwill toward China.[25]

Such views reflected a belief (not necessarily shared by all Chinese leaders) that the Soviet Union, rather than marching inexorably toward global conquest, found itself increasingly beleaguered on various fronts. On this basis, therefore, Moscow would inevitably seek to find a means of reducing its farflung problems and crises, with the China issue as a principal candidate for such overtures.

Six weeks before the establishment of Sino-American diplomatic relations, for example, an analysis in *Red Flag* already saw Moscow as increasingly "besieged" on the world scene by an everexpanding "anti-hegemonist international united front." As its author argued:

> Soviet social imperialism is being placed in an increasingly isolated position. In recent years, it has relied upon its agents to fight its aggressive and expansionist efforts in certain areas and has even resorted to despicable means of assassination and subversion. This shows that it is unpopular everywhere and is unprecedentedly isolated politically.

After depicting various failed Soviet efforts to isolate China and the growing cooperation among various threatened states to combat Soviet activity, the author drew conclusions wholly reminiscent of those attached to the United States in the 1950s and 1960s:

> Soviet social imperialism is now taking over U.S. imperialism's role and following in Hitler's footsteps. It has a great hunger for power. To vie with the United States for world hegemony, it wants to encircle the entire world. It is intensifying its expansionist offensive everywhere and putting its head in the noose everywhere. This is

[25]Guang, 1979.

> leading to the ever growing expansion of the international anti-hegemony united front and earning the Soviet Union an ever more heavy pounding from the people throughout the world. The plotter of a siege will find himself besieged and ultimately defeated. This is the inevitable fate of Soviet social imperialism.[26]

This assessment, of course, appeared precisely when Deng Xiaoping and the Carter administration had accelerated their efforts at normalization, leading to the joint announcement of full diplomatic relations in mid-December. The fact that the United States was now added to the "ever growing" roster of anti-hegemony forces enabled Commentator to assert long-term optimism in the face of growing short-term tensions to China's south.

This clash between broader strategic trends and more immediate threats and imperatives has been a recurrent source of tension in Chinese strategic debate. Depending on the perspective, one could draw conclusions supporting either unyielding struggle or partial accommodation. In early November 1979, for example, the *Red Flag* Commentator (seeking to justify the Sino-Soviet negotiations) asserted that although "factors involving the danger of war are on the increase, . . . at the same time factors inhibiting the outbreak of war are developing. This condition will provide a possibility for deferring the outbreak of war and for gaining a longer period of peace." The author argued further:

> The possibility of putting off the outbreak of war still lies in the weakness of the hegemonists. . . . The Soviet hegemonists are very ambitious and attempt to dominate the world, but they are plagued by economic ills and their development is very slow. . . . In short, their strategic deployments for starting a war have not been completed and difficulties are increasing.

In a concluding section entitled "What Is the Correct Path for Upholding World Peace?" the author placed the prospect of Sino-Soviet normalization in the context of the broader struggle to guarantee peace:

> We are not against "detente" but are against hegemonism, aggression, and expansion in addition to hegemonism under the camouflage of "detente." We are not opposed to other countries developing normal state relations with the Soviet Union. We are striving to make such improvements ourselves. However . . . instead of a "detente" that is hypocritical, we want a detente which is in keeping with the principles of international relations, that respects independence, sovereignty, equality, and friendly cooperation and which is conducive

[26] *Hongqi* Commentator, 1978, p. A13.

> to upholding international peace and security.... [If] we adhere to the correct road of upholding peace and make the effort in a down-to-earth manner, they [the peace-loving nations] will be able to avert the outbreak of world war and win world peace.[27]

Commentator clearly sought to convey to an audience in Moscow that "the anti-China cliches that China is 'warlike' and wants to 'trigger . . . a new world war to win world hegemony' " were ludicrous:

> No one . . . believes this apart from the Cuba in the West and the "Cuba of the East" [Vietnam]. Opposing wars of aggression and defending world peace have been the consistent stand . . . of the Chinese government.... The Chinese people . . . need a permanent peaceful international environment. It is useless and impossible for China to trigger a new world war which would entail unprecedented disasters. We also oppose any superpower doing this.... Peoples and farsighted politicians of countries throughout the world are hoping that China will become prosperous, rich, and strong [since it] . . . will become the bulwark for defending world peace.[28]

Commentator concluded, "Not even the peoples of the Soviet Union and the United States want war."[29]

By early December, the entire mood and prognosis had changed. In an additional analysis prepared for *Red Flag*, Commentator saw the USSR introducing an "anti-hegemony" theme in "their multilateral [the United Nations] or bilateral [the Sino-Soviet negotiations] diplomatic activities." The author asserted that the Soviet Union had been "demanding that something be included in a certain agenda, proposing motions, or getting things written into treaties." Such steps were judged as a tactical ploy to "extricate" Moscow from "the dire straits into which [it had] fallen and been encircled." A modest list was then provided "if the Soviet authorities really want to oppose hegemonism": immediate withdrawal of all Soviet forces from Eastern Europe and Mongolia; immediate withdrawal of Soviet advisers and Soviet-backed forces in Africa and Asia; a halt to "all Soviet activities of military intimidation, intervention, [and] subversion . . . in any part of the world"; and disarming "all offensive military forces in excess of the number needed for defensive purposes."[30] Whatever flexibility the advocates of negotiation had previously sought to inject into such discussions was now lost in a torrent of preconditions. Assertions by "many people" in the West (and implicitly in China) that contention

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[27]*Hongqi Commentator*, 1979a, p. A7.
[28]Ibid., p. A4.
[29]Ibid., p. A6.
[30]*Hongqi* Commentator, 1979b, pp. C1-C2.

existed in the Soviet leadership between hawks and doves were caustically dismissed:

> Whether the Soviet Union is intent on hegemonism or aggressive wars is not determined by the personal likes or dislikes of any individual leader but by the set principles and policies of the ruling clique of today's Soviet Union. . . . It is just like a train speedily rumbling in a dangerous direction, impossible to suddenly grind to a halt or make an abrupt about face. . . . They [the hegemonists] will not restrain themselves from their diplomatic or other activities keyed to aggression and expansion until telling blows are dealt to them and until their activities are kept in check.[31]

At the close of the decade, three trends coincided to help freeze a confrontationist Chinese posture with regard to Moscow: Deng's increasing ascendance within the Chinese leadership, which enabled him to deflect the challenges of those who sought a dialogue with Soviet officials; the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the consequent expansionist view of Soviet strategy; and Defense Secretary Brown's visit to China, with his pledge to foster "complementary actions in the field of defense as well as diplomacy."

The Role of Readjustment and Reform

Yet such trends posed dangers as well as opportunities. If negotiations with Moscow were out of the question, this could well raise the temperature of a Sino-Soviet military confrontation, draining Chinese resources and (in the worst of cases) leading to war. Deng Xiaoping sought to allay such concerns. Speaking to the cadre conference in Beijing, Deng tried to rebut more pessimistic opinions being raised in opposition to the Vice Chairman's line. China's diplomatic successes of the previous three years, Deng asserted, had provided "comparatively good international conditions for accomplishing the four modernizations while expanding the lineup in the struggle against hegemonism." Given these positive developments, Deng saw no need for pessimism:

> We should perceive our successes. We should see that we have spent three years in laying a very good foundation as we enter the 1980s in all fields in internal politics and economics and in international affairs.
>
> In short, the situation as we enter the 1980s is very good. We have prepared our positions in all respects for victorious advance. We are filled with confidence as we enter the 1980s. *It is completely wrong*

[31]Ibid., p. C4.

and baseless to harbor doubts about the future of the four modernizations.[32]

China's general political line of "building a powerful modern socialist state" was the central issue around which everything must revolve. Only if a large-scale war broke out would China depart from it. Moreover, Deng added, "even if a major war does break out, we must continue to implement this line after the war." The enormous task of "socialist construction" so long impeded by international tensions or domestic upheaval would now take precedence over all other objectives. "Modernization," Deng further observed, was the "main condition for solving international and internal problems." Although the 1980s would be "a decade of extremely great turmoil and filled with danger, . . . we have confidence in being able to put off the outbreak of war and in striving for a somewhat longer period of peace, if we make a success of our struggle against hegemonism."[33]

Deng's optimism was based on a belief that modernization could proceed more or less unimpeded. During 1980, however, the depths of China's economic crisis and the need for basic reform in the economy became increasingly apparent. Extending the period of "reform and readjustment" (the latter undertaken under the aegis of Chen Yun, not Deng Xiaoping) was judged necessary to deal with the pervasive, seemingly intractable problems hampering the modernization effort. In December, extraordinary steps were announced severely curtailing capital construction, reducing state expenditure (principally in the defense sector), postponing or canceling outright major projects and undertakings with outside powers (principally Japan and Western Europe), and orienting the modernization effort far more strongly toward agriculture and light industry in order to meet consumption demands.[34] Such steps made even more imperative the need to define the international environment in less threatening terms.

Because of Deng's repeated expressions of optimism about the prospects for China's economic development, he may have had to concede that those who had "harbored doubts about the future of the four modernizations" were closer to the truth. The inability of the economy to turn around in the shorter period of "reform and readjustment" put Deng on the defensive.[35] In the early months of 1981, a number of discordant opinions surfaced in the official media, many of them challenging the premises of Deng's policies in foreign affairs. Some were quite plausibly addressed to further facilitate economic

[32]Deng, 1980a, p. 7. Emphasis added.
[33]Ibid., p. 2.
[34]*Renmin Ribao* Editorial, 1980.
[35]Miller, 1981.

readjustment. This task diminished the urgency and immediacy of the Soviet threat to China.

An authoritative article in the January 1981 issue of *Red Flag* invoked Lenin and the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk as well as the New Economic Policy of 1921 to defend such steps. Its applicability to the present could not have been lost on the journal's readers:

> What was the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk about? [It] gave Russia, which was already in a state of exhaustion, "an opportunity to regain its breath" so that Russia could consolidate the proletarian regime, maintain the proletarian leadership over the peasants, readjust its economy, build its Red Army to defeat the White Army and the foreign armed meddlers and stand rock firm.... If the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk had been rejected, as the "left-wing communists" suggested, the new born Soviet republic could have been strangled in its cradle by the German bandits.
>
> In 1921, Lenin and the Russian Communist Party suggested and carried out a new economic policy.... Was this not [also] a retreat? Yes, it was. But, this retreat was entirely necessary in Russia at that time.... That is, by correcting the mistake of continuing to carry out wartime communism during the period of peace and construction, the Soviet Government advanced readily toward communism.
>
> Similar examples were also numerous in the history of the Chinese revolution.[36]

If the logic of this argument was not obvious enough, an article praising Wang Jiaxiang's 1962 effort to redirect China's foreign policy was. Wang's observations had relevance to the present as well:

> It is better to adopt a moderate policy in foreign affairs in order to work against time to tide over difficulties and quicken accomplishment of our country's socialist construction. In view of the vilification of our country by some other countries, it is proposed that we should make a relatively all-round statement on foreign relations to clarify our foreign policy.... We should... guard against diverting a local war to our country and avoid being taken as the main target of attack by imperialists.[37]

Deng's problems in early 1981 presented the opportunity to air a range of policy disputes. Most of this debate was couched in allegorical terms, and hence subject to differing interpretations. As one of these articles observed, "The appraisal of historical figures is a complicated subject and there is still no unanimity of views."[38] If the

[36]Lu, 1981, pp. 44-45.
[37]Wang et al., 1981, p. L9.
[38]Su and Xiao, 1981, p. K11.

identity of the contemporary protagonists was not apparent, the relevance of these issues to the present was inescapable: determining whether the principal threat to China was in the east or in the north and west (coastal defense versus land border defense); assessing the appropriate mix of diplomatic and military measures to counter the pressure of "Czarist aggression" in Xinjiang; judging the wisdom of relying on certain imperialist powers for military and economic assistance in order to defeat or deflect the challenges of other imperialist powers; and attempting to seek relaxation of tensions abroad in order to enable more rapid progress on the domestic economic front.[39] These discussions embodied more than academic controversies. Such debate "was not a manifestation of controversy over policy, but it was in fact a struggle between two different strategic ideologies."[40]

In mid-January, a *People's Daily* editorial raised the issue of whether the major economic reappraisal of December 1980 posed a direct challenge to Deng Xiaoping's general policy line, including foreign policy. The editorial's authors sought to rally to Deng's defense:

> The guiding ideology . . . laid down by the third plenary session [has] not changed. Not only will the . . . various important policy decisions not change, but other policies, such as an economic policy of opening up to foreign countries . . . [and] our foreign policy insisting on opposing hegemonism and safeguarding world peace and so forth also will not change.[41]

Subsequent confirmation of such debate was also reported in the Western press. During the spring Deng received an endorsement for his policy line (ratified publicly in the decisions of the Sixth Plenum at the end of June).[42] The debate within the leadership, however, purportedly involved discussions of the most appropriate means of avoiding major armed conflict. Although Deng's policies were reaffirmed, some leaders apparently considered diminished tensions with Moscow as an additional means of assuring Chinese security. (Others supposedly objected to the removal of ideology from the Sino-Soviet rivalry.) Even if reports of such debate are discounted, the issues were still the nature of the Soviet global challenge and the reliability of the United States as a coalition partner in the "united front against hegemonism."

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[39]For a representative cross section, see Ye and Su, 1981; Wang et al., 1981; Yang, 1981; Qiao, 1981; Yan, 1981; and Chen, 1981.

[40]Ye and Su, 1981, p. L12.

[41]*Renmin Ribao*, 1981, p. L7.

[42]The above discussion derives from Parks, 1981a.

Afghanistan Revisited

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (and its indirect involvement in Kampuchea) supported Deng's views of relentless Soviet expansionism. Early assessments of the events in Afghanistan argued that the "nature of Soviet social imperialism . . . has been proved by new evidence. People [perhaps in China?] no longer have doubts about it." Soviet strategy, it was further asserted, was

> offensive and in no way defensive. . . . [A]ll declarations, statements, and pledges made by the Soviet leading clique about "detente" are worthless. . . . People can also see very clearly that the concept of categorizing the present Soviet leaders as "doves" and the hope of securing world peace on these "doves" is entirely wrong.[43]

As noted previously, between January 21 and 25 the *Renmin Ribao* Commentator wrote four front page assessments on the "lessons to be drawn from Afghanistan." The struggle against hegemonism was defined as global; Soviet actions "must be assessed from a strategic point of view" and not as "isolated incidents." Although "only the struggle of the Afghan people can put an end to the Soviet intervention," the invasion had greatly enhanced the prospects for "the peoples of the world . . . [to] upset the Kremlin's global strategic dispositions and accelerate their material and organizational preparations against a war of aggression."[44]

The benefits of such a strategy were readily apparent to Chinese leaders. The Soviets (like the Vietnamese before them in Kampuchea) may have expected to win rapid victory by "a war of quick decision," but such hopes proved illusory. "It is not a simple matter to subjugate a country like Afghanistan," a signed commentary in *People's Daily* declared in mid-April. Although the Soviets may have introduced more than 100,000 troops, these numbers were insufficient. "While Soviet units appear to be on the offensive, in reality they are in a defensive position all the time."[45] With the "new czars . . . bogged down in a protracted war of aggression with no way of extricating themselves, their forces for global expansion will be weakened."[46] By the end of 1980, *Red Flag* offered an encouraging assessment of the results of the invasion. Notwithstanding the vast preponderance of Soviet power, the two sides "have come out even after one year of fighting." The longer the war might last, the greater the opposition among both "the common Soviet people" and Soviet soldiers "forced to

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[43]All the above citations are drawn from *Hongqi* Commentator, 1980a, pp. 81, 83.
[44]The key points of these articles are summarized in *Beijing Review*, 1980a.
[45]Sima, 1980a, p. C3.
[46]Sima, 1980b, p. C3.

go to Afghanistan." Such success demonstrated yet again "the power of people's war":

> Their troops are scattered and hidden. They have seized opportunities to make sudden attacks upon the enemy, to intercept enemy convoys, to skillfully seize strongholds, to burn warehouses and to attack the airport. In this way the enemy has been put into a passive position.... The struggle of the Afghan people tells all the people of the world the following truth: Despite their military strength, the Soviet social imperialists are not irresistible.[47]

Given such failures, the Soviets would increasingly shift their strategy to a political level. By offering the prospect of a Soviet withdrawal if the Karmal regime were given legitimacy at the negotiating table, Moscow would seek the acquiescence of others to its *fait accompli,* thereby making permanent the Soviet role and presence in Southwest Asia.

Rather than reward such aggression, the *Renmin Ribao* Observer saw no alternative to a prolonged military struggle to oust the aggressors:

> All peace-loving countries in the world should unite and wage a tit-for-tat struggle against the Soviet and Vietnamese aggressors... [by] giv[ing] energetic support to the peoples of Afghanistan and Kampuchea in their struggle against aggression.... In this way, instead of being able to batten on wars, the Soviet Union and Viet Nam would inevitably be burdened by an ever increasing drain on their manpower and material and financial resources and be bogged down in Afghanistan and Kampuchea. This will make it possible to upset or even disrupt the global strategic plan of the Soviet Union, to delay and check the process of Soviet war deployment and to put off the outbreak of war while gaining precious time for the peace-loving countries and peoples.[48]

This and comparable assessments stressed that the era of Soviet expansion had only begun. The course of such expansion could be checked only after repeated tests of strength with the anti-hegemony forces, thereby strengthening the case for a long-term strategic relationship with the West.

Poland as a Test Case

The most problematic events for the Soviet leadership in recent years, however, have taken place in Poland. For the Chinese, the

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[47]Yi, 1981a, pp. F1-F2.

[48]*Renmin Ribao* Observer, 1980b, p. 9.

special circumstances surrounding the Polish crisis have posed a sensitive political issue within the leadership. The imposition of martial law has been judged a far more tolerable outcome than a direct Soviet invasion. The Chinese have yet to assert that martial law was instituted on orders from Moscow, nor have any condemnations of martial law been issued. Chinese media coverage has been based almost exclusively on various Polish and Western press dispatches, without further embellishment from Chinese observers. Most of these reports have emphasized the return to normalcy in Poland, thereby conveying China's tacit support for the imposition of military rule. In a more direct sense, a Chinese-Polish trade protocol signed in late January 1982 increased bilateral trade 30 percent above 1981 levels; an earlier agreement to sell Poland 50,000 tons of pork has also proceeded.[49]

These actions stand in obvious contrast to Western efforts at imposing economic sanctions. Yet China's unwillingness to cooperate with the West is unrelated to Beijing's mounting displeasure with the United States. The Chinese are well aware of the challenge posed by an independent trade union movement to all ruling parties, including the CCP. Although China has long offered subtle encouragement to any loosening of Soviet controls in Eastern Europe, Beijing never risked close identification with Polish-style reforms, because such a step could unleash comparable pressures within China.[50] Moreover, Poland has long been in the Soviet sphere of influence and thus represents a very different case from Soviet actions elsewhere. China's consistent stand that it opposed any external involvement in the Polish crisis finds the PRC position ironically symmetrical with Soviet policy.[51] The evolution of Chinese views, therefore, seems worthy of some attention.

Throughout the summer and fall of 1980, Chinese interpretations of the workers' protests were very low key and equivocal. In early September, a Xinhua dispatch posed the issues and choices for Moscow in explicit terms:

> The Soviet Union . . . took a very cautious attitude at the beginning, imposing a news blackout on the strikes and keeping quiet for 50 days. It voiced intimidating warnings only after the situation . . . continued to spread and . . . there appeared the possible danger of the Polish situation "going out of bounds." This precisely reflected the embarrassment facing the Soviet Union. At the moment it has not yet freed itself from the international difficulty in which it had landed itself after Afghanistan and could not afford another stormy reac-

[49]Weisskopf, 1982a; Wren, 1982a.

[50]For discussion in several confidential Party documents, see Liao, 1980; Kyodo, 1982a.

[51]*Renmin Ribao* Observer, 1980c, p. H2.

> tion such as occurred after the "Czechoslovakia invasion." . . . Judging from Moscow's past behavior, it could have made another adventurous move at this critical moment, yet it had to be very cautious before making such a move.[52]

Although the Chinese press continued to monitor tensions in subsequent weeks, including reports of Soviet troop movements, results were inconclusive: "People cannot help but keep close watch on this."[53]

As tensions increased, Chinese commentaries adopted a more worried tone. On December 6, for example, a Xinhua Commentator warned that "the shadow of outside armed intervention looms large." Noting "the habitual practice of the Soviet hegemonists to resort to the threat of arms or naked military intervention at times when developments . . . run counter to the will of the Kremlin," the author argued that Poland had a sovereign right to determine its own affairs. Implicitly conceding that the Polish trade movement diminished the authority and predominance of the Communist Party, the article still discussed the international context and consequences of a possible Soviet intervention:

> Warsaw in 1980 is not Prague in 1968. The Polish people have the right to decide their own destiny, the firm will to preserve their national interests, and the ability to settle their problems by themselves.[54]

Days later, an additional commentary for the first time posed the issue of a possible Soviet intervention in terms of the increasing demands on Soviet capabilities along multiple fronts. Although the author asserted that Moscow was "preparing pretexts for eventual intervention," he also noted:

> Of course, the Soviets are not without difficulty when it comes to mounting an invasion of Poland. The Afghanistan burden is heavy enough as it is. They would be compelled to think twice before they undertake another and even more staggering burden. . . . Then there is the overwhelming universal condemnation which Moscow must consider if it has not lost all reason.[55]

By mid-December, the PRC issued its first highly authoritative assessment, with the *Hongqi* Commentator discussing Poland far more in terms of Soviet global strategy. The indeterminacy of the evalu-

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[52]Xinhua, 1980b, p. H2.
[53]Fang, 1980, p. H2.
[54]Xinhua, 1980b, p. H2.
[55]Xinhua Commentary, 1980c, pp. C1-C2.

ation was readily apparent. The Soviets were a hegemonic power "playing the role of international gendarme," but there appeared to be genuine constraints on a direct military intervention. Indeed, Commentator drew explicit parallels between the possibility of a Soviet intervention and American behavior in the 1950s and 1960s. The United States, he asserted, had ultimately landed itself in "an extremely isolated and pathetic situation . . . resulting in great damage to its national power. This has led some people [in China?] to think that today America is no longer a superpower and that it is only a big power." An even worse fate was judged to await Moscow should it choose to intervene:

> If the Soviet hegemonists want to be the new international gendarme, their fate will be even worse than the Americans . . . [since] America relied [also] on dollars, aside from military strength, to play its role . . . At present the Soviet Union has overstretched itself in its external expansion. It is now overburdened and has sunk into quagmires in several places. *If* it still engages in brutal intervention against the Polish people . . . the result will be even worse for the Soviet Union.[56]

There was an undeniable tentativeness to this assessment. Commentator did not even see fit yet to deem the USSR "the new international gendarme." Indeed, in view of the transition between Presidential administrations then under way, one would assume that there was no more propitious time for a Soviet intervention. If only by what was left unsaid, Moscow's decision in late 1980 not to intervene gave pause to Chinese strategic analysts.

By the early spring, Deng Xiaoping himself sought to put events in Poland in their more appropriate context. In a conversation in early April with British Foreign Secretary Lord Carrington, Deng stated, "The Afghan and Kampuchea problems should not be overshadowed by the problems of Poland, the Middle East and the Iran-Iraq war."[57] A week later, Deng extended his analysis in a conversation with the visiting Swedish Prime Minister, Thorbjorn Falldin. "People should not let their attention be diverted from Afghanistan and Kampuchea by the problems in Poland [and elsewhere]. . . . We should regard Afghanistan and Kampuchea as the front line in the fight against hegemonism and support the resistance forces there."[58] By treating Poland as a less pivotal issue, Deng hoped to continue to focus global attention on issues more important to China. The wars in Asia were

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[56]*Hongqi* Commentator, 1980, pp. C3-C4. Emphasis added.
[57]Deng, 1981a, p. G1.
[58]Deng, 1981b, p. G2.

battlegrounds where Soviet power might advance (and Poland had long been within the Soviet sphere of influence), so there was a certain logic to Deng's statements. Yet Deng was also seeking to limit the damage to his political and strategic framework. In the wake of the Polish party congress—with widespread expectations of a Soviet intervention again proving premature—the *Renmin Ribao* Commentator stated bluntly that "the Afghan problem . . . is in the forefront in the overall situation of the struggle against hegemonism . . . no matter what may happen in other parts of the world [Poland?], . . . no illusion may be cherished about the Soviet hegemonists."[59] Such references implicitly suggested that others within China may have been less than wholly persuaded.

The PRC advocated that Moscow not be given a pretext to intervene, leading Chinese spokesmen to identify increasingly with "the Polish authorities." They warned that undue zealousness on the part of more militant factions within Solidarity might provide exactly such an excuse.[60] The ultimate imposition of martial law was greeted with quiet approval in Beijing. No assertions were made that Prime Minister Jaruzelski was working on the orders of a "backstage boss."[61] In view of all these calculations, the declaration of a national emergency represented a *decision* that the Chinese found compatible with their interests and concerns. As a year's end international review observed: "In the past year, contradictions have been complex and intricate between Solidarity and the government, between the Polish party and Solidarity, and between Poland and foreign intervention. But one thing is clear, the Polish state and its people are all for solving the problems on their own."[62]

Direct Versus Indirect Strategies

Poland is atypical in Chinese strategic assessment, because it is not easily subsumed within the Chinese framework for interpreting Soviet actions. Rather, the continuing emphasis is on challenging Soviet power when its unchecked exercise would lead to direct political or military gains for Moscow. So long as such opposition does not threaten a direct Sino-Soviet crisis, these actions can be expected to temper Soviet ambitions. It is closely akin to Liddell Hart's "conservative approach" to grand strategy—trying to convince the adversary that the

[59]*Renmin Ribao* Commentator, 1981a, p. G2.
[60]See, for example, Xinhua, 1981.
[61]For an overall summary of Chinese views on the imposition of martial law (based largely on Western press accounts), see Wu, 1982.
[62]*Banyuetan* Editorial Department, 1981, p. 4.

game is not worth the candle.[63] In this view, the exercise of Soviet power in regions of instability provides ample opportunities to make life difficult for Moscow or its surrogates. The USSR, saddled with a stagnating economy, an "indigestible empire," various internal political and economic contradictions, and "overextended battlelines and excessive burdens," will ultimately find such efforts difficult and painful to execute.[64] With time but only after suffering defeats, Soviet leaders will be forced to reassess their strategic objectives.

The more immediate implications of such views for China's own security are all too obvious. By mobilizing disparate forces to combat and frustrate the exercise of Soviet power, the PRC fosters the creation of an informal security coalition whose aggregate capabilities pose a major challenge to Soviet power. Preoccupying the Soviet Union on as many fronts as possible shields China from undue political or military pressure. The imbalance of forces along the Sino-Soviet border—considered by most the central concern of Chinese defense planning—rarely receives more than passing mention in these assessments.[65] Unlike Afghanistan or Indochina, the border is portrayed as peripheral to the global strategic competition, or at least stable and predictable. Obvious advantages accrue to China by depicting the USSR as a *far more* active and greater threat to other states and on other fronts. Such circumstances enable Beijing to assume a somewhat detached posture in regard to the political-military equation, with consequent long-term advantages.

Yet such optimistic projections are based on assumptions that many find questionable. The indirect approach to strategy requires endless fortitude and a willingness to reject any compromises that might legitimize the Soviet presence in a particular contested area. It also fails to allow sufficiently for the Soviet Union's capabilities to incur and accept such long-term costs.[66] Moscow's capacity for countering such coalition-building with political strategies of its own are substantial. Chinese analysts display great anxiety that political forces in the West will seek accommodation and compromise with the Soviets, thereby permitting Moscow to escape from its growing military predicaments and strategic dilemmas. Soviet calls for political solutions in both Afghanistan and Kampuchea represent "smokescreens" that would enable Moscow to achieve political

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[63]Liddell Hart, 1954, Chap. XXII.

[64]For representative assessments, see Mei, 1981; Kamm, 1981; Lu, 1981; Lu and Zhou, 1981; Qi and Zhou, 1981b; Yi, 1981b; Sun, 1982; Tang, 1982; *Renmin Ribao* Commentator, 1982; and Yuan and Yuan, 1982.

[65]For discussion of this issue, see Chen, 1981; Qi and Zhou, 1981a; Li, 1981; and Qi, Zhou, and He, 1981.

[66]Becker, 1981.

victories where it has been unable to achieve military ones.[67] With the Western alliance system in increasing disarray, the USSR could consolidate its strategic position by appealing to disparate voices within the anti-hegemonic "united front," especially those with a continued political and economic stake in detente.[68]

Among such anxieties, none looms larger than a resurrection of long-standing Chinese fears of Soviet-American collusion. Despite the Reagan administration's harsh anti-Soviet stance and its long-term defense buildup, some Chinese strategic analysts see Moscow and Washington confronting parallel problems within their separate spheres of interest. The growing frictions within the Western alliance in particular have enabled the Soviet Union to "exploit the conflicts between the United States and Western Europe . . . sowing dissension among countries, causing relations between countries to disintegrate, and dealing with different things or nations in different ways."[69]

A series of articles under the byline of Di Xin has offered a far more pessimistic view. The Soviet Union was not only trying to "give the dying 'detente' an opportunity to take a second breath" and "sow discord" in the Western alliance. An even more "sinister design" underlay Soviet efforts to renew detente in both East and West.

> Noticing that Reagan has revealed an inclination toward a "bipolar world" during his election campaign, Brezhnev tries to play along and lure Washington into agreeing to redivide the spheres of influence with the Soviet Union on a global scale. . . . It hopes that Washington will take the lead in accepting the *fait accompli* of its aggression and expansion since 1972 so it can go ahead to digest and consolidate its loot. . . . In other words, it may for the time being recognize the principal U.S. interests in El Salvador in exchange for Washington's recognition of its interests in Southwest Asia (including Afghanistan) and other places.[70]

Such an approach would buy time for later Soviet moves, and permit a momentary respite from the "quagmires" in Afghanistan and Indochina. Appeals to the Reagan administration to recognize separate spheres of influence for the "two superpowers" were "bait to weaken U.S. resistance and seek international recognition of its aggressive and expansionist efforts." But they also "appeal[ed] to the U.S. taste and [are] in tune with Reagan's idea of treating the United

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[67]*Renmin Ribao* Commentator, 1981a, 1981b; Foreign Ministry, 1981; Tang, 1982; *China Daily* Commentator, 1982; *Renmin Ribao* Commentator, 1982.

[68]Qi and Zhou, 1981b.

[69]Yi, 1981, p. C2.

[70]Di, 1981a, pp. C4-C5. See also Di, 1981b.

States and the Soviet Union as two poles of the world."[71] Such moves were mere tactical adjustments rather than changes in the Soviet Union's hegemonic course. But "quite a few Americans" had already been persuaded that agreements with Moscow would provide a means of respite for both superpowers.[72]

Should Soviet calls for negotiation find favor within Washington and other Western capitals, Chinese strategists fear it will sanction and legitimize Soviet expansion. Securing the "strategic focal point" of Europe by political means would enable Moscow to concentrate its available resources on the "struggles and hotspots" along the long arc stretching from the Mediterranean to the Pacific, thereby "squeezing the United States out of the area of Asia and Oceania" and threatening the economic and energy lifelines of Japan and Western Europe. But it would also aid "the planned encirclement and isolation of China."[73] All these moves and ploys would conform to the "important strategem of 'winning a victory without launching a war.'"[74]

Equally important, Soviet efforts to advance its global strategic interests were underway at a time of growing friction between China and the United States, leaving China potentially far more vulnerable to Soviet political and military pressure. In such circumstances, the opportunities for furthering the anti-hegemony united front seemed far less certain than before. A renewed vigilance against the United States could only detract from the earlier singleminded focus on opposing Soviet power. But "particular emphasis" remained on opposing Soviet hegemonism, because the breadth and scope of Soviet ambitions continued to outweigh the dangers of revived "American hegemonism."[75]

The fluidity in the framework of strategic relationships between China and the United States afforded new opportunities for Soviet leaders in their dealings with China. How have these recent changes affected Soviet views of China in the post-Mao era and the future of Sino-Soviet relations?

WATCHFUL WAITING: SOVIET VIEWS OF CHINA IN THE 1980s

Chinese assessments of the prospects for Soviet power in the 1980s find a ready parallel in Soviet evaluations of China's long-term fu-

[71]Di, 1982, p. C1.
[72]Ibid., p. C2.
[73]Chen, 1981.
[74]Qi and Zhou, 1981a, p. C5.
[75]*Banyuetan* Editorial Department, 1982, p. A4.

ture. Beijing's emergence as a threat to Soviet security and the potential importance of Chinese power for Soviet interests have spurred the development of a large research apparatus on Chinese domestic and foreign policy. There has been a vast outpouring of Soviet writings on post-Mao China in the official press and various specialist journals;[76] Soviet officials and analysts are also addressing pertinent issues with increasing candor.[77]

These views, although illuminating, must be measured against the graphic, almost primitive opinions periodically expressed by high Soviet leaders. These include the thinly disguised racist views embodied in Khrushchev's observations of Mao[78] to an even more virulent racism expressed by Brezhnev in private conversations with Henry Kissinger.[79] Such historical fears of China are no doubt a continuing factor in contemporary leadership attitudes. No matter how deeply embedded these sentiments, however, Soviet leaders recognize the urgent need to assess the implications of a more modern, powerful China ultimately confronting the USSR. We cannot assume that the views of Soviet China specialists are fully reflected in Soviet leadership calculations, but there is considerable overlap between Soviet professional writings on China and Soviet policy statements. Taken as a whole, the views of Soviet decisionmakers and the assessments of Soviet specialists define the broad outlines of officially sanctioned debate on post-Mao China and the prospects for Sino-Soviet relations.

The Clash of Theory and Practice

Most Soviet analyses of China after Mao are predictable. They raise the alarm bell of an even more militarized, warlike China, now openly assisted by "the forces of militarism and reaction in the West" under the common banner of anti-Sovietism. A China so strengthened would be a major threat to regional stability and ultimately to world peace, with the assistance proffered by the West one day returning to haunt its donors.[80] By 1980, longstanding Soviet fears of Sino-American

[76]For a review of Soviet writings in the two years following Mao's death, see Rothenberg, 1979.

[77]For a wide ranging assessment based on extensive interviews with Soviet officials, see Garrett, 1981.

[78]See Khrushchev, 1974, pp. 239-240.

[79]According to Kissinger, in May 1973 Brezhnev said that the Chinese "were cannibalistic in the way they destroyed their top leaders . . . they might well, in fact, be cannibals." Kissinger, 1982, p. 29.

[80]Examples of such analyses in the late 1970s are almost too numerous to mention. For appropriate examples, see Apalin, 1978; Aleksandrov, 1978; Ivkov, 1979; Semyonov, 1979; and Kruchinin, 1979.

collusion at Moscow's expense had materialized with a vengeance. Trends in Chinese foreign policy and its potential consequences for the global "correlation of forces" seemed particularly worrisome. Soviet leaders, having hoped for a degree of accommodation in their relations with China after the death of Mao, instead confronted a political system increasingly aligned with the West and almost reflexively opposed to the USSR. Mao's fixation on ideology was now discarded and condemned and with it the recurring factionalism and elite conflict it helped engender. Yet Deng Xiaoping's dismantling of the Maoist record in domestic politics and economics did not extend to foreign policy or Sino-Soviet relations. As one highly authoritative Soviet source concluded:

> Maoism as the theory and practice of a great power policy, hegemonism, and anti-Sovietism remains the basis of PRC foreign and domestic policy.... Maoists of various tints succeed one another at the helm of power in Beijing, different people, different methods emerge, but the essence of Mao's foreign policy remains as before.[81]

Yet there are more reflective views of China's future and its strategic implications. One study has revealed considerable variation between private and public opinions.[82] Many Soviet officials, mindful of China's continued reliance on Soviet production technology now two decades or more old, recognize the lengths to which China must go before it becomes a major world power, industrially or militarily. Some Soviet decisionmakers may even take a degree of satisfaction from knowing the West must deal with such an obstreperous, demanding partner. In this less worrisome view, the differences between the operation of a highly centralized, planned economy and the dominant practices of Western private enterprise could well find the Chinese at loggerheads with the noncommunist world in the not too distant future. Some argue that Chinese planners may eventually revert to a Soviet style of planning process.[83]

Although most Soviet writings convey a ritualized alarm, certain other analyses contain an underlying long-term optimism: The West cannot hope to develop a successful long-term relationship with China, or vice versa. Over the longer run, the Chinese will have to rejoin the socialist camp. As one article has noted, China's "role of imperialism's accomplice and junior partner . . . is the price that Beijing has to pay for . . . economic and military aid from the capitalist

[81]Aleksandrov, 1980, p. B3.
[82]Garrett, 1981.
[83]Ibid., pp. 27-32.

states."[84] Such a compromised position will prove increasingly dissatisfying to the Chinese, as the West will supposedly seek to use China for its own selfish ends. "The road of forming political and even military blocs with the imperialist and reactionary forces on the basis of anti-Sovietism and enmity toward socialist forces," an article in *Izvestiya* has observed, is "an anomaly for countries [that] have chosen the socialist path of development. Like all anomalies, such a course does not have any prospects."[85] This belief helps explain the "wait and see" attitude evident in present Soviet policies toward China. There is no public recognition that Soviet behavior has accelerated the prospects for security ties between China and the West. What incentives are there for Moscow to show flexibility toward the PRC, Soviet officials implicitly argue, when China's leaders seem determined to strengthen China through cooperation with the West and opposition to the USSR?

As Soviet specialists note, the passing of Mao Zedong and the ouster of his radical cohorts have generated a process of political change that moves the PRC in ideological and economic directions much more compatible with Soviet and Western views and practices. Soviet officials are well aware of four trends in post-Mao domestic politics. First, the factionalism within the CCP leadership "against the background of serious crisis phenomena in [China's] economic, ideological, political, and social life" can only undermine any efforts to formulate a consistent set of policies for China in the 1980s. As one assessment has argued: "The Chinese leadership has no clear long-term program of actions, no unity on questions of economic and social policy, education, state building and so on." Given the growing recognition of "the complete bankruptcy of Maoism as a theory and practice for the leadership of a society," China's leadership will be neither confident nor secure enough to challenge the USSR effectively.[86] Second, Soviet observers have noted that China's past ideological polemics directed toward the Soviet Union have ceased. The most renowned—the "Nine Comments" of 1963, which sought to define an independent policy line for the CCP—were in late 1979 subjected to a withering assault in *Cheng Ming*, the Hong Kong publication then linked with the views of Deng Xiaoping.[87]

Third, every major victim of the Cultural Revolution has now been rehabilitated, including many individuals previously identified by the Soviets as among the "healthy internationalist forces" who once flour-

[84]Aleksandrov, 1980b, p. B4.
[85]Fedorov, 1980, p. B2.
[86]Aleksandrov, 1980b, pp. B1-B2.
[87]*Cheng Ming*, 1979.

ished within the CCP, most notably Liu Shaoqi, China's one time head of state.[88] An authoritative Soviet pseudonym (I. Aleksandrov) reminded the readers of *Pravda* that "the grounds for [Liu's] rehabilitation . . . deliberately omit everything relating to the foreign policy platform of the Eighth CCP Congress, which had a clear anti-imperialist and internationalist thrust."[89] The same author also expressed doubt about the prospects for a durable "line of anti-Sovietism" when so much of Mao's record is under attack:

> It is known that the West received with a certain degree of caution the criticism in China of the Cultural Revolution and in particular the rehabilitation of Liu Shaoqi. Questions have been raised as to whether this process will lead to a review of the foreign policy platform established under Mao Zedong, with its overt anti-Sovietism and its stake on an alliance with imperialism.[90]

Such references indicate that Soviet observers are raising pertinent and potentially volatile policy questions.

Fourth, China's entire domestic program, having become as fully revisionist as its Soviet counterpart, must lead to a more balanced and somewhat more favorable view of the USSR within China. The obviously cathartic quality of the CCP's departures from Mao's policies and programs has not been lost upon Soviet observers. The endless reiteration of a supposedly Maoist "essence" to Chinese policy-making has assumed a somewhat forced quality. In an article in *Far Eastern Affairs*, the major journal of Soviet Asian specialists, its author went to great and rather creative lengths to defend this view:

> The domestic policy line of the present Chinese leadership is entirely geared to solving the task of creating by the end of the present century the domestic preconditions for direct implementation of Mao's global hegemonist aims. Amendments are being made to certain Maoist theses in the quest for more efficient ways and means of administering the country. Maoism is being adapted to the particularly acute demands of the stabilization of the regime and the implementation of the so-called "four modernizations." This "updating" of Maoism [marks] . . . a transition from the pseudoleftwing orthodox Maoism of the "Cultural Revolution" period to an undisguisedly rightwing, extremely pragmatic Maoism. . . . This turnabout . . . reveals in a new way the anti-scientific nature and invalidity of Maoism.[91]

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[88]For an authoritative earlier account of Sino-Soviet relations that stresses the mid-1950s struggle within the Chinese Communist Party between "the Marxist internationalist line" represented by Liu Shaoqi and "the petty bourgeois nationalistic line" represented by Mao Zedong, see Borisov and Koloskov, 1975, Chaps. III-V.

[89]Aleksandrov, 1980b, p. B2.

[90] Aleksandrov, 1980a, p. B2.

[91]*Far Eastern Affairs*, 1979, p. 13.

No doubt the implications of such "turnabouts" could prove harmful to Soviet interests, especially if China were to achieve greater success in its modernization effort. But some Soviet analysts view such developments as leading China toward a less doctrinaire view of the USSR.

In late 1979, press reports from Beijing suggested that the CCP had drafted an internal document urging removal of the "revisionist" label from the Soviet Union. The document purportedly argued that the USSR could be deemed a socialist state, given that the means of production were state owned.[92] A literary symposium held in September 1979 also discussed the political and economic characteristics of the Soviet system, with "most of the comrades" deeming the USSR as "basically socialist."[93] In response to such developments, Deng Xiaoping declared to President Sekou Toure of Guinea that "the Soviet Union is not a socialist country, but a social-imperialist country,"[94] but his criteria for this determination concerned the *external* behavior of the USSR, not its internal political characteristics.

Such concessions, acknowledgments, and suggestions reveal China's willingness to alter the range of questions at issue between the two countries. These indications are not lost upon the Soviet leadership. Although they do not presage a major reduction in Sino-Soviet tensions, China no longer challenges the USSR's credentials as a socialist system, thereby reversing a past Chinese policy that Moscow always found highly offensive.[95] A less rancorous atmosphere will emphasize the long-term political, military, and economic competition between the two states.

Unlike the situation in earlier years, there is now a fairly broad consensus within the Chinese leadership on the need to expand economic dealings with the West and Japan, thereby permitting major breakthroughs in economic development.[96] The Soviet leaders understand how China hopes to reduce its economic weakness and vulnerability through economic, scientific, technological, and educational exchanges with the advanced industrial countries. They further realize that shared concerns about Soviet power were among the principal factors advancing Sino-American relations at the start of the 1980s. How do they evaluate the prospects for further

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[92]Butterfield, 1979.

[93]*Wenyi Baijia*, 1979.

[94]*Beijing Review*, 1980b.

[95]For the last systematic detailed critique of this sort replete with attacks on the "Soviet revisionist renegade clique" and its manifold sins, see Institute of World Economics, 1977, especially pp. 7-8.

[96]For a detailed official defense of these policies, see *Hongqi* Editorial Department, 1982.

Sino-Western security cooperation and its implications for Soviet security interests?

There are no simple answers to these questions. Beyond predictable expressions of concern or alarm, no consensus appears in Moscow about the threat posed to Soviet security by China's modernization program, including military modernization. Soviet officials are well aware of the extent of China's economic backwardness; Soviet generals are also familiar with China's "state of the art" military technology—that is, of the late 1950s. Soviet analysts also know that despite the talk, rumor, speculation, exchange of visits, and revisions in Western technology transfer policy toward the PRC during the past few years, the effects on the quantity and quality of Chinese defense capabilities have been slight. They are well aware that China's main interest in acquiring newer defense technology concerns access to the means of production, rather than end items; that for the foreseeable future China will not have the funds for large purchases in this area; and that the United States—now embarking on a sustained defense buildup of its own—has no intention of providing such equipment free. Soviet officials also understand the considerable problems involved in integrating modern Western equipment and materiel into the Chinese armed forces.

Yet the convergence of Sino-American interests at a political level has been of more immediate concern to the Soviet Union. Even as Sino-American relations moved forward rapidly late in the Carter administration, authoritative Soviet commentaries continued to note the limits of U.S.-Chinese security arrangements and the relationship of Chinese foreign policy to Beijing's need to secure a long-term peaceful environment. In late May 1980, for example, I. Aleksandrov (widely assumed to represent Politburo views) noted Chinese assertions about deterring the "inevitable world war" to gain time and strength to compete more effectively in the future international system. He further observed that the PRC's dealings with the West were suffused with conflicts and divergent interests and aims that suggested the limits of these ties:

> In the political maneuvers undertaken by the Chinese leaders and imperialist circles many fear the clear intention of each side to achieve their own ends and the satisfaction of, above all, their selfish interests.... It is not a formal military alliance, of course, but this kind of rapprochement between China and imperialism poses a danger in the current international situation.[97]

[97]Aleksandrov, 1980b, pp. B1, B3.

The assumption of independent and supposedly selfish interests on the part of both the United States and China would limit the potential damage to Soviet interests.

Are There Contradictions in the Sino-American Axis?

The stress in Soviet writings on the "underlying conflicts of interest" between Washington and Beijing received a strong boost by the growing strains evident in Sino-American relations as early as mid-1980. The introduction of the Taiwan issue in the U.S. election campaign had introduced tension and suspicions of the United States in Beijing on what has always been among the most sensitive of issues to the Chinese. Beijing indicated that security cooperation with the United States and the needs of global strategy (countering Soviet power) would not move forward if Washington again placed relations with Taiwan on an official basis. Without any Soviet inducements or pressures, it appeared entirely possible that the burgeoning anti-Soviet security coalition might unravel before achieving major results.

In the earliest months of the Reagan administration, an authoritative article in *Kommunist* saw few grounds for encouragement in the dominant trends of Chinese policy. "Beijing . . . is actually implementing an anti-Soviet hegemonist policy coordinated with the imperialists . . . which translated into language intelligible to all means an alliance."[98] By urging the United States, NATO, and Japan to heighten military pressure against the USSR, China might hope to gain a degree of "breathing space" as well as access to the West's technology. But the author also foresaw clashes between U.S. and Chinese interests:

> There are divergences and contradictions in the positions of the Chinese leadership and the imperialists, even though they are united by anti-Sovietism and anti-socialism. Each side is endeavoring to bind the partner, but is unwilling to forfeit a free hand and bind itself with far-reaching commitments. In the United States, for example, particularly with the advent of a Republican administration, fears are being expressed, and not without reason, that a strengthened China would direct its expansion into the zone of American influence. In any event, one thing is certain: Chinese hegemonism will sooner or later clash with the interests of the imperialist powers, primarily the United States and Japan.

The assessment of Chinese internal economic and political developments further diminished the prospects for a stable, predictable course: "Instability [within the PRC] is also reflected in an uneven,

[98]All citations are drawn from Borisov, 1981.

erratic foreign policy.... China still has to formalize a stable and long-term foreign policy course." But there were no objections raised either to "the country's [growing] dependence on the West" or to "further experiments in i's domestic policy." Puzzlement and disappointment reduced to a single, vital issue: "Why, given all this [change], is it necessary to stubbornly continue a policy of confrontation with the USSR which emerged under completely different conditions and under the influence of motives rejected by China's current leaders themselves?"[99]

China's "tilt" to the right and the consequent disowning of much of the PRC's political past continues to encourage the Soviet leadership. Even as Soviet officials insist that Beijing's "great power hegemonic course" remains unchanged, they recognize the difficulty of insulating internal change from the external environment. Brezhnev's assessment of China, offered in his address to the 26th Party Congress in February 1981, directly addressed this belief:

> One has to assign a special place to China: The experience of the PRC's socioeconomic development over the past twenty years or so is a grave lesson that shows what the distortion of socialist principles—its essence both in domestic and foreign policies—leads to. The current leaders of China themselves call the state of affairs in their country, during the period of the so-called Cultural Revolution, the cruelest feudal-fascist dictatorship. We have nothing to add to an evaluation of this kind. Changes are now taking place in China's domestic politics. Time will yet show their true essence. Time will show to what extent the present Chinese leadership will find it possible to overcome the Maoist legacy. However, as yet, one unfortunately cannot speak of any changes for the better in Beijing's foreign policies. As before, they are directed at aggravating the international situation, coming close to imperialist policies. Naturally this will not put China back onto a healthy path of development. Imperialism will not be socialism's friend.... As far as the Chinese people are concerned, we are profoundly convinced that their true interest would be met by a policy of peace... [and] normal relations with other states.... The Soviet Union has not sought and does not seek confrontation with the PRC.... Our proposals aimed at normalizing relations with China remain in force.[100]

Brezhnev's arguments indicate a degree of satisfaction with recent changes in China's internal politics, because they conform to long-held Soviet views. As leadership in both systems is increasingly assumed by those less centrally involved in the disintegration of the

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[99]Ibid.

[100]Brezhnev, 1981, p. 9. Unlike many of his earlier statements on China, Brezhnev did not claim that the deterioration of Sino-Soviet relations was "through no fault of the Soviet Union."

Sino-Soviet alliance, the prospects for meaningful political change also become greater.

Yet Brezhnev and other Soviet leaders still seem unwilling to consider the effects of the USSR's emergence as a global power upon Chinese policy calculations. Officials in Moscow perceive opportunities for meaningful change in Sino-Soviet relations, but they seem persuaded that the pressures for change are almost exclusively on the Chinese side. Sino-American relations therefore assume pivotal importance in Soviet thinking: They constitute a test case for Soviet assumptions about Chinese policymaking. Expanded and improved ties between Beijing and Washington reduce Chinese incentives to foster better relations with Moscow. Deteriorating U.S.-Chinese relations would heighten the pressures for changing the PRC's anti-Soviet orientation.

Soviet commentaries have closely assessed the unsteady course of U.S.-Chinese ties under the Reagan administration, but without any consistent view of the consequences of these developments for Soviet foreign policy. Certain trends, in particular revisions in the guidelines for transfer of U.S. defense technology to China announced in June 1981, were highly unsettling. In the wake of Secretary of State Haig's visit to Beijing, the status of U.S.-Chinese-Soviet dealings were assessed in worrisome fashion by I. Aleksandrov.[101] Haig's announcement that the United States was now prepared to consider sales of lethal military technology was described as

> a new and highly dangerous stage in the development of the Chinese-American partnership . . . [especially in] its military aspects. . . . The present Washington leaders have gone much farther in their dangerous instigation than the Carter Administration, which they criticized before the election for its excessive pro-Beijing tilt.

Aleksandrov incorrectly claimed that China now "has open access" to all types of U.S. military hardware, including fighter bombers. However, he also asserted that China did not intend to use such weapons to threaten the USSR:

> Those who are placing contemporary weapons in the hands of the Chinese hegemonists obviously suppose that they are acquiring an opportunity to influence Beijing's policy and to guide its expansionism basically in a northerly direction. A profound delusion! The danger of China's militarization . . . lies in the fact that the American weapons now in Chinese hands will be turned primarily against the comparatively small neighboring states, among whom, incidentally, are America's allies.

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[101]All citations are drawn from Aleksandrov, 1981.

Yet even as the United States and China sought to put joint pressure on Hanoi and "surround Vietnam with something in the nature of a 'cordon sanitaire,'" more long-term Sino-American differences would also emerge:

> The architects of U.S. and Chinese policy, who see eye to eye when it comes to their militant anti-Communism and anti-Sovietism, are far from being of the same mind on their global claims. Each of the sides strives to tie down the other, to tether it more firmly to its policy and at the same time leave itself freedom of action.... Until now the United States has been more successful in its tactics. It determines the pace and content of the collusion.

On this basis, Aleksandrov argued, the PRC had made increasing concessions on the Taiwan question, effectively assenting to a situation of "two Chinas." Such a step constituted "an insult to the prestige and sovereignty of a great power."

Aleksandrov also saw the United States using its newfound role in Beijing to influence Chinese domestic politics. In his view, Washington was increasingly intent on strengthening Deng Xiaoping's political position, because this would help cement the Sino-American quasi-alliance. As he concluded, "The Soviet Union cannot remain indifferent to the dangerous new turn taken by Sino-American relations,... [which] cannot be seen as other than hostile to our country." Although he did not specify the possible steps, Aleksandrov argued that a U.S.-Chinese association "on an anti-Soviet basis... will be duly taken into account in the USSR in the overall context of Soviet-American and Soviet-Chinese relations." Moscow would also continue to defend the interests of its friends and allies. As in the past, however, Soviet policy was described only in reactive terms: "The Soviet Union will take such measures as will be dictated by the situation as it evolves." Even if Moscow believed that future Chinese-American dealings would develop regardless of Soviet actions, the uncertainties and contradictions remained. Precipitate Soviet actions—whether in a coercive or accommodating direction—were not warranted, because they could foreclose subsequent opportunities with regard to either Beijing or Washington.

The wisdom of this prudent "wait and see" course was quickly justified—perhaps far sooner than even optimistic observers in Moscow had expected. Expectations of expanded U.S.-Chinese strategic cooperation proved premature, as U.S.-Chinese relations foundered on the sensitive Taiwan issue. By year's end, the security relationship between Washington and Beijing had become hostage to Chinese suspi-

cions about Reagan administration China policy.[102] Those Soviet observers stressing the inherent contradictions and underlying conflicts of interest in Sino-American relations saw their long-term prognosis substantiated even in the short run. In almost gloating fashion, some Soviet assessments took great satisfaction from China's leaders "reaping the fruits of their capitulation" on the Taiwan issue:

> Making a hasty visit to the United States in January 1979, Deng Xiaoping entered into direct collusion with Washington for the sake of "strategic partnership" on the basis of the joint struggle against world socialism. He effectively agreed to postpone the solution of the Taiwan problem indefinitely—that is, he accepted the "two Chinas" concept, which is humiliating for a great power.[103]

Such developments have confronted the Soviets with a dilemma: whether to seize the opportunities inherent in Sino-American frictions, or to avoid entanglement in an issue that Moscow can influence only marginally. Such a decision must be based on an additional judgment: Are Chinese-American difficulties a momentary aberration, or do they reflect inescapable contradictions between unlikely coalition partners?

Weighing Alternative Options

Soviet actions and commentaries suggest a two-track policy toward China. The recurrent tensions and near crises in U.S.-PRC relations have afforded unexpected political opportunities for Moscow. They have substantiated the view that Deng Xiaoping has encountered considerable opposition to his policy of aligning with the United States. Somewhat paradoxically, however, Soviet leaders have not judged such friction far reaching enough to justify major changes in the USSR's China policy.

The evidence of atmospheric changes is clearcut. The few key statements on China from high Soviet officials within the past two years testify to this transformation. Not unlike the PRC's departure from its strident, ideological stance of the 1960s and 1970s, Soviet commentaries are now also marked by a measure of normalcy. Brezhnev's remarks in Tashkent in March 1982 suggest the broad outlines of Soviet declaratory policy: a commitment to noninterference in Chinese internal affairs, an acknowledgment of the existence of a socialist system in China, a commitment to one China and to Chinese

[102]See Parks, 1981c, 1981d.
[103]Ovchinnikov, 1981, p. B1.

sovereignty over Taiwan, a denial of any territorial claims upon China or any military threat to the People's Republic, and a willingness to carry out without preconditions any mutually acceptable steps to improve bilateral relations. Taken as a whole, these pledges constitute what Brezhnev termed "the principled position of our party and the Soviet state on the question of Soviet-Chinese relations."[104]

Brezhnev's pledges closely paralleled Prime Minister Tikhonov's remarks to a visiting delegation from *Asahi Shimbun* the previous month. Both reiterate longstanding Soviet proposals without indicating when, where, and how these "concrete steps" address Chinese concerns about Soviet global and regional behavior.[105] Airing such overtures at a time of acute U.S.-Chinese difficulties hardly seems coincidental. By offering reassurances to the PRC in those areas where Chinese unhappiness with the United States has been most pronounced, Soviet leaders hope to engender a degree of goodwill in Beijing. To this extent, such declarations are a necessary confidence-building measure, but they break no new ground. Leaders in Moscow still want to detach bilateral negotiations from Sino-Soviet differences in global strategy, and leaders in Beijing uniformly insist that substantive change must await Soviet deeds as well as words.[106]

Soviet leaders seem convinced that time is on their side. Tactical flexibility toward China is all that is judged necessary at present: more concrete overtures or proposals for meaningful compromise in Sino-Soviet relations can await additional changes in China's political course. Such changes, however, would not require a stark choice in Chinese foreign policy between Moscow and Washington. Some Soviet observers see China as the third pole in a global great power triangle. Although this option would preclude any reconstitution of a Sino-Soviet coalition, it would also greatly diminish Soviet fears of an anti-Soviet quasi-alliance between China and the West.

Izvestiya political commentator Aleksandr Bovin has predicted such developments. In a dialogue with Vladimir Lukin of the Institute of U.S.A. and Canada Studies, Bovin expressed optimism about the long-term directions of Chinese policy:

> It is logical to suppose that Beijing leaders have varying opinions regarding the orientation of the country's foreign policy. Some Chinese cannot fail to ask: What has China gained by placing itself in a self-made anti-Soviet cage.... Ultimately it may be asserted that hostile relations with our country accord with neither U.S. nor Chinese national interests. And as Beijing and Washington become

[104]Brezhnev, 1982, p. R3.
[105]Burns, 1982.
[106]Xinhua, 1982b.

> aware of this, a fundamentally new political situation will emerge. Not only the three states but all mankind will gain from the equalization of relations right around the "triangle" perimeter.[107]

As Bovin also acknowledged, however, such optimism must be tempered by present circumstances: The United States and China remain partners in a "quasi-alliance." In Bovin's view, the normalization of U.S.-Chinese relations "is a natural and legitimate process"; a relationship "encumbered with substantial difficulties and contradictions" and "a marked divergence of strategic interests" has no long-term prospects.[108] Although he did not predict a major shift in Chinese policy, he judged a highly imbalanced relationship with the two superpowers as fatally flawed.

The balance of leadership opinion in both Beijing and Washington is therefore considered a critical variable in Soviet assessments. Soviet observers see the continuing contradictions between the United States and China reflecting underlying tensions and disagreements within the political processes of Washington as well as Beijing. Two leading Soviet international affairs specialists, Boris Zanegin and Vladimir Lukin, have described Sino-American relations during the 1970s in terms of competing viewpoints within the U.S. government on China's relevance to U.S. global strategic interests. The uncertainties in Sino-American relations in the Reagan administration continue to reflect these debates and disagreements: "Policy toward China is currently the subject of disputes among the President's closest advisors, and this provides more evidence of the ambiguous and contradictory nature of the process of U.S.-Chinese rapprochement."[109] Secretary of State Haig's prospective offer to sell weapons to China was therefore viewed as an effort to placate the PRC for its unhappiness over continued U.S. support for Taiwan rather than as a serious overture.

The firmness of Deng Xiaoping's grasp on power is an even greater factor in Soviet assessments. A review of political trends in China after the Sixth Plenum published in *Kommunist* described Deng as "a typical mouthpiece of the rightwing nationalist and pro-imperialist trends in Maoism which emerged a long time ago and are now dominant in the country's politics."[110] The article's conclusions about U.S.-Chinese relations were far more ominous than those offered by Zanegin and Lukin. Under Deng's direction, China was "making the transition from ingratiating [itself] with reactionary imperialist

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[107]Bovin and Lukin, 1982, p. B15.
[108]Ibid., pp. B12, B14.
[109]Zanegin and Lukin, 1981, p. 34.
[110]Vladimirov, 1981, p. 96.

circles to the role of ally and military instrument in the hands of international imperialism."[111] China's uncompromising line on renewing negotiations with the Soviet Union was therefore considered payment in kind to the United States for American assistance to China.[112] Yet Deng's opposition to renewed negotiations and the "uniform stand against the general normalization of Soviet-Chinese relations" was supposedly subject to challenge within China. According to a major assessment of Sino-Soviet relations published in *International Affairs* in September 1981, there are "those in China who are beginning to ask questions about the causes of the leadership's reluctance to do at least something to improve relations with the USSR and who are disturbed by the policy leading to the transformation of China into imperialism's minion."[113] The key questions persist: What circumstances might seriously alter Beijing's present orientation toward the USSR? And can accommodating Soviet behavior be expected to influence Chinese thinking and actions?

Soviet commentaries avoid both questions. Although Soviet leaders and analysts alike are no doubt pleased by the difficulties and strains in U.S.-Chinese relations, China has not noticeably shifted toward Moscow. The adjustments evident in Sino-Soviet relations—resuming higher levels of trade, visits of Chinese economic specialists to the USSR and of Soviet athletes to China, and related efforts at normalization—leave the underlying geopolitical rivalry intact.[114] By mid-May 1982, I. Aleksandrov acknowledged that Soviet efforts to decouple bilateral relations from the broader Sino-Soviet competition had been rejected by the PRC. While Soviet proposals for normalization remained in force, the Chinese leadership proved unyielding, even in the face of a major deterioration in U.S.-Chinese relations.[115] Changes in the political atmosphere should not be dismissed as unimportant, but they have yet to alter the national security calculations that transformed Sino-Soviet relations during the 1970s. The prospects for substantive change in the political-military context of the Sino-Soviet rivalry continue to depend on the firmness and resiliency of China's political and strategic course.

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[111]Ibid., p. 100.
[112]Dalnev, 1981, especially pp. 83-89.
[113]Ibid., p. 84.
[114]Kyodo, 1982b, p. C1; Kyodo, 1982c, p. C1; Wren, 1982f.
[115]Aleksandrov, 1982.

THE UNITED FRONT IN TRANSITION

The sharp deterioration in Sino-American bilateral relations during 1981 and 1982 has generated substantial speculation about the future directions of Sino-Soviet relations and Deng Xiaoping's continued grasp on political power. Deng's pivotal role in planning China's strategy toward both superpowers made him accountable for the results of his policies. Has the degeneration in U.S.-Chinese relations and the weakening of Beijing's anti-hegemony united front seriously affected Deng's anti-Soviet strategy or his domestic political position and goals?

Although a detailed review of these issues will not be undertaken in this study, changes in the U.S.-China relationship have not produced such effects on either Sino-Soviet ties or on Deng's position within the Chinese leadership.[116] Deng remains vulnerable to challenge for his advocacy of closer ties with Washington, including the arrangements over Taiwan reached at the time of normalization.[117] But no Chinese politician could expect to maintain his grasp on political power if he appeared to yield to the demands of a major foreign power. By altering both the tone and substance of his policies toward the United States, Deng has been able to deflect domestic criticism and counter any charges of capitulation to the West.

Deng's clearcut need to reduce the risks to his domestic power base and his internal political strategies casts a large shadow over an equally important question: the security of China. By denigrating America's importance for China, Deng undermines one of the principal pillars of his anti-Soviet strategy. The strident attacks on U.S. policy toward China diminish the credibility of past claims of shared American and Chinese interests. The reelevation of the United States to the status of a hegemonic power in Chinese foreign policy pronouncements casts Washington as well as Moscow as a threat to global security. Even in the absence of any changes in Soviet global strategy (as perceived by the Chinese), the renewed attacks on American policy reduce the singlemindedness of China's opposition to Soviet power.

These changes have not escaped notice in Moscow, but they have not generated much momentum within China for major changes in the Sino-Soviet relationship. Any abrupt, highly visible change in Moscow-Beijing relations initiated by the PRC would severely harm future Sino-American ties. Such steps would also confirm Soviet views

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[116]I will address the evolution of Sino-American security relations during the Carter and Reagan administrations in greater detail in a forthcoming report.

[117]For one such account, see Parks, 1981b.

of Beijing's vulnerability and weakness. Beijing's troubled dealings with the United States have strengthened arguments for a modest improvement in Sino-Soviet bilateral ties, including increased trade relations, heightened scientific and cultural exchanges, and a variety of quasi-official dealings.[118] But normal state-to-state relations have always been compatible with China's anti-Soviet strategy, in particular steps undertaken since 1979 to remove ideological barriers from the conduct of interstate relations.[119] They leave wholly unchallenged the underlying Sino-Soviet political and military rivalry. In the absence of broader strategic changes and the leadership realignments that would have to accompany them, the forces sustaining China's anti-Soviet course remain much stronger than the arguments favoring a major reduction of Sino-Soviet tensions.

From Carter to Reagan

Continuity in Chinese policy is nonetheless challenged on several fronts, beginning with Sino-American relations. The injection of the Taiwan issue into the 1980 Presidential campaign and the election of Ronald Reagan had introduced severe instability in the Sino-American relationship. Over the course of the campaign, high Chinese leaders, including both Deng and Li Xiannian, had expressed displeasure about the prospect of a Reagan presidency. But such concerns about Sino-American relations in no way affected the depiction of Sino-Soviet relations offered by any Chinese officials.[120]

Within weeks of Reagan's electoral victory, both Deng and Vice Foreign Minister Zhang Wenjin sought to reassure the incoming administration of China's continued interest in close cooperation with the United States.[121] Deng in particular conveyed the urgency of joint efforts to oppose Soviet power, reiterating that China's anti-Soviet orientation reflected a long-term strategic course rather than a momentary tactical posture. Yet the aftereffects of the Presidential campaign and continued tensions over the Taiwan arms sale issue had clouded future Sino-American dealings. As noted previously, intermittent signs of foreign policy debate continued to surface in the winter and spring of 1981, though it was couched largely in allegorical terms. As the depths of China's economic problems also

[118]For several such reports, see Kyodo, 1982b; *Ming Bao*, 1982; and *Yomiuri Shimbun*, 1982.
[119]Butterfield, 1979; Lucbert, 1982.
[120]Salisbury, 1980; Deng, 1980c, p. L29.
[121]Deng, 1980d; Hoagland and Weisskopf, 1980.

became more apparent, Deng's political hand appeared somewhat weakened, leading to concern that his foreign policy strategies might also be subject to challenge or reappraisal.

By late spring, however, these concerns had eased. Although Alexander Haig's visit to Beijing did not resolve Sino-American differences over Taiwan, it put a more authoritative stamp on Reagan administration China policy. Haig's announcement that the United States would be willing to consider sales of lethal weaponry case by case seemed the precursor to a potentially much larger Sino-American security relationship.[122]

On the eve of Haig's departure from Beijing, *People's Daily* published the first major Chinese assessment of the Sino-Soviet border question in four years.[123] The author of the article, Li Huichuan, had been a principal PRC representative at earlier border negotiations and also served as Director of the Institute of International Studies, the principal research arm of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Although the article ostensibly offered to reopen the long-stalled border negotiations (as distinct from the abortive negotiations on interstate relations held in the fall of 1979), its underlying message was harsh and unyielding. Li not only reiterated long-standing grievances against both Czarist Russia and the Soviet Union, he painted an unusually stark picture of the Soviet military threat to China:

> The world knows that in the past decade and more the Soviet Union has greatly increased its armed forces, deployed an increasing number of offensive weapons and established theater headquarters in areas bordering on China and continuously carried out military exercises and other military activities of various scale aimed at China. This constitutes a military threat to China.
>
> The world knows that since the 1960s, the Soviet Union has stationed its armed forces in the Mongolian People's Republic. In 1966, the Soviet Union and the Mongolian People's Republic concluded a treaty of the nature of a military alliance targeted at China. After that, the Soviet Union stationed and amassed a huge armed force . . . thereby posing a military threat to China from the Mongolian territory. . . .
>
> The world knows that the Soviet Union supports the Vietnamese authorities in seeking regional hegemony . . [and] also seeks to build military bases in Vietnam and other places in Indochina.
>
> The world knows that the Soviet Union openly and militarily invaded and occupied Afghanistan, China's western neighbor, thereby threatening world peace and China's security.

[122]Haig, 1981.

[123]Li, 1981. The text of the article appearing in the 17 June issue of *Renmin Ribao* is a slightly abridged version of this essay.

> In this way, the Soviet armed forces constitute a military threat to China from the north, south, and west. This is an ironclad fact vividly reflecting hegemonism in the relations between China and the Soviet Union. . . .
>
> Obviously, the Soviet Union's military threat and its hegemonistic policy toward China constitute an essential obstacle to the solution of the Sino-Soviet border issue and an essential obstacle to normalizing Sino-Soviet relations.

Thus, rather than China playing a "Soviet card" at a time of uncertainty in Sino-American relations, Li had conveyed a basic message to Moscow: Soviet negotiating overtures would not elicit a serious response from China unless accompanied by evidence of restraint and outright reversals in the Soviet political and military posture in Asia.

Other developments since the summer of 1981 led high Soviet officials and diplomats either to table negotiating offers or to hold out the prospect of improved Sino-Soviet relations.[124] On all such occasions, China's response has been negative.[125] The rejection of such public overtures hardly seem unexpected. To prove more responsive at a time of growing uncertainty in China's security dealings with the West would suggest negotiation under duress. The Chinese response to these proposals has also reminded Soviet leaders of underlying differences not addressed in Moscow's statements. As a Xinhua correspondent noted two days after Brezhnev's remarks in Tashkent:

> It was not the first time for a Soviet leader to make such "improvement" remarks. But so far, people have not seen any substantive actions taken by the Soviet authorities in this respect.
>
> While massive Soviet troops are deployed along the Sino-Soviet border, Brezhnev in his speech denied that the Soviet Union constitutes any threat against China and that his country has ever interfered in Chinese internal affairs. . . .
>
> The true value of what the Soviet Union has said should be judged in light of its actual deeds.[126]

Deng's Political Future

The timing of Soviet overtures to China has also been linked to Chinese leadership politics. Deng's indelible identification with the

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[124]Doder, 1981; Burns, 1982; Brezhnev, 1982.
[125]Agence France Presse, 1981, 1982; Xinhua, 1982b.
[126]Ibid.

anti-hegemony united front has suggested to many observers that Deng may be vulnerable to challenges within the Chinese leadership. The Vice Chairman's policies of political, economic, and administrative reform challenge a broad range of institutional interests; his advocacy of heightened economic and security dealings with the West has also stimulated substantial concern about the foreign penetration of China. Thus, opposition to Deng could coalesce around Deng's bold risks with the United States, thereby leading to adjustments in Sino-Soviet relations.

Such thinking reached a peak in the winter of 1982, with Deng's unexplained absence from Beijing for more than five weeks. A comment by Vice Premier Wan Li that Deng had withdrawn from "the first line" of official responsibilities led to immediate speculation that Deng's third fall from power was imminent.[127] During Deng's absence, Li Xiannian gave a provocative interview with Siegmund Ginzberg, Beijing correspondent for *L'Unita*, the newspaper of the Italian Communist Party. Li signalled an increasingly harsh line against the United States while also holding out the prospect of renewed negotiations with the Soviet Union: "The Soviets have sought the resumption of negotiations. Why not?... We are not opposed to them.... Why ever should we be opposed to negotiations between the USSR and China, provided that tangible results are achieved?"[128] Li's remarks were nonetheless ambiguous. Preparations were "necessary" before negotiations could begin, and although preconditions did not exist, Beijing intended to bring up China's long list of grievances against "Soviet hegemony."

Li's interview was more notable for its depiction of U.S.-Chinese relations:

> The United States also practices hegemonism. The USSR is striving to make its own hegemonism prevail. It is taking into account this situation that we are pursuing the policy of combating hegemonism and safeguarding world peace. It is said that there are close relations between China and the United States. It is not true. We know very well that the United States is still an imperialist country.... Currently it is in a defensive position. It wishes to keep what it gained. The USSR is on the offensive.[129]

Li's arguments were highly reminiscent of China's security posture of the mid-1970s, but they failed to take account of more than a half decade of diligent effort to build the "broadest possible anti-hegemony

[127]Wren, 1982b, 1982c.
[128]Ginzberg, 1982, p. G2.
[129]Ibid.

united front." The hegemonic label now again applied to two superpowers rather than one.

Deng's reappearance in mid-February (in a talk with Prince Sihanouk) put to rest rumors that he had been ousted from power.[130] His absence was far better explained by his campaign against recalcitrant holdover officials from the Cultural Revolution era and his larger effort to undertake far reaching bureaucratic reform.[131] But Deng linked himself (if in less harsh language) to the emergent foreign policy line of opposing the United States as well as the Soviet Union:

> Comrade Deng Xiaoping . . . said that China cannot accept the U.S. approach to the Taiwan issue. We have no room for maneuver on this question. If things really go on like this, then relations will retrogress. What is so terrible about this? I think the Chinese nation will continue to exist. . . .
>
> Some people in the United States still regard Taiwan as their unsinkable aircraft carrier in the Far East. If this viewpoint prevails, it will be extremely difficult to make a success of Sino-U.S. relations. The essence of this viewpoint is to deny that Taiwan is part of the PRC. We are now waiting to see; we are prepared for all eventualities.[132]

Toward an Independent Posture

In subsequent months, Deng and other Chinese leaders clarified the possible implications of the deterioration in Sino-American relations. The positive elements in U.S.-Chinese ties—especially in the area of economic relations and the solicitation of foreign assistance—would be preserved and broadened, but the course of Sino-Soviet relations would remain unaffected by such developments.[133] As Premier Zhao Ziyang made clear in his talks with Japanese Prime Minister Suzuki in late May:

> There has been no change in Sino-Soviet relations. The 1982 trade has increased slightly and this is because trade in 1981 registered a sharp decline. We acknowledge that the USSR wants to improve its relations with China, but we feel it should show its desire in deed. It should take some specific action such as settling the Sino-Soviet dispute, or withdrawing one million troops from the border, or by withdrawing its troops from Afghanistan. . . .

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[130]Wren, 1982d.

[131]Weisskopf, 1982b.

[132]Zhou, pp. W2-W3.

[133]See, especially, Deng's meeting with Armand Hammer, Board Chairman of Occidental Petroleum. Wren, 1982e. See also *Hongqi* Editorial Department, 1982.

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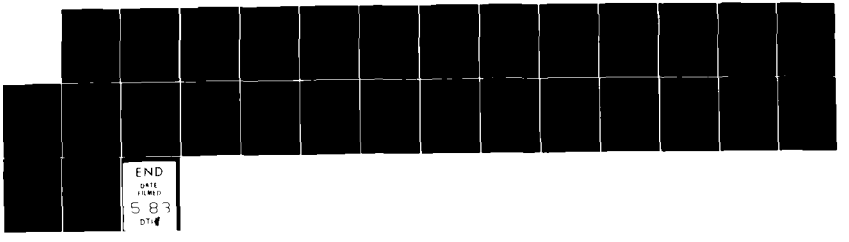

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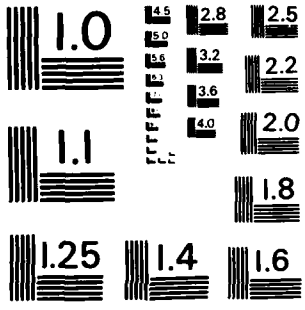

> The cause of dispute between the two countries today is Soviet hegemonism toward China and the world. A change in Sino-American relations will not necessarily lead to a change in Sino-Soviet relations. It was not because of Sino-American relations that Sino-Soviet relations worsened. The two relationships have nothing to do with each other.[134]

The test for the future of Chinese security strategy will be to keep these "two relationships" distinct.

For the present, China's leaders, including Deng, have opted (at least in doctrinal terms) for an equidistant policy toward the United States and Soviet Union.[135] China's capability to stay the course will nonetheless depend on maintaining a clear difference between theory and practice, without incurring undue risks to its security. "The overall strategic perspective"—that is, the belief that the USSR constitutes the far more dangerous threat to global security—leaves open the possibility for improved Sino-American relations in the future, even as Beijing casts an increasingly wary eye on American actions and intentions.[136] But an overly stark depiction of "two hegemonisms" can foreclose possibilities in Sino-American relations and present Moscow with new opportunities for exerting political and military pressure against Beijing.

The future of Sino-Soviet ties, therefore, has a life and logic of its own that will continue well beyond the political and physical fortunes of the present Chinese leadership, including Deng Xiaoping. It is difficult to disagree with the observations of one discerning Chinese strategic analyst: "Due to the frantic expansion of Soviet social imperialism and the interwoven pattern of 'multipolarization' of the world and unity against hegemony, the future international situation will be more turbulent, tense, and intricate. In the face of such a complicated and changeable situation, we should also conduct meticulous observation, analysis, and study."[137]

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[134]Zhao, 1982.

[135]See, in particular, *Guoji Wenti Yanjiu* Special Commentator, 1982. Note the parallelism in the article's title and theme to Li, 1981.

[136]See Geng, 1982.

[137]Zhang, 1981.

IV. THE SINO-SOVIET RIVALRY: JUDGMENTS AND IMPLICATIONS

With the onset of the 1980s, the Sino-Soviet rivalry entered its third decade. What began as a highly pesonalized ideological dispute has become a fixture on the global political-strategic landscape. The persistence of this conflict during a time of profound international change has obscured major transformations in the character of Sino-Soviet relations. What sufficed to explain the conflict in the 1960s was not wholly adequate to the framework of international politics in the 1970s. Political, economic, and military trends in the early 1980s suggest the need for further reappraisal of the dynamics of the rivalry and its implications for U.S. policy.

There is no single, undifferentiated "Sino-Soviet relationship." Analysts in the West, for example, have heavily emphasized the atmospherics of the differences, as revealed by the strident, almost paranoid expressions of suspicion and hostility. This view is reinforced by historical and racial animosities centuries rather than decades old; it is further underscored by deeply embittered memories in both societies dating from the decade of an active Sino-Soviet alliance. With the Sino-Soviet military confrontation in the late 1960s and the emergence of an informal anti-Soviet security coalition between China and the West in the 1970s, the prospects for diminished Sino-Soviet tensions in the near future seem slight indeed.

Yet such arguments are overly simplistic. No matter how superficially fixed the policy orientations of particular leaders, all decision-makers are subject to crosscutting incentives, opportunities, and imperatives. The abrupt deterioration in Sino-U.S. ties during the first year of the Reagan administration strongly bear out this judgment, as do the periodic occasions when Deng Xiaoping's policies have been subject to challenge and modification. A loosening of the constraints on political change seems highly likely in both the Chinese and Soviet systems, the former having initiated an extraordinary (and continuing) political transformation in recent years, and the latter certain to undergo substantial generational change in its leadership within this decade. No matter what legacy Deng and Brezhnev hope to transmit to their successors, the full range of their policies is unlikely to endure intact.

Even in the absence of a generational transition, the pressures for policy change could be substantial. Chinese calculations toward the

USSR depend upon global as well as bilateral considerations, as both interact within the Chinese policy process. Deng Xiaoping in particular is closely identified with an optimistic view of the prospects for countering Soviet power. In his view, Soviet power and ambition, although global, are not unbounded. By exploiting Soviet vulnerabilities and weaknesses that do not create a major Sino-Soviet crisis or expand the present rivalry, China hopes to compel Moscow to pay dearly for its actions abroad. At the same time, Deng insists that China must remain unyielding on any formal improvement of relations, because that would serve only to legitimize Moscow's political and military presence along China's periphery. In Deng's view, China should show interest in normalized Sino-Soviet ties only when Soviet deeds match their words. A less antagonistic Sino-Soviet future must await substantial changes in Soviet foreign and military policy.

Deng's calculations reflect a belief that Soviet capabilities cannot possibly match their presumed hegemonic ambitions. The USSR, in effect, will inevitably face reappraisal with respect to its external commitments and goals. In this view, Soviet military power embodies weakness as well as strength. A Soviet Union with major military assets committed to the Sino-Soviet border with few discernible political gains to justify the expense; increasing restiveness in Eastern Europe necessitating an enormous and potentially even larger economic, political, and military effort; a resuscitated strategic and naval competition with the United States all but certain to accelerate in coming years; and a bothersome (if not unduly risky) "live war" in Afghanistan—none of these developments lends confidence to the long-term prospects for Soviet security. When one adds Soviet domestic vulnerabilities to this picture, Moscow's opportunities appear even less promising. An aged leadership structure, declining economic growth rates, continuing allocations to the defense sector well in excess of 10 percent of the Soviet gross national product, major civilian and military ethnic tensions, and diminishing access to Western economic and technological assistance hardly offer grounds for optimism.

Yet this view of the "burdens of empire" rests on a parallel set of assumptions. First, given such a bleak long-term assessment of the prospects for Soviet power, Moscow will increasingly be compelled to restrain the exercise of its power, rather than act provocatively out of fear that time is not on its side. Second, constraining the actions of the USSR or its surrogates rests on timely, effective countermeasures by "the forces opposing hegemony." Third, Chinese strategy assumes that all members of the anti-Soviet coalition will resist any temptation to reach political agreements with Moscow that might legitimize Soviet military advances. Fourth, in view of Moscow's global burdens, the Sino-Soviet border will in relative terms represent an oasis of

stability for Soviet strategic planners. Fifth, Deng will be able to thwart those within the Chinese leadership who either view the USSR as more directly menacing to Chinese security or who want to make greater efforts to seek full normalization of Sino-Soviet relations.

None of these assumptions seems fully warranted. It is the balance of opinion within the Chinese leadership toward the USSR that analysts understand the least, yet it could prove pivotal. Deng's internal political and economic course has rested on a belief that China would remain insulated from Soviet political and military pressure. Despite Deng's expressions of confidence that China can prosper and develop in the absence of close ties with the United States, his optimistic view seems very much for political effect, domestically as well as internationally. A China with a much diminished stake in close relations with the United States (especially in the area of strategic cooperation) is potentially far more vulnerable to Soviet pressure and blandishments. The conjunction of deteriorating relations with Washington and the continued Soviet presence in both Southwest and Southeast Asia does not bode well for the continuation of Deng's political course unless Deng successfully portrays himself as leading China's opposition to America's resurrected "hegemonic" policy toward Beijing. At the same time, Soviet proposals to negotiate bilateral issues could elicit more serious interest in the PRC leadership than when U.S.-Chinese relations appeared on a sounder footing.

None of these observations suggests that China is now "playing its Russian card." Both the Chinese and Soviet leaderships remain far too practiced at long-term strategic and political assessment to react unduly to tactical or atmospheric adjustments in policy.[1] Although the PRC continues to demonstrate substantial independence and flexibility in its calculations with regard to both superpowers, it cannot ignore the changes in the global strategic environment that led Beijing to reorient its foreign policy course. The emergence of the USSR as a global power, the retrenchment of American power in Asia, the militarization of the Sino-Soviet dispute, and Moscow's growing effort to encircle the PRC both politically and militarily continue to prove highly unsettling to the present leadership in Beijing. Circumstances may compel a degree of adjustment in Sino-Soviet relations. But the Soviet leadership surely understands that only a major change in the character of its Asian policy could produce a major redirection in the foreign policy course of the present PRC leadership.

[1]On Soviet strategic calculations in the 1980s, see Gelman, 1981.

Strategic planners in both capitals understand the incentives for a stable deterrence relationship along the Sino-Soviet border. In view of the major imbalance of forces, such a condition could not have persisted had either leadership seriously transgressed these tacit restraints. The number of soldiers killed and wounded along the border since the clashes of 1969 has been infinitesimal. Chinese blood shed in conflict has been almost exclusively in Vietnam; similarly, Soviet blood has been shed almost exclusively in Afghanistan. This does not mean that either the Soviets or the Chinese are likely either soon or suddenly to reduce the forces arrayed against one another, but it surely places their military competition in a somewhat different and less worrisome light.

Whether such arrangements can remain in force or will be subject to pressures for change in a positive or negative direction are important questions in Sino-Soviet relations for the foreseeable future. Neither elite seems willing to disclose its views of the legitimate security interests of its opposite number. However vexing to China, leaders in Beijing must acknowledge a long-term Soviet stake in Asia not only because of the Sino-Soviet and Soviet-American rivalries, but because the USSR is both an Asian as well as a European power.[2] Similarly, Soviet leaders must recognize that in the absence of substantial internal dissarray in China or Soviet readiness to undertake the severest of military measures, the emergence of a far more powerful China along the USSR's eastern borders is all but inevitable. With both leaderships depicting their rival in the most negative of lights, these geopolitical realities have received no serious consideration in public pronouncements.

Yet such factors very much require assessment because they would impart a far fuller understanding of the potential directions of the Sino-Soviet competition, as perceived by the two states. Current U.S. policy toward the PRC, for example, assumes a more or less open-ended Sino-Soviet rivalry and parallelism of American and Chinese interests in restraining the Soviet Union. Those leaders in the PRC closely identified with the "American connection," beginning with Deng Xiaoping, have also sought to convey assurances of policy continuity, no doubt in part to allay suspicions in the United States that China pursued closer ties only to afford momentary leverage in its dealings with Moscow. By stressing that China's interests in building an "antihegemony united front" were not expedient but were rather "a long-term option of a strategic nature," Deng tried to ease such doubts.[3] Similarly, Geng Biao remarked (before his departure for the

[2]On the Soviet Union's political, economic, and military stake in Asia, see Whiting, 1981.

[3]Deng, 1980d.

United States in May 1980) that "our American friends can be reassured" that Sino-Soviet relations "cannot be restored to their former status."[4]

China's stated goal of "opposing hegemonism and defending world peace" has never been a call for a military confrontation against the USSR or a proposal to oppose all Soviet actions. Even at the high point of expectations for an anti-Soviet security coalition, Beijing never proposed a formal alliance relationship with the West. By instead making life as unpleasant as possible for the USSR in those areas where Moscow (in Chinese eyes) sought to expand its influence illegitimately, the onset of an "inevitable world war" would be deferred and China could secure the long-term peaceful international environment essential to its development plans.

The Chinese consistently assert that their own capability to contribute directly to a putative security coalition remains modest; moreover, they continue to argue that Soviet expansion is not directed principally against China. Where does China fit according to its own conception of opposing "Soviet hegemonism"? And how if at all will this role be affected by the growing difficulties in Sino-American relations?

Although the Chinese have not been explicit on either question, they do on occasion acknowledge a three-fold Chinese contribution to an anti-Soviet security coalition: (1) tying down large numbers of Soviet forces in Asia that would otherwise be available for action elsewhere; (2) creating problems for Vietnam that frustrate Hanoi's effort to dominate Indochina, thereby preventing the Soviets from acquiring a major new base of operations to encircle and outflank vulnerable locations in the third world; and (3) alerting other states to the continued growth of Soviet military power and the need to oppose Soviet efforts to secure political gains that it has been unable to achieve militarily.[5] As a leading Chinese strategic analyst has noted, however, one must contrast "the homogeneity of the overall strategic situation" from issues of bilateral relations:

> Due to the different interests and positions of the various countries, it is not possible to express a united strategy against hegemonism in a specific form and by united action. However, it is necessary and possible for these countries to proceed from their common strategic interests, to strengthen consultation about their policies on the basis of equality and to work together and supplement one another.[6]

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[4]Geng, 1980. His observation, although true, is disingenuous: International conditions do not allow and will not allow in the future for a reconstitution of the Sino-Soviet alliance.

[5]All these factors are noted in Xu, 1981.

[6]Pei, 1981, p. K12.

Such an approach leaves indeterminate the form and substance not only of the relationship among the "forces opposing hegemony," but the character of relations between various states (including China) and the "big hegemonist."

Assertions of such independence and flexibility grew far more pronounced over the course of 1981 and have not gone unnoticed in Moscow. In Deng's felicitous phrase, China remains a "very nonaligned country,"[7] having in no way compromised its capacity for independent action. Previous arguments about a Soviet global challenge furnished additional justification for a "united front" strategy, replete with calls to undertake "practical, down-to-earth steps" to curb Soviet actions. Now, with the United States again consigned by the PRC to the ranks of the "hegemonic powers," the emphasis on countering Soviet power has lost a measure of its previous importance. As a result, the process of political and strategic consultation that the United States deemed such a valuable asset remains in abeyance, without China feeling compelled to alter its policy orientation toward the USSR.

In a broader sense, however, the PRC's increasingly pointed displeasure with the United States poses real risks to China. Beijing's earlier accommodation with Washington was born of obvious strategic necessity: Leaders in China faced a growing disparity in the Sino-Soviet power balance at a time of increasing Soviet assertiveness. Deng not only argued that such circumstances were simply the wrong moment to demonstrate any flexibility in relation to Sino-Soviet differences; he saw the United States as essential to his domestic and international political strategy. By Deng's own reckoning, China's modernization prospects hinged on a successful anti-hegemony united front, permitting a long period of peace.[8] With Sino-American relations in such jeopardy, Deng has been compelled (in part for internal political reasons) to denigrate America's importance for China. The validity of his arguments is open to serious question. Although the PRC is not nearly as isolated or vulnerable as it was in the late 1960s, neither can it lightly cast off a coalition partner as valuable as the United States. At the same time, a serious deterioration in Sino-American relations will also inject major uncertainties in the equally important Sino-Japanese relationship.

Deng's public criticisms of U.S. policy were voiced only after months of growing displeasure and unease within the Chinese leadership over developments in U.S.-PRC relations. Even in the face of the deterioration of political relations (and China's consequent decision to freeze

[7]Deng, 1981d, p. K12.
[8]See especially Deng, 1980a.

the further development of strategic relations with Washington), Deng has sought to preserve and enhance the benefits of the U.S. tie in the areas of trade, education, and science and technology. If Beijing has concluded that Washington must pay a price for what China deems the U.S. violation of the normalization accords, it has not been at the expense of the newfound opportunities for China's modernization effort.

It is far from certain that such a strategy will prove wholly workable over the longer run, either for China or the United States. The riskiest element in Beijing's decision to publicize and thereby exacerbate U.S.-Chinese differences remains among the least discussed: If relations continue to degenerate, the Soviet Union will be able to act politically and militarily unconcerned that its actions might provoke a serious, coordinated response from Washington and Beijing.

Deng may well have calculated that the risks of attacking the United States outweighed the possible costs to Chinese sovereignty of compromising on Taiwan; in view of the extraordinary sensitivity of the Taiwan question in Chinese politics, he may have had no alternative. Deng made conscious use of foreign policy (especially the opening to the West) as a political resource in Chinese leadership debate. In circumstances where relations with the United States are now subject to open criticism, he cannot risk isolation and vulnerability on this critical policy question, and his influence in other policy areas—including Sino-Soviet relations—is correspondingly weakened.

Although the capacity of U.S. policy to condition (if not control) the directions of Sino-Soviet rivalry was far more pronounced in the heyday of triangle diplomacy,[9] it remains evident even with the apparent supplanting of the "strategic triangle." Beijing is mindful of the effects of Soviet-American relations on PRC diplomacy and strategy and the implications of U.S.-Chinese relations for countering Soviet global power. As early as the late 1960s, some Chinese leaders began to appreciate the risks to PRC security of standing too far apart from the superpower rivalry. Soviet leaders also recognized why and how the Chinese leadership sought closer ties with the United States, thereby reducing Soviet pressure on the PRC.

Both politically and logically, Soviet efforts to diminish tensions with Beijing have occurred when U.S.-Chinese relations have been under uncertainty and strain. This pattern has again developed and can be expected to recur. It remains unclear precisely what "improved relations" might look like. Changes in the atmospherics of Sino-Soviet relations contribute substantially to a *perception* that relations have undergone substantive change. Such actions are somewhat akin to

[9]As graphically portrayed in Kissinger, 1979, p. 24; 1982, pp. 28-32.

confidence-building measures. They convey a measure of reasonableness in Sino-Soviet relations to the consequent displeasure of the United States, but without directly or immediately affecting the larger Sino-Soviet rivalry. The test for the longer term is whether political overtures create a negotiating "window" not only between the Soviet Union and China, but within their respective decisionmaking processes. If the Chinese leadership feels it has nothing to lose in relation to the United States, sentiment in Beijing could coalesce around such a political option, even if it seemed contrary to previous policy directions. Deng himself might then have to accept a reformulation of the way the Soviet issue is debated within the Chinese leadership.

No matter what the course of Sino-Soviet ties, this issue has a life and logic of its own. Given the present uncertainties in U.S-Chinese relations, there is a growing temptation to downplay the importance of the Sino-Soviet conflict for American security interests. When U.S.-Chinese cooperation is high, positing a decisive U.S. role in the evolution of Moscow-Beijing relations has also surfaced. Neither view effectively describes or serves U.S. interests. U.S. policy toward both China and the USSR has been and will remain an issue for deliberation within the Chinese political process. Yet the American role remains largely indirect. No matter what the future evolution of China's Soviet strategy, it will be determined largely by leaders in Beijing, affected by their assessment of Soviet strengths and vulnerabilities and the balance of political forces in Beijing. The United States can influence the general orientation of Chinese policy, but it cannot control or direct this influence in a specific, predictable manner.

However limited the U.S. capacity to affect the Sino-Soviet future, there have been tangible policy consequences for the United States as a function of the rivalry. First, the military confrontation has greatly simplified U.S. force planning requirements in Asia. Beijing and Moscow must devote major resources to their mutual rivalry, which diminishes the assets either has available to threaten the United States or its Asian allies. Second, the Sino-Soviet conflict provided a political logic for various national policies that were previously not practicable, although this gain is now threatened by the deterioration in Sino-American relations. China's emphasis on its internal economic reconstruction and its broader anti-Soviet orientation both represent substantial gains for American interests. Third, the militarization of the Sino-Soviet conflict had led Moscow to incur substantial new political, military, and budgetary obligations along the periphery of China. Although there have been undoubted Soviet gains in Asia, the balance of costs and benefits for Moscow is far from certain. These

changes, however, were initiated by the involved parties, not the United States; there is little that the United States can do in a first-hand way to diminish the repolarization of Asian international politics based on the Sino-Soviet geopolitical rivalry.

Somewhat paradoxically, Sino-American relations have deteriorated during a period of heightened Soviet-American tensions. However, in no sense was America's Soviet policy undertaken to curry favor in Beijing. Under present circumstances, American policymakers must remain mindful of the changes that have led all three corners of the "strategic triangle" to depart from the logic of their past policies. The new rules of the game could well prove more complicated than earlier norms.

Opportunities for flexibility and maneuverability in Sino-Soviet ties may well increase, especially in view of the leadership transitions that will occur over the course of the decade, but the Sino-Soviet conflict seems certain to endure. The United States cannot avoid its obvious if indirect involvement in the evolution of the rivalry. Now as in the past, the Chinese and Soviet leaderships will exercise their own judgments on the appropriate course of their dealings. American interests are obviously engaged, but American power need not be, except to the degree that U.S. policy objectives converge or conflict directly with those of either communist power.

The absence of a consistent American strategy toward the Soviet Union and China reflects the lack of consensus within the United States on the preferred course of American dealings with both Moscow and Beijing. Yet a serious effort to formulate such a course would reduce the confusion repeatedly voiced by Soviet and Chinese leaders about American goals and actions and would permit a clearer specification of American long-term objectives in relation to the rivalry between the Soviets and Chinese in Asia as it affects the interests of the United States and its regional friends and allies. Given the uncertainty evident in Sino-Soviet-American relations, the most appropriate U.S. policy orientation is a hybrid form of participant and observer. The relative emphasis on either of these roles, however, will depend on when, where, and how U.S. security interests are directly influenced by the future character of the Sino-Soviet rivalry. Yet the tail must not wag the dog; the need for a long-term U.S. strategy toward both the Soviet Union and China has never been more important.

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Unclassified

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE (When Data Entered)

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE		READ INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE COMPLETING FORM
1. REPORT NUMBER R-2907-AF	2. GOVT ACCESSION NO. AD-A125 [illegible]	3. RECIPIENT'S CATALOG NUMBER
4. TITLE (and Subtitle) The Sino-Soviet Rivalry and Chinese Security Debate		5. TYPE OF REPORT & PERIOD COVERED Interim 6. PERFORMING ORG. REPORT NUMBER
7. AUTHOR(s) Jonathan D. Pollack		8. CONTRACT OR GRANT NUMBER(s) F49620-82-C-0018
9. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME AND ADDRESS The Rand Corporation 1700 Main Street Santa Monica, CA 90406		10. PROGRAM ELEMENT, PROJECT, TASK AREA & WORK UNIT NUMBERS
11. CONTROLLING OFFICE NAME AND ADDRESS Requirements, Program & Studes Group(AF/RDQM) Ofc, DCS/R&D and Acquisition Hq USAF, Washington, D. C. 20330		12. REPORT DATE October 1982 13. NUMBER OF PAGES 119
14. MONITORING AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS(if different from Controlling Office)		15. SECURITY CLASS. (of this report) Unclassified 15a. DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE

16. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of this Report)

Approved for Public Release; Distribution Unlimited

17. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of the abstract entered in Block 20, if different from Report)

No restrictions

18. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

19. KEY WORDS (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number)

International relations
Political objectives
Communism
Foreign government
Risk
History

20. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number)

see reverse side

DD FORM 1 JAN 73 1473 EDITION OF 1 NOV 65 IS OBSOLETE

Unclassified

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE (When Data Entered)

This report describes and analyzes the policy implications of the shifting security and foreign policy concerns among China's leaders since the mid-1960s. Among these concerns, none has more profoundly affected Chinese policymaking than the deterioration and militarization of Sino-Soviet relations. This study traces the course of the conflict between Moscow and Beijing to indicate the increasing emphasis that both leaderships have placed on the national security aspects of their rivalry. Beijing's predominant security concern is to reduce (or at least to stabilize) the Soviet political and military threat to China. Several key policy considerations continue to be contentious issues within the Chinese leadership, including (1) China's effort to construct an anti-Soviet security coalition with the United States and other major powers; (2) a burgeoning pattern of economic, technological, and political links between China and the noncommunist industrialized work intended to facilitate China's modernization; and (3) periodic overtures to the Soviet Union that test Moscow's willingness to negotiate key bilateral issues.


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