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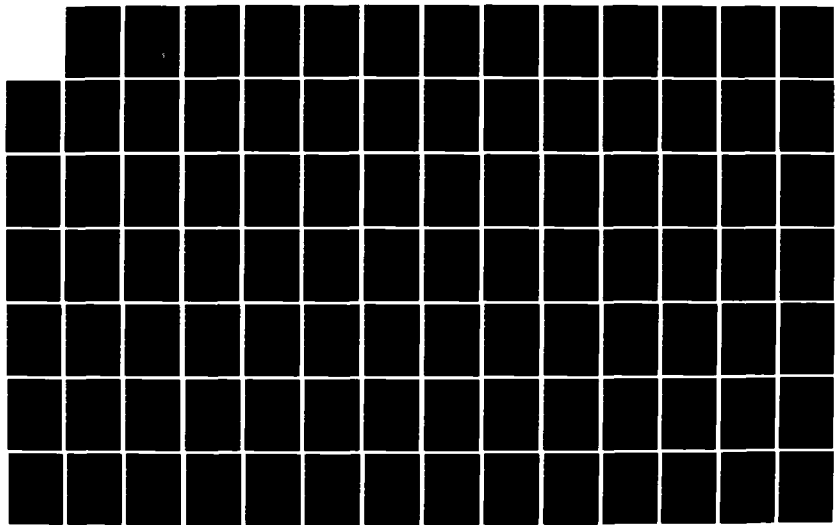
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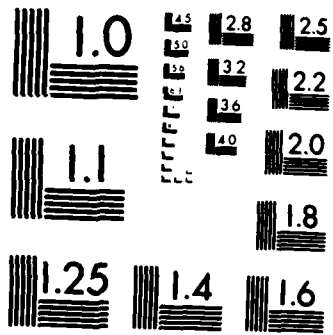
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# NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL Monterey, California



## THESIS

SOVIET PERSPECTIVES ON  
CURRENT SINO-SOVIET RELATIONS

by

Douglas Conrad Meister

June, 1984

Thesis Advisor:

Jiri Valenta

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Soviet Perspectives on Current Sino-Soviet Relations

by

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Lieutenant, United States Navy  
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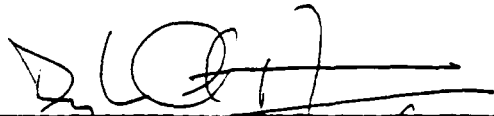
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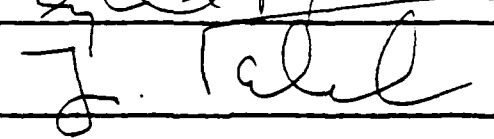
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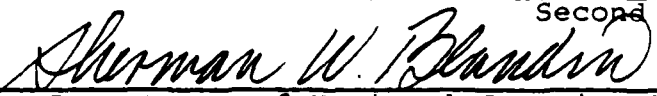
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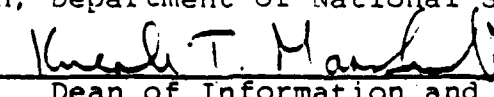
  
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#### ABSTRACT

The Sino-Soviet dispute affected a fundamental realignment of the world power structure. It has been suggested that improving Sino-Soviet relations presage yet another such change. This will not be the case. The USSR is by any measure the more powerful and decisive actor in the dispute. It considers the existence of the dispute and the position of the PRC an affront to its dignity and a threat to its interests. The dispute should be resolved but only on Soviet terms. Compromise would risk ideological and strategic stability. At the same time PRC leaders face analogous constraints that prevent compromise on their part. The Soviets' only other solution, military force, can only be applied at greater risk than compromise would entail. Continuing the relationship on terms of peaceful coexistence, while operating diplomatically and internationally to contain the PRC, is the only alternative left.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The history of Sino-Soviet relations is over 700 years long. It may be said to begin with the Mongol invasion of Russia in the thirteenth century. Eventually, the Russian Empire reversed the situation and began to encroach on Chinese territory. By the beginning of the twentieth century, Czarist influence was very strong in the decaying Chinese Empire. Then came the Russian Revolution of 1917. It was a turning point in Sino-Soviet relations.

The international ideology of the new Soviet state presented the Chinese with two important changes in Soviet foreign policy--the change regarding nationalistic forces and the policy of world revolution. The internal disarray in Russia caused by the revolution, of course, eased Russian pressure and influence on China. Yet, the Chinese were astounded when the new Soviet regime announced it was repudiating the "unequal treaties" the czars and bourgeoisie had forced on China. It was, however, in conformity with communist propaganda which had denounced capitalist imperialism and promoted ethnic nationalism. Even though the Soviets never followed through with their pledge, it was important in principle. The Soviet communists' belief in world revolution similarly fostered good relations with the Nationalist regime in China. The Soviets decided to

support the Chinese revolution by ordering the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to join forces with the Chinese Nationalists. This particular policy was ravaged by Chiang Kai-shek in 1927, but the USSR continued to support, covertly and via the COMINTERN, the CCP in its ultimately successful revolution.

With the proclamation of the People's Republic of China in 1949, a potentially fruitful new era of Sino-Soviet relations should have ensued. There were indeed a few years of friendly and cooperative relations. But by the late 1950's frictions began to develop. By the early 1960's, this evolved into an open dispute marked by bitter polemics and a cessation of trade. This continued until 1969, when actual conflict along their mutual border broke out and both nations uttered war threats. Subsequently tensions eased, but neither side has allowed their relations to be normalized. Unresolved conflicts in ideology, national sovereignty, territorial claims, defense postures, international politics, and their respective national interests lie at the root of their disagreement.

Even barring settlement of their most difficult problems it would obviously be in the interests of both countries to at least normalize their relations. Attempts to negotiate peaceful settlements could then begin. This has not happened.

In the fifteen years since the 1969 border clashes Sino-Soviet relations have remained at a superficial level. This includes minor trade agreements, low levels of cultural exchange, technical discussions to formalize navigation on their border river boundaries and a continuing series of negotiations to resolve their border problems. The latter border talk negotiations have the most potential for normalization of relations. They are generally conducted at a high level--deputy foreign minister--and have continued despite interruptions.

It is difficult to judge the true state of Sino-Soviet relations due to the nature of their closed societies. But all the evidence suggests that so far there has been no progress in improving relations. There have been occasional thaws in their mutual hostility, such as after Khrushchev was ousted from Soviet leadership in 1964, after Mao Zedong's death in 1976 and after Deng Xiaoping established himself in control about 1978. Conversely, mutual hostility has always returned, and sometimes is exacerbated anew, as after Hua Guofeng consolidated his power in late 1976, the Chinese invasion of Vietnam and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

Currently Sino-Soviet relations are again in a 'thaw'. There is some speculation that this time a viable detente between the two countries is in the offing (although some of the same speculation occurred during each prior 'thaw!').

The difference this time is that even in the midst of two peaks of hostility--Afghanistan and Vietnam Kampuchea--both sides have made some conciliatory overtures to the other. Additionally, China's developing relations with Japan and the United States adds a new dimension to the international situation. Finally, the recent leadership succession in the USSR may bring new opportunities for a breakthrough. Though this is unlikely under Chernenko it may prove true for his successor.

The focus of this paper is the Soviet perspective of current Sino-Soviet relations. The political aspects of their relations will be emphasized, but this necessarily entails some discussion of historical, cultural, economic and military matters. Such factors influence politics even in countries governed by scientific socialism. Basically, the following points will be addressed.

To place the dispute in the proper historical perspective, a review of Russo-Chinese and Sino-Soviet relations reveals a history of tension between the two nations over territorial matters. In this context, the modern Sino-Soviet dispute is only a continuation of unresolved expansionist pressure. Of course, this is only a small part of a very complex issue. For the two biggest socialist states in the world to turn against each other was an astounding event --so much so that many Western observers long doubted its veracity, or deemed it would be of short duration. It was

simply not in either country's national interest to let the dispute exist, or at least, persist. The reason for this lack of comprehension was the failure of observers from pluralistic Western societies to credit the importance of ideology in single ideology societies. It is the basic component of political thought, and heavily influences political action in both the USSR and PRC. Ideology is also necessarily subject to interpretation. The leaders who formulate it do so in the context of their own experience and national environment. It was quite natural for the newly independent PRC to still have much in common, and support, its ally and precursor in the socialist community. As the CCP gained experience and confidence in recognizing the special needs of its own country it was also natural for its practical application of the ideology to diverge from that of the CPSU. Eventually the difference became irreconcilable. The strong belief in their respective formulations of the communist ideology, modified in their national interest, drove them apart. It is important to realize that the leaders of the USSR and PRC are as fallible as anyone else. Their ideals are subject to their personalities and emotions. Personal disputes between their leaders and emotional ties to national prestige (as in territorial boundaries) also adversely affected Sino-Soviet relations.

A dispute cannot really be settled until its root causes have been dealt with. It can be postponed, or ignored, or

even forgotten, while it lies dormant. But it still exists intact until its causes have been removed. Often the hope (or belief) is that in the passage of time events will alter so a dispute can be solved without direct action: it will become meaningless or trivial. The Sino-Soviet dispute is in a dormant stage. In the absence of overt hostilities, with successive leadership changes and renewed cultural and economic activity between the USSR and PRC many observers predict a future détente in their relations. Contrarily, others point to their apparently increasingly antagonistic national policy goals and predict hostilities will break out.

The conclusion of this paper is that neither course is as likely as a slightly improved form of the current status quo. Substantial elements of the original causes of the dispute still act to prevent a complete rapprochement. Each side is confident of the propriety of its position and will only minimally bend. Even so, there is mutual recognition that armed conflict would be worse. The high force levels each employs along their border arise more from latent caution than intent to impose a solution. They recognize their respective conviction of purpose and do not offer the temptation of unprepared military forces.

## II. HISTORICAL REVIEW OF SINO-SOVIET RELATIONS

### A. RUSSO-CHINESE HISTORY PRIOR TO 1917

The Russian nation consisted of the expanding city-state of Kiev when it was conquered in 1237-38 by the Mongol Batu Khan. Asian influence on the Russians was strong for the next two centuries, but the sharp cultural difference between the nomadic Mongols and the settled Slavs mitigated the impact of Mongol rule. There was little intermarriage, and the Mongols did not interfere with the Russian's Greek Orthodox religion. After the initial conquest, the most onerous obligation was the yearly tribute paid to the Mongols. The Mongols simply "had no notion of what could be done with a...city, nor how they might use it for the consolidation and expansion of their power."<sup>1</sup>

By the latter half of the fifteenth century, various Russian princedoms had grown strong enough to operate with almost independent policies. The city of Novgorod had established a commercial empire that was the Russians' primary link with Asia, and the princes of Moscow had established complete control of their environs.

Ivan III, Prince of Moscow, began the process of the city-state's expansion which would continue for the next four centuries. In 1471, he conquered Novgorod's commercial empire, and in 1480 he severed the last remnant of Mongol

rule by refusing to pay tribute. For the next two hundred years, successive czars acquired (without any serious setbacks) the Khanats of Kazan, Astrakhan, Siberia and outposts in Tomsk, Yakutsk and Okhotsk. But in the late 1600's, conflict developed with the Manchu Empire in the Amur/Ussuri river region. The Manchus successfully drove the Russians back and formalized the settlement with the Treaty of Nerchinsk in 1689.

It was not until the Opium Wars between Britain and China in the 1840's displayed China's weakness that Russia was able to make significant inroads into Chinese territory. The Treaties of Nanking (1842), Aigun (1858), Peking (1860), Ili (1881), Anglo-Russian (1895), Russo-Chinese (1896) and Tsitihar (1911), to name the most important, formalized the de facto Russian occupation of Chinese territory along the entire border (and Mongolia).<sup>2</sup> These treaties established the border basically as it is now. Russia had, and would certainly have more (formerly) Chinese territory today were it not for the intervention by the other great powers (which were apprehensive of further Russian gains) and Russia's loss to Japan in 1904.<sup>3</sup> These setbacks cost Russia hundreds of thousands of square miles of territory in Manchuria and to the South-West of Mongolia.

## B. SINO-SOVIET RELATIONS 1917-1949

The Russian Revolution in 1917 marked an abrupt turn-about in Sino-Soviet relations. Two tenets of the Bolshevik ideology particularly affected Soviet policy towards strife-torn China. Lenin's view was that in the long run ethnic nationalities would inevitably be superseded by the communist inspired 'Soviet Man'. Therefore, policies were promoted by the Party that garnered minority nationality support, e.g., official recognition, and even independence for various nationalities. The second point is that Soviet leaders believed their brand of Marxism, Leninism was truly international in scope and would eventually be adopted throughout the world. Regional differences would disappear as fraternal brotherhood expanded.

On the basis of these points, the Soviet regime issued the Karakhan Manifesto in 1920 renouncing the Chinese territorial acquisitions of its predecessor. It would, after all, not matter in the long run, and it was a gesture of goodwill that promoted the Communist cause in China. It is interesting to note that although the USSR never repudiated the Karakhan Manifesto, it did nothing more than stall during subsequent negotiations! At the same time the Comintern, under Lenin's guidance, decided to support the national liberation movement in China. As decided by the Fourth COMINTERN Congress, policy would be, in the short run, to support the bourgeoisie, and in the long run, the

peasantry. To this end in 1923, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was ordered to support the pro-parliamentary Chinese Nationalist Party, or the Kuomintang (KMT). The Sun-Joffe Declaration in 1923 formalized Soviet support for the KMT.

Chiang Kai-shek's successful and bloody purge of the communists in 1927 decimated the CCP. This was a severe blow to the Soviet policy of cooperation with the KMT. That the Communist Party and official Soviet reaction would be was not easy for the Soviet dominated COMINTERN to see in spite of the CCP's disaster. Communist-KMT collaboration was, after all, a policy initiated by the COMINTERN under Lenin's guidance. Support of moderate (KMT) revolutionary elements was consonant with the interests of both the Soviet state and a long range view of Marxist ideology. Moreover, Stalin had earlier rejected Trotsky's radical position of intransigent world revolution in favor of 'socialism in one country'. In this Stalin had allied himself with the rightest group--Bukharin, Tomsy and Rykov. Chiang's purge presented Stalin with a dilemma. Either capitulate to members of the Trotskyite opposition or maintain allegiance to the discredited (because of the purge) 'rightest' group. Stalin compromised. Borodin and Bukharin were blamed for the disaster, the CCP was ordered to follow an openly revolutionary social policy, and official relations with the KMT were to continue. Covert support to the CCP was in the form of limited funds and advisers. By 1929 Soviet and KMT

friction in Manchuria reached the point of armed clashes. Stalin broke diplomatic relations with the KMT over this. In 1932 the Japanese invasion of Manchuria induced Stalin to reconsider, relations were restored with the KMT to establish a common cause against the Japanese. By 1934, Stalin found it useful to revert to the earlier policy of complete cooperation with the KMT as part of the war against Japan. This policy continued through 1944.

The period 1945-1949 was chiefly notable for the victory of the Chinese Communists. Their victory was immediately recognized for the momentous event it was. The surprising feature was that as late as January, 1947, Stalin was still negotiating with Chiang and providing little help to the CCP. Perhaps, as Adam Ulam says, "The Soviets, engrossed in the enormous problems of socialist construction in their own country, could be excused for not realizing the enormous revolutionary potentialities in [China]."<sup>4</sup> In any event, Stalin had continued the policy of a united front (CCP and KMT) against Japan through the end of the war. In accordance with the Yalta agreement, he signed the Soviet-Republic of China Treaty of Alliance in 1945, thereby gaining Outer Mongolia and Port Arthur, the use of Port Dairen and part ownership of the Manchuria Railway. However, the treaty also provided that the Soviets would only deal with the official government, and that Soviet troops would quickly withdraw from Manchuria after the war. On the whole, Stalin

kept to the treaty. The significant discrepancy was that while Soviet troops still occupied Manchuria, CCP troops were allowed in and outfitted with captured Japanese weapons. This provided the CCP with a power base from which they were able to eventually conquer China. But it was not until the May-June, 1947 CCP victories that an inkling of Chiang's weakness became apparent to most observers, and late 1948 before the ultimate victory of the CCP was obvious. Only at this point did the Soviets begin to publicly side with the CCP. The lack of Soviet support was a sore point the CCP was not soon to forget.

#### C. SINO-SOVIET RELATIONS 1949-1956

Immediately after Mao Zedong proclaimed the People's Republic of China (PRC) on October 1, 1949, the USSR withdrew recognition of the KMT and recognized the PRC. This would seem to have augured well for Sino-Soviet relations. So also did the terms of the (February, 1950) Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship. The terms included large amounts of military and economic aid to China and expanded cultural exchanges to involve thousands of students. What was not so promising was the arbitrary two-month delay Stalin made Mao wait in Moscow before the treaty negotiations began. Then, in June, 1950, the Korean War began. After the Chinese were dragged into the fighting Mao chaffed at being left to do, as he considered, the Soviet's fighting. But Stalin's death

in 1953 removed a damper from the festering disagreements that his prestige and prominence had hitherto mitigated. These included Soviet presumption of ideologic authority and Stalinist initiatives to construct pro-Soviet economic programs and political factions within China.

#### D. THE SINO-SOVIET DISPUTE 1956-1969

The period 1956-1969 marks the transition of modern Sino-Soviet relations from a position of general cooperation, though with private disagreements, to one of open and bitter conflict. 1956 is a distinctly subjective choice to begin this era. Much of the information available about the early years of the dispute was only provided in the later years of the dispute by the public charges and countercharges each side made.

The significance of 1956 is that it marks the 20th Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) Congress. Khrushchev used this Congress to announce the de-Stalinization, peaceful coexistence and disarmament policies that shook the world communist movements. The PRC took particular exception to these policies. Peking charged Moscow with abandoning both the world communist movement and Peking.

Over the next four years, the USSR and PRC found themselves on opposite sides of an increasing number of issues. Mao's 'Let a hundred flowers bloom' policy (1957) was distasteful to Soviet leaders more accustomed to repress

non-official views than encourage them. The year 1958 was critical for Sino-Soviet relations. Mao refused to allow Soviet military bases on Chinese territory, risked nuclear war with the US by attacking the Nationalist Chinese islands of Quemoy and Matsu and stated that the losses incurred by a nuclear war would be acceptable (all while under the Soviet's nuclear umbrella). The CCP issued its first direct challenge to the CPSU by claiming the imminent achievement of communism, via the "peoples' communes" program. This was regarded by the CPSU as a slight, implying that Soviet policy was not progressive. In conjunction with the peoples' communes was the PRC's "Great Leap Forward". Industry and agriculture were reorganized around individual communes. This economic de-centralization was carried to dramatic lengths, "every rural subgroup would create its own small blast furnaces for the production of iron..."<sup>5</sup> The Soviets were stunned and perturbed by the Chinese persistence--two years--with such a disastrous policy. Considering the above--from Soviet eyes--Chinese irresponsibility, it is not surprising to witness Soviet refusal to provide China with a prototype atomic bomb despite a prior arrangement to do so. Soviet misgivings with their Chinese allies were amply displayed when they remained neutral during the Chinese-Indian border clashes of 1959. Khrushchev claimed the first public airing of the dispute was conducted in 1960 by the PRC's Albanian proteges. The Soviets were outraged

by Albania's defection to the PRC, and retaliated by cancelling all economic and military aid to Albania.

From this point forward each nation not only indulged itself with public accusations and criticisms of the other but also shifted to tangible evidence of discontent. In 1960, economic relations were broken as the USSR suddenly withdrew all its advisors from China and began to cut its aid package to China. By the middle of the decade, trade between the two countries reached its nadir. Cultural exchange visits were curtailed by both sides. In 1962, the USSR began to incite anti-Chinese ferment among Chinese Moslems in the central Asian border regions. That same year the PRC closed all Soviet consulates in China, and the USSR publicly took a neutral stance during the Chinese-Indian war of 1962. The latter particularly aggravated the Chinese because not only did the USSR fail to publicly support them, it covertly supplied India with planes to prosecute the war. The USSR had long promoted better relations with India, but this was also indicative of Soviet reservations about their future prospects with China.

Nineteen Sixty-Three marked another escalation of the Sino-Soviet conflict. In March of that year, the PRC publicly announced it no longer accepted the validity of nine "unequal treaties" of the nineteenth century by which Chinese territory was ceded to various states. The anti-Soviet content of this was unmistakable--the PRC

specifically named most of its past treaties with Russia. This appellation neatly recalled the words of the Karakhan Manifesto of 1920. Furthermore, reference was pointedly made to the fact that this affected approximately 600,000 square miles of Central Asia (Soviet territory). The announcement demanded renegotiation of these treaties. Later in the year, the first public statement of Sino-Soviet border problems was made by the PRC. The PRC charged Moscow with conducting subversive activities in its northwestern province of Xinjiang. Both nations began to reinforce their border garrisons. Khrushchev's ouster in 1964 tempered the dispute for a few months. But the increasing radicalism of the Chinese Cultural Revolution in 1966 carried a strong anti-Soviet line that soon produced a return to the standing of the dispute as of a year earlier. Border incidents--possibly numbering in the hundreds--continued and both ambassadors were recalled and were not to return for five years.

#### E. THE 1969 BORDER CLASHES

The peak of Sino-Soviet tension occurred in 1969. On March 2, the PRC apparently instigated a serious border clash on the Ussuri River at Damansky Island.<sup>6</sup> Hundreds of regular troops were involved, and armor, artillery, mortars and heavy machine guns were employed. Fighting broke out again two weeks later at Damansky, and then through the

rest of the summer and fall at various points along the border. The numbers of troops and weapons involved is quite significant. These were not routine patrols hickering in the snow. Evidently the authorities in both countries anticipated just such an outbreak, or desired it. Equally illuminating is that "rather than letting tempers cool, the two Communist giants had made an extravagant effort to dramatize the Ussuri clashes in their daily newspapers, trading denunciations and striving hard to vilify each others' leaders to the outside world."<sup>7</sup> These denunciations abated only slightly after May 11, when the PRC accepted the (third) Soviet proposal to hold the 15th regular meeting of their River Navigation Commission on June 18. During the June-August talks the diplomatic tension and incidence of clashes rose again. On August 13, a particularly large clash occurred on the Xinjiang-Kasakhstan border, which "appeared to be the most serious Sino-Soviet clash since the March 1969 incidents."<sup>8</sup> This must have pushed the Soviets too far. In mid-August, reports circulated that the USSR was informally sounding out the U.S. reaction to a nuclear attack on the PRC.<sup>9</sup> On August 18, 1969, Pravda aired the possibility of a nuclear war with China,<sup>10</sup> and in September a Soviet Deputy Defense Minister raised the possibility that Moscow might initiate a "preventive" war should it be necessary.<sup>11</sup>

By this time, saner counsel prevailed. In the midst of this very tense situation both parties availed themselves of an impromptu opportunity to settle matters peaceably. Soviet Premier Kosygin stopped off at Beijing airport while returning from Ho Chi-Minh's funeral in Hanoi (September, 1969). While at the airport, he was met by PRC Premier Chou En-lai, and they reached an agreement to defuse the situation by negotiation. In October both sides opened negotiations to settle their border dispute. This commenced the series of talks that continues today.

#### F. SINO-SOVIET RELATIONS 1970-1983

It is characteristic of this period that the talks begun in 1969 have remained stalled over an agenda. The Soviet Union has consistently pushed for a broad agreement of principles, or even a non-aggression treaty. The PRC has always countered that no substantive issues may be considered until the border problems have been resolved. Neither side has been willing to compromise its position in a bid for improved relations. The negotiations will be examined in more detail in chapter five.

Meanwhile, the USSR and PRC remain polarized over events in the international arena. The USSR was very disturbed by the rapprochement between the PRC and US symbolized by Nixon's visit to China in 1972. Conversely, the PRC was upset at the growing US-Soviet detente marked by the signing

of the SALT I accords. The US evacuation of Vietnam (1973) and the victory of the Vietnamese communists (1975) were ostensible victories for the greater Communist movement. The Chinese feared, correctly, that they presaged a predominant Soviet influence in a country traditionally hostile to China. Other divisive events included the Sino-Japanese peace treaty (1972), the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea (1978), the PRC invasion of Vietnam and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (1979).

The events have created difficult problems for improving Sino-Soviet relations. Nonetheless, beginning in 1979 each country made tentative overtures to renew the normalization talks.<sup>12</sup> Following Brezhnev's death in late 1982, some progress has been indicated despite interruptions caused by Vietnam and Afghanistan. Propaganda attacks have been muted and the talks have been characterized in a much more favorable light by each country. No new border incidents have been reported, and trade between the two countries has grown.<sup>13</sup> Finally, the latest visit by the Soviet negotiation team in September, 1983, was an official visit to the Chinese government. It was the first official visit in two decades.<sup>14</sup>

NOTES FOR CHAPTER II

1. René Grousset, The Empire of the Steppes: A History of Central Asia, trans. Naomi Walford, (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1970), p. 230.
2. For a complete coverage of these treaties see Mark Mancall, Russia and China, Their Diplomatic Relations to 1728, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), and Tai-Sung An, The Sino-Soviet Territorial Dispute, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1973).
3. Tai-Sung An, Ibid., p. 45.
4. Adam B. Ulam, Expansion and Coexistence, 2nd ed., (NY: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974), p. 484.
5. Jonathan D. Spence, The Gate of Heavenly Peace (New York: The Viking Press, 1981), p. 338.
6. Which side actually instigated the first clash is not known for certain. The truth has been somewhat shrouded by their mutual accusations of guilt. Scholars investigating the issue largely agree that the PRC initiated the hostilities on March 2, 1969 and the Soviets retaliated on March 14, 1969. For a view of these events that tends to accord with the Chinese see Doak A. Barnett, China and the Major Powers in East Asia (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1977), pp. 20-88.
7. Tai-Sung An, Op. Cit., p. 95.
8. Ibid., p. 105.
9. The Washington Post, 17 August 1969, p. 7, and The New York Times, 29 August 1969, p. 5.
10. Pravda, ed., 28 August 1979 (in Current Digest of the Soviet Press, Vol. XXI, No. 35, 24 September 1979), pp. 3-5
11. The Washington Post, 9 October 1969, p. 27.
12. Sino-Soviet negotiations have undergone a subtle change since they began in 1969. Since the issue at heart was primarily their border problems, they were referred to as 'border talks'. In spite of the lack of progress

at the formal talks each side unilaterally took steps to stabilize the border. As these steps took effect and the number of incidents dropped, the issue at the talks became one of principle, vice necessity. Additionally, the very issues that impeded the progress of the talks quickly became associated with the talks themselves as 'conditions'. Hence although the ostensible reason for the talks - the border - was still valid, the talks actually came to represent the entire range of issues separating the two. In recognition of this, the talks were gradually referred to as 'normalization' talks. The border dispute is only one of the issues; others include troop levels, Vietnam, Afghanistan and general treaties of principle (e.g., non-aggression).

13. It is important to note that the normalization talks are not the only means of dialogue between the USSR and PRC. Low level trade agreements have been negotiated at various times since 1969, as have a few general trade agreements. Also regularly held are the annual meetings of the Commission for Border River Navigation.
14. The previous Soviet delations had been guests of the Soviet embassy in Beijing. New York Times, 9 September 1983, p. 5, col. 5.

### III. NATURE OF THE SINO-SOVIET DISPUTE FROM THE SOVIET PERSPECTIVE

#### A. IDEOLOGICAL IMPACT OF THE DISPUTE

The USSR considers that Marxist-Leninist ideology is a 'scientifically' valid tool capable of predicting history. State policy must act in concert with ideological truths to achieve the communist level of development. Anything else would be contrary to the reason for the state's very existence. It is the purpose of the Communist Party to determine the proper policy for the state to follow in accordance with these principles. The Party justifies its existence and monopoly of political power by claiming to be the only instrument capable of ensuring that policy is correct. This is the only legitimization for authority in the USSR. Therefore, the Party as a whole cannot afford to be wrong, and is not.

Any mistakes in policy are attributed to individuals or factions. The public position of individual CPSU leaders is that their exercise of power is justified because of their correct policy decisions. The logical outcome is that while a leader of the CPSU is in office, his policy is always correct. It is only after a leader is ousted that his policies may be publicly referred to as wrong, mistaken or less than optimum. It is simultaneously an explanation of existing

shortcomings of state policy and a justification for the new leader's assumption of power.

Admitting a previous leader's mistakes does have its drawbacks. The concept that the Party cannot be wrong, while individuals may have been, is tenuous and dangerous. After all, Soviet leaders only act collectively as representatives of the CPSU. Power is not vested in them as individuals. The extension is that Party policy was wrong as well. It is obvious to conclude that if past leaders' policies can be wrong, so can those of the current leaders, and the Party! For this reason, condemnation of previous leaders is not frequently employed. The first use of this ploy at the highest level--Khrushchev at the Twentieth CPSU Congress-- caused consternation and commotion in the world communist movement.

Even though both the USSR and PRC espouse a communist ideology, their interpretation and application of communist principles has greatly differed. This is an extremely troublesome issue to Soviet ideologues. Marxism-Leninism knows no national boundaries. It is universally valid in scope and application. Two countries operating under this same ideology cannot maintain dissimilar, and even mutually exclusive, policies. The problem is fivefold.

First, one of the positions must be wrong, and for the reasons outlined about, it cannot be the USSR's. But attributing fault to the other country--and weakening its

leadership--may not be feasible if that country is an ally (as was China from 1949-1962). This puts a premium on keeping differences private. Only when differences become too obvious, and public, is this course unfeasible.

Second, once the debate is public, the USSR is inevitably subject to denunciations similar to its own from the other country. In spite of official ridicule seeds of doubt might be spread in the Soviet populace.

Third, other communist parties are faced with a choice between the two positions, thus splitting and weakening the world communist movement.

Fourth, other communist parties might interpret an unreconciled split as indicative that maybe neither side is correct, and develop their own path to communism. This could lead to disaster for the world communist movement. Without a viable Marxist-Leninist ideology, every communist party's legitimacy is threatened.

Fifth, the option of simply declaring a deviant country no longer Marxist-Leninist is unpalatable. It would imply that the process of communist revolution is reversible. This is not impossible. Temporary setbacks along the road to full communism are to be expected. The problem is that by no stretch of the imagination could China's reverting to the capitalist camp--of its own will--be construed minor or easily correctable. It would reverse a 'historically objective' event. This would either destroy a major

ideological tenet or the credibility and reputation of a generation of ideologists. Such a major defeat would impinge on even the most credulous citizen's belief in the viability of the communist ideology and its interpreters. Furthermore, it would be difficult to isolate only one country or faction. Excommunication could easily create more problems than it would solve. Little short of national survival would override these considerations.

The potential problems of multiple centers of authority indicate the importance of unity within the world socialist movement. The USSR, as the world's first socialist country, the most experienced and the most successful, considers its right to be the leader of world communism necessary and self-evident. As such, its policies and programs should be acknowledged by other parties. The CCP's refusal to do this is a serious impediment to friendly relations between the two countries.

It is not necessarily an impediment to normalization of relations. The CPSU has adopted a policy of peaceful co-existence with fundamentally anti-Soviet regimes since 1956. Typically, the Soviets use the term 'peaceful coexistence' in conjunction with relations with non-communist countries. However, Brezhnev has stated that, "Moscow was prepared to settle outstanding differences [with the PRC] on the basis of peaceful coexistence."<sup>1</sup> The problem is that the Soviets have always stopped short of excluding the PRC from

the world socialist system. The PRC is still considered "a member in bad standing" that has occasionally (frequently) deviated from the 'true' tenets of Marxism-Leninism.<sup>2</sup> This implies that some pro forma admission of past errors and some degree of future commitment to Soviet leadership is necessary by the CCP before relations can make much progress. The first might be as simple as agreeing to a non-aggression pact. The latter will be more difficult, but the Yugoslav example indicates how far the Soviets will go towards international communist unity: Communist relations "...need not...be based on identity of doctrine, or even on the pretense of such identity - only on agreement on some vital points of doctrine, combined with practical solidarity and absence of polemics."<sup>3</sup> The Soviets were stymied in their desire for unity by Mao's intractability. But it is likely that their cessation of anti-PRC propaganda at Mao's death, and later Hua's ouster, was to indicate their willingness to receive the successor should he recant.

#### B. PERSONAL ANTIPATHY BETWEEN LEADERS

There is evidence that at least the beginnings of the dispute can be traced in part to personal dislikes between Soviet and Chinese leaders. Khrushchev in his memoirs mentions how Stalin felt suspicious toward Mao and had a low opinion of him, "What kind of man is Mao, anyway? He calls himself a Marxist, but he doesn't understand the most

elementary Marxist truths. Or maybe he doesn't want to understand them.<sup>4</sup> A more tangible display of Stalin's dislike of Mao occurred during Mao's visit to Moscow in 1950 to seal the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship. Stalin purposefully kept Mao waiting for two months in near isolation before signing the treaty. Khrushchev, in turn, gives his impression of Mao as outdated, impractical, and egotistic: "...he expressed opinions and made grandiose claims that were hopelessly outdated," and "Mao had wanted for a long time to be recognized by his people not only as a leader but as a god."<sup>5</sup>

Intimately related to the leaders' personal feelings was their stature within the international communist movement. Stalin not only considered himself heir to Lenin's governmental authority, but also to Lenin's ideological mantle. Stalin considered Mao's early ideological innovations an impertinence. After Stalin's death Mao believed his genesis of the only independently successful communist movement apart from the USSR entitled him to preeminence. In spite of the force of this argument, Khrushchev claimed the title by virtue of being Stalin's direct successor. Considerable ill-will was generated by these conflicts.

It is unlikely that the current leaders have experienced much personal intimacy. Opportunities for personal contacts have been very infrequent since the inception of the dispute. Even though Deng Xiaoping had frequently been in

Moscow when difficult negotiations were being conducted, "Under Stalin there was a strict rule: if you weren't told, you weren't meant to know and you'd better better not ask."<sup>6</sup> Any personal opinions remaining among the Soviet's top leadership would probably be inherited from Stalin. The strength of such feelings should not be minimized. Soviet leaders today are a product of the Stalin era, and as Khrushchev said, "...you don't free yourself from [Stalinist] habits so easily."<sup>7</sup> Nixon reports that Brezhnev said, "He was certain that the entire Chinese leadership was instinctively aggressive."<sup>8</sup> At a lower level of leadership, the Soviet negotiating team and embassy personnel in the PRC are the source for current Soviet opinions of the PRC's leadership. In private conversations, the current Soviet Ambassador has spoken in a very deprecatory manner of his Chinese counterparts.<sup>9</sup>

A realistic estimate of the impact of personal dislikes for continuing the Sino-Soviet dispute would have to be low in spite of their probable existence. Historically, politicians have frequently been able to accept strange bedfellows when it suited them.

#### C. THE DISPUTE OVER THE SINO-SOVIET BOUNDARY

For the eleven years from 1963-1974, the substance of the dispute over the borders was contained in the March 8,

1963 Chinese announcement that they no longer accepted the validity of the old 'unequal' treaties signed with Czarist Russia. The USSR conceded that the old treaties were the result of imperialist policies, but contended that they were made in the face of an equally imperialistic power--the Chinese Empire--and hence cancelled each other out. As Khrushchev said:

As far as we were concerned, we weren't responsible for what our czars had done, but the lands gained from those czarist treaties were now Soviet territory...We were afraid that if we started remapping our frontiers according to historical considerations, the situation could get out of hand and lead to conflict.<sup>10</sup>

The essence of the Chinese demand was for the USSR to recognize the treaties as 'unequal', and renegotiate the borders on that basis. It was not a 'claim' for 600,000 square miles of Soviet territory, as the Soviet press consistently stated. But should the USSR have negotiated under those conditions, it would have been a tacit recognition that Chinese claims to some amount of territory were valid. This it refused to admit.

The 1969 conflict over Damansky Island can be traced to the vague terms of the Treaty of Peking (1860), which established the Ussuri River as the Sino-Soviet border. No mention was made in the treaty of the river islands. In such cases, international law stipulates the center of the main channel, or thalweg, becomes the boundary.<sup>11</sup> But the Ussuri floods and shifts course, "changing the location of

islands and thus bringing the issue of their sovereignty into question.<sup>12</sup>

In 1974, the PRC dropped its demand for recognition of the 'unequal' status of the treaties, and has merely called for renegotiation of border areas. This may refer to areas such as Damansky, the Pamir Mountains in the south and other areas of the 4,150 mile border that are either ill-defined or are not specifically delimited. However, the USSR continues to reject this demand on the principle that there is no basis for such discussions. The Soviets are happy with the borders as they exist. The USSR would prefer to see the border issue confined to measures for preventing disputes from erupting again.

#### D. NATIONAL INTEREST

The concept of explaining a country's actions in terms of its national interest is a familiar one. National interest here is used to mean a country's primary vital interests, such as national security and national prosperity, and its less tangible interests such as desired level of national power and the elusive element of national prestige. But the weight that should be assigned to national interest for explaining Sino-Soviet relations is not commonly agreed on. The position presented here is that national interest is intimately related to ideology.

An important facet of ideology is the precepts of those who frame it. Marxist ideology became Marxist-Leninist as Lenin found it necessary to tailor Marxism to conditions in the USSR. Similarly, the leaders of the CCP have found it necessary to adopt their own interpretation of Marxism-Leninism. This expression of national autonomy within another communist country's ideological framework would be most difficult to prevent unless complete control over that country could be maintained. The USSR has been able to do this with most of Eastern Europe, and to some degree Vietnam,<sup>13</sup> but has failed regarding China. Adoption of the new ideological principles involved in the de-Stalinization campaign, the principle of peaceful coexistence and disarmament talks with the US was traumatic even for the USSR, a well-established and stable socialist state. Mao Zedong and the leaders of the CCP contended that not only were these innovations wrong in principle but that adoption of them by the CCP would do much to negate the gains achieved in China. Therefore, the ideological differences were based in some measure on different perceptions of their respective countries national interest.

At the Twentieth CPSU Congress in 1956 Khrushchev decided that despite the risks, to best promote Soviet interests modern times required another shift in ideology. These changes included the principle of peaceful coexistence, de-Stalinization, de-satellization and relaxing

societal controls. To the Soviet leaders' dismay, these policies fostered some results contrary to Soviet national interests both internally and externally. A few elements of the Soviet populace committed 'excesses' of personal freedom, and Eastern European countries like Hungary and Poland became too lax in their domestic politics. Hungary's case actually required Soviet military intervention to restore 'order'. In 1960, the CPSU Central Committee resolved to step up propaganda and ideological work to 1) justify the changes; 2) halt 'abuses'; and 3) define new limits for the ideological changes so that they were more in accord with Soviet interests.<sup>14</sup> The point is that while excesses committed under the changes caused problems in Soviet foreign policy, the changes were not intended to do so.

The importance to the Soviets of their national interest was displayed when the Chinese gained a convert in Albania. This vulnerability within their own sphere disturbed them greatly. It was too serious to ignore, but Khrushchev had already removed the Cominform as an instrument to handle the issue. Forcing the issue at a conference of world communist parties was explored, but never employed, because it was only an option if it could succeed, and the PRC had already made clear that was impossible. Failure would only compound the problem by putting an official stamp on two ideological camps. To protect their national interest they were forced

to abandon the recently adopted ideological changes. In the case of Albania, as later in the case of the PRC, the Soviets were, "...forced back to the 'Stalinist' use of state power in inter-communist relations..."<sup>15</sup> for lack of an effective method of inter-Party control.

The issue of disarmament and peaceful coexistence was more a matter of national interest for the USSR than it was for the PRC. As a military and nuclear superpower in its own right, the USSR felt constrained to adopt a long-term view of the capitalist-communist conflict. Long before, radical policies of world revolution had been discarded by Stalin. Communism will eventually triumph over capitalism, but such a "victory" after a nuclear war would be a catastrophe. Soviet leaders determined that in the modern world, "The principal role of Soviet military power [should be] to dissuade imperialist powers from resort to their military power."<sup>16</sup> The propriety of arms talks logically followed, as did the principle of peaceful coexistence. From the Soviet view, Khrushchev's comment about Mao being "outdated" is particularly appropriate here. Khrushchev felt that as a communist state, the PRC was inextricably involved with the USSR. Safeguarding the USSR from nuclear war was in effect safeguarding the PRC.

The Brezhnev Doctrine of 1968 indicated a formal blending of ideology and national interest in Soviet foreign policy relations with other socialist countries. As

sovereign states Communist countries have traditionally functioned:

...in three distinct international or transnational environments: 1) the Communist interstate sub-system; 2) the general international system; and 3) the world of Communist Parties...the 'Brezhnev Doctrine', for the first time, insinuated purely Party principles into the behavior of Communist states in their capacities as members of the general international community, i.e., it limits their autonomy as states, not simply as Parties.<sup>17</sup>

The distinction from the Soviet view is purely nominal. Communist states are governed by Communist Parties, which must already conform to CPSU leadership. But other Parties than the CPSU clearly perceive that the juridical intent of the doctrine allows the USSR complete leeway to ensure the ideological and national interests of the USSR are protected. Blurring the state/Party distinction blurs the ideology/national interest demarcation. It elevates the national interest to the status of ideology.

An alternative method of looking at the problem might be that ideology's importance was lowered, while that of the national interest was raised. Taking this proposition further results in an estimate put forward by Seweryn Bialer, "The leadership in both countries is looking frantically for an ideological underpinning for the current conflict."<sup>18</sup> This recognizes the imperative a sound ideological base has for their leaderships' legitimacy, but it also implies a cynical retroactive application of the ideology. Some of this probably exists, but it is much more likely that

leaders raised within the ideology genuinely believe it. Real world events that present conflicts of ideology and national interest must trouble Soviet leaders. Their only solution to the shortcomings of their ideology is a commitment to the propriety of their decisions. This will make it all the more difficult for the PRC and USSR to reconcile their differences over US-PRC detente, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Soviet aid to Vietnam and Soviet troop dispositions along their common border.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER III

1. William G. Hyland, "The Sino-Soviet Conflict: A Search for New Security Strategies." Strategic Review, Vol. 7, No. 4, (Fall, 1979), p. 53.
2. Vernon V. Aspaturian, "The Metamorphosis of the 'Socialist Commonwealth'." Sozialismus in Theorie und Praxis, eds. Horn, Hannelore, Alexander Schwan and Thomas Weingartner, (NY: Walter de Gruyter, 1979), p. 249.
3. Richard Lowenthal, World Communism, (NY: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 263.
4. Nikita S. Khrushchev, Khrushchev Remembers, ed. and trans. Strobe Talbot, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1974), p. 239.
5. Ibid., pp. 261, 278.
6. Ibid., p. 64.
7. Ibid., p. 67.
8. Richard Nixon, RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon, (NY: Grosset and Dunlap, 1978), p. 882.
9. From a discussion between Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Kapitsa and U.S. Ambassador to the USSR Hartman in March, 1983, as related by Claude Buss (NPGS, October, 1983).
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11. William W. Bishop, Jr., International Law: Cases and Materials, 3rd ed., (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971), p. 448.
12. Tai-Sung An, The Sino-Soviet Territorial Dispute, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1973), p. 93.
13. Donald C. Daniel, "Peacetime Use of the Soviet Navy," Monterey, CA, December, 1983, (Lecture presented at the Naval Postgraduate School).

14. The details of the ideological campaign may be found in Frederick C. Barghoorn, "Soviet Russia: Orthodoxy and Adaptiveness," in Lucian W. Pye and Sidney Verba, eds., Political Culture and Political Development, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), pp. 497-499.
15. Lowenthal, Op. Cit., p. 263.
16. Raymond L. Garthoff, "Mutual Deterrence and Strategic Arms Limitation in Soviet Policy." Strategic Review, Fall, 1982, p. 37.
17. Aspaturian, Op. Cit., pp. 257-259.
18. Seweryn Bialer, "The Sino-Soviet Conflict: The Soviet Dimension." Soviet Policy in East Asia, ed. Donald S. Zagoria, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), pp. 103-104.

#### IV. CHINA IN THE SOVIET SCHEME

The previous historical review of Sino-Soviet relations and the details of the dispute's origin leave out an important element that impacts on current Sino-Soviet relations. The general attitude of the Soviets toward China and the Chinese underlies the basis of the Soviets' China policy. It includes the emotional and cultural feelings of the Soviets for the Chinese, the priority of the 'China Problem' in Soviet politics, and the relative military situation.

##### A. SOVIET NATIONALISM

The USSR is officially a multinational country. As such, all ninety-two ethnic nationalities (as of the 1979 census) enjoy completely equal status under the law.<sup>1</sup> The right of nationalities to official recognition was guaranteed in both the 1936 and 1977 constitutions. In fact, the state is organized on the basis of its national content. The most numerous nationalities compose the fifteen Socialist Republics, smaller nationalities are accorded lesser status. This official Soviet position on nationalities is in full accord with Marxist-Leninist ideology, as was covered previously. The minority nationalities (non-Slavs) benefit from this policy in many ways. No official prohibition exists to prevent their access to education, jobs, military service or the CPSU. Many have taken

advantage of this to improve their position in Soviet society.

The official line regarding foreign nationalities is similar. All nationalities and races are recognized as equals in the struggle against capitalism. The USSR frequently propagandizes this and points with pride to itself as an example for other multi-ethnic nations to follow.

The true picture of ethnicity within the USSR is much more complex, and is beyond the scope of this paper to explore in depth. But basically, the USSR is dominated by Slavs, and particularly Russian Slavs and Ukrainians. Since Stalin, determined efforts have been made to Russify Soviet society. In some cases this has succeeded, but many minority nationalities, especially the Muslims, stubbornly cling to their national heritage and traditions. What is worse, demographic trends indicate that the Slavic population is declining relative to the Islamic nationalities in central Asia. Since the Slavic and European nationalities of the northern Soviet Union have traditionally been the most productive in industry and agriculture, the demographic shift presents a problem for the Soviet economy. Unless the Soviets institute corrective measures, a serious decline in industrial and agricultural products will result. A serious level of resentment is already growing among northerners at

the necessity to distribute their product among the unproductive southerners.

In spite of official intolerance, racist attitudes are prevalent in Soviet society. This is especially true between European and Muslim nationalities. Central Asian nationals are looked down upon by Slavs who consider them stupid and dull-witted. Considerable racial strife has been reported within the military.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, Slavs are well aware that minority nationalities have in the past been disloyal to the regime, e.g., a quarter of the German manpower on the eastern front was composed of non-Slavic deserters from the USSR.<sup>3</sup> For this reason, the Soviet leaders have often considered minority nationalities untrustworthy. An example is Khrushchev's refusal to use Georgian troops to quell a 1956 riot in Tbilisi.<sup>4</sup>

Soviet cultural attitudes towards Chinese nationals are infected with the same racism and suspicion. In 1959, Khrushchev was unhappy with Chinese students who staged incidents in the USSR: "They were supposed to be cultured people, but they are nothing but swine."<sup>5</sup> Soviet propagandists found it easy to whip up anti-Chinese sentiment at the time of the 1969 border clash. Andrei Amalrik relates that, "One can hear nowadays in Russia remarks like 'The United States will help us because we are white and the Chinese are yellow.'"<sup>6</sup> And a famous poet, Yevgeny Yevtushenko, referred to the Chinese as the new "Khans". These remarks

are indicative of the Russian fear of the "yellowing" of their society and of the "yellow peril" across the border. Soviet leaders with these attitudes would find it easy to accept a Sino-Soviet split.

#### B. CHINA IN SOVIET PRIORITIES

The PRC is not first among Soviet priorities in spite of its antagonistic policies and contiguous border. The USSR's opposite number in the capitalist camp, the US, occupies first priority with the Soviets. The USSR has traditionally been and still is oriented towards the West. Largely because of this and the German invasion of the USSR in WWII the Soviets' next two priorities are Eastern and Western Europe, in that order. East Asia, including Asia, then follow Europe. This order is by no means absolute. Individual events certainly may temporarily rearrange regional priorities for the Soviets. But this order has been repeatedly born out over the last decade.

Within East Asia ascertaining Soviet priorities is much more difficult. The contest is between Japan and the PRC. Japan's military capability is not high but it is an economic superpower with the world's second highest GNP. China probably edges out Japan primarily due to its contiguous border with the USSR and immense army, along with its avowedly anti-Soviet policy.

The aforementioned history of Sino-Soviet relations can give the misleading impression that the Soviets have primarily been interested in China. It is useful to remember the PRC's relatively low position in Soviet priorities when considering the Sino-Soviet dispute. Some elements of the dispute's origin can be attributed to Beijing's dissatisfaction with this. Mao was infuriated when, on Soviet instigation, the PRC was excluded from talks on the Partial Test Ban Treaty (December, 1958); and again when the Soviets summarily refused to supply the Chinese with the sample atomic bomb they had promised (June, 1959). Both of these moves were made in accordance with Khrushchev's high priority disarmament negotiations with the US.

Soviet concern with the PRC and East Asia is relatively recent. Many factors are responsible for the rise of the PRC, and East Asia in general, in Soviet priorities since Stalin. The conflict with the PRC was one, but just as important were: the transition of the USSR to a global power capable of power projection to the Third World, the growth of the strategic importance of South-East Asia, the Second Indochina War, the growth of Japanese economic power, Sino-Japanese normalization and the potential for an American-Chinese-Japanese anti-Soviet alliance. Should the latter alliance ever be cemented, it would rapidly become the single most important Soviet concern.

## C. SOVIET MILITARY PERSPECTIVES OF THE PRC

### 1. Geography\*

Before proceeding to the details of the military possibilities along the Sino-Soviet border it is necessary to be familiar with the geography of the border. The strategic geography shapes the nature of the threat each country must guard against.

The 4,150-mile Sino-Soviet boundary is the longest two-nation border in the world. This excludes that segment occupied by Mongolia; although Mongolia hosts a number of Soviet Red Army divisions, no border problems have resulted with the PRC and Mongolia.

To the west, the Sino-Soviet boundary begins in the Pamir mountains at the junction of Afghanistan, USSR and PRC territories. The Pamirs are the central core of the systems of Central Asia. The Pamirs are of great elevation, and generally increase in height westward to 25,000 feet or more. They are characterized by flat ridges and valleys, the valleys are five to ten miles wide, while the ridges average about 13,000 feet elevation (4,500 - 5,000 feet above the valley floors.)

The frontier then runs generally north-east along a complex of mountain ranges. Directly north is the Alai range, similar to the Pamirs without the great lateral

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\* See Map, Appendix A.

extensions. East and west of the Alais are plains, the Kirghiz steppes in the USSR and the Tarim Basin in the PRC. The passes connecting the lowlands are steep, and quite high (averaging 14,000 feet).

The east to west bend of the border follows the Tien Shan mountains, which continue on into China and divide Xinjiang Province. The Tarim Basin lays south, while the Dzungarian Basin lays north. The Tarim is mostly uninhabitable desert, with some steppe and swamp surrounding mountain drainage areas. The Dzungarian is mostly steppe. North of the Tien Shan, the Ili River cuts east-west and provides a natural route across the border. The eastern border of the Dzungarian Basin is composed of the Alatau mountains, which run north to the Altai. The Alataus and Altais are relatively low and unspectacular, but provide a sufficient obstacle to overland traffic. The Dzungarian Gates are the famous pass across the border in the Alataus, it is a ten-mile long gorge at only 700 feet above sea level. From here east into China proper is the Kansu Corridor, a narrow route between the Gobi Desert on the north and the Tibetan mountains on the south. To the east of the Alataus is Soviet Turkestan, which ends at the Altais.

East of Mongolia, the border is defined by the Argun, Amur and Ussuri Rivers. Running north along the Argun is the Greater Khingan mountain range; following the Amur east to the Ussuri junction is the Lesser Khingan

range. The Khingans are only about 6,000 feet elevation in the south, gradually decreasing to about 4,000 feet in the north and east. This is sufficient to contain the monsoonal precipitation, and hence the Manchurian lowlands are fertile and heavily forested. Swamps extend from the junction of the Amur and Ussuri south along the Ussuri.

## 2. The Military Situation Along The Sino-Soviet Border

### a. Military Force Levels

Following the outbreak of hostilities in 1960, it became clear to the USSR that the PRC presented a military threat. The seriousness of the situation was indicated by the Soviet reaction. Within three years, the number of Soviet troops along the border had doubled to 400,000 men. Granting that a threat exists, the question is one of degree. What kind of threat does the PRC pose to the USSR?

Table I below indicates the current force levels each nation has in the border region (as of 1983).

### b. The Military Balance

The data in Table I is a quantitative comparison, and requires a qualitative element to accurately reflect the relative force levels. Generally, this drastically alters the situation in favor of the Soviets. Soviet military equipment is plentiful and incorporates modern technology. Chinese equipment is largely obsolescent; what little modern equipment they have is in scarce quantity. Soviet military training is comprehensive, frequent and

TABLE 1  
APPROXIMATE COMPARISON OF SOVIET AND CHINESE FORCE LEVELS  
ALONG THE SINO-SOVIET BORDER IN 1985

COMPONENT	USSR	PRC <sup>B</sup>	COMPONENT	USSR	PRC <sup>B</sup>
Strategic Nuclear Weapons (Total) <sup>A</sup>			Air Force		
MRBM/IRBM	710	100-150	Combat A/C	2,000 <sup>D</sup>	5,500 Total
ICBM	1,400	<10	- Fighters	1,100	4,000
SLBM	1,050	Few	- Bombers	200	700
Tactical Nuclear Weapons	Yes (FROG-7)	No	- Attack	700	500
Nuclear WMDs	7,800	300	Transports	80	550
			Helicopters	700	550
Ground Forces			Source: <u>The Military Balance 1985-84</u> ; Donald C. Daniel, "Sino-Soviet Relations in Naval Perspective", and Kenneth Hunt, "Sino-Soviet Theatre Force Comparisons", Stuart and Low, ed., <u>China, the Soviet Union and the West</u> , and Harlan W. Jencks, <u>From Muskets to Missiles</u> .		
Men	510,000	1,500,000	A. "About 50% of all Soviet strategic missiles are deployed along the Trans-Siberian Railway and in SSPNs assigned to the Pacific Fleet." <sup>7</sup>		
Divisions	52 (45 MRD) (7 Tank)	66 MF (58 Infantry) ( 8 Armored )	H. Except for the ground forces, all the figures listed for the PRC are total numbers in the entire PLA.		
Paramilitary	4 Artillery	53 Local Force	C. Fifty-five of the Soviet submarines are nuclear powered, only two of the Chinese are.		
Tanks	KGB (Total) 190,000 MWU (Total) 260,000 10,000	ARMED MILITIA 7,000,000 1,000	D. Excludes combat forces of the aviation armies.		
Navy					
Submarines <sup>C</sup>					
- Ballistic Missile	28	1			
- ASUM Attack	23	0			
- Attack	62	94			
Major Surface Combatants	78	25			
Other Surface Ships					
- Minor Combatants	225	942			
- Other	326	631			
Aircraft	110	725			
- Tactical Strike					
- Tactical Support	70	6			

effective. Chinese training has been hampered by lack of equipment and political disruption. Soviet military doctrine competently employs the latest concepts of modern warfare. Chinese doctrine is inflexible and relies on outdated Maoist concepts. These comparisons impinge equally on each of the military branches.

Soviet nuclear forces are second to none in the world, and are perhaps even superior to those of the United States. They certainly far outstrip the Chinese. Their delivery systems are well-diversified between jet bombers, equally modern solid fuel ICBM's, IRBM's, MRBM's, SLBM's and tactical nuclear delivery systems (FROG-7). They are reliable and increasingly accurate. Their supply of warheads targeted at the PRC overwhelmingly exceeds the PRC's. This includes a wide range of megatonnage for flexible employment. PRC nuclear forces are limited in almost every variable. Their strategic bombers, copies of TU-16 "Badger A's" are disregarded by the Soviets, "who judge it obsolescent as a bomber."<sup>8</sup> Chinese nuclear credibility resides in their missiles. These are widely dispersed and well-concealed, and the CSS-1 and CSS-2 have some mobility. But the total numbers are relatively few; and all are liquid fueled and, "extremely vulnerable to attack (conventional as well as nuclear) once launch preparations begin."<sup>9</sup>

The potential size of the Soviet ground forces is not indicated in Table I. Of the fifty-two divisions

only about fifteen percent are Category A, thirty-five percent are Category B and the remaining fifty percent are Category C.\* At full mobilization the total numbers of troops would swell to nearly two million men. The Category A divisions are closest to the Manchurian border. Even without mobilization these trained, well-equipped and supplied troops are "quite capable of defeating the Soviet Far East and undertaking minor offensive operations."<sup>10</sup> Given time for mobilization, the additional two million men would provide much greater strength and flexibility for any operation short of full invasion and occupation.

The Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) deploys roughly 1.5 million of its 3.6 million ground forces along the border. (Note: The PLA is a unified service which includes the air force and navy as well as ground forces. For the purposes of this paper, the former two will be considered separately.) Of the approximately 100 divisions, two-thirds are main force (MF) divisions and the remaining third are local force (LF) divisions. The MF divisions are better and more fully equipped than the LF

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\* Soviet procedure is to man most of their divisions with only a cadre of essential personnel. In times of need, the divisions are brought up to full strength with reserves. Soviet divisions are divided into three categories depending on their standard amount of undermanning: Category A--divisions are at 80-100 percent readiness; Category B--divisions at 30-50 percent readiness; and Category C--divisions at 5-10 percent readiness.<sup>11</sup>

divisions, which are intended for static defense and border defense. 'Better' is a distinctly relative proposition. "Many of the MF divisions still rely partly on horse-drawn transport, and little more than light infantry divisions...."<sup>12</sup> Pack mules might be an advantage in the jungles and steep mountains south of the Yangtze River, but the north is ideal terrain for mechanized forces. The PLA is woefully short of self-propelled artillery, heavy tanks, and modern armored personnel carriers. Soviet tank divisions and Chinese armored divisions are comparably structured, but the PLA's tanks are mostly old versions of Soviet T-54's, while the Soviets use T-64's/-72's. One strength of the PLA is its superb individual training. The Chinese infantryman is tough and practiced in fighting at close quarters.

The Soviet air force is a modern, all-weather force. It employs excellent ground control and aircraft radars and electronics. Its 2,000 combat aircraft are equipped with modern armaments, including effective air-to-air and air-to-ground missiles. There are significant numbers of the latest aircraft types, including Backfire bombers, MiG-27 fighter-bombers and MiG-25 fighters.

The Chinese air forces have respectable numbers but are virtually all of 1950's vintage. For example, 3,600 of the 4,000 fighters are MiG-17 and MiG-19 copies. There are only about 100 J-7's (versions of MiG-21) deployed. The

latest Chinese effort, the F-8, a delta-winged interceptor, is only a marginal improvement of the J-7. Moreover, "Nearly all the...fighter interceptors of the PLA Air Force and PLA Naval Air Force are effective only in daylight and fair weather."<sup>13</sup>

The Soviet navy is one of the world's two best by any measure. Its Pacific Fleet comprises roughly a quarter of the entire Soviet Navy, more if measured by submarines alone. It is a very strong fleet as measured by either hardware or operational experience. The PRC navy, on the other hand, is mentioned as being the second largest in the world when measured by its total number of ships and men. In fact it is very weak in both hardware and operational experience. The Soviets have an overwhelming advantage in long range submarines and major surface craft, both of which employ anti-ship and anti-land missiles. Soviet armament is large, powerful and plentiful. The PRC has no ships larger than a destroyer, and all its technology is outmoded. Its weaponry is almost entirely short range guns and torpedoes. In essence, the PRC navy is useful only for coastal defense. The Soviet navy is an experienced open-ocean navy. In spite of its size, the PRC navy could really only oppose the Soviet's by extensive use of mines. Unfortunately, there is little data on Chinese minewarfare capability.

Even this brief comparison of Soviet and Chinese force levels makes clear that though outnumbered, the Soviets have the substantially superior forces. But an assessment of the overall military balance should review two other factors: military doctrine and the strategic framework.

Military doctrine includes military tactics and strategy, and the operational 'style' of the armed forces in combat and command. Soviet land forces have the quantity and sophistication of material to practice and effectively employ modern combined arm concepts. Heavy infantry, massed armor and air support are combined to wield a theoretically devastating punch. Their forces are mobile and well directed by advanced techniques of command, control and communications (C<sup>3</sup>). The PLA 'People's War' tradition of light infantry and guerrilla warfare is quite different. It is inherently defensive, and relies on mass mobilization and protracted fighting. As a strategy for opposing Soviet attack it is manifestly unsuitable. The Chinese recognize this, and over the last decade have emphasized the need for the PLA to modernize for 'People's War Under Modern Conditions'. Military modernization is one of the current leader's goals under the 'Four Modernizations' program, albeit the one with least priority. But the PLA has far to go before it realizes any significant improvement.

Since the PLA was organized after, and with the help of, the Red Army, it is no surprise to note their similar structure. Their command style is likewise similar. Both armies operate under a highly centralized command where relatively little initiative is left to lower levels. With their modern communications equipment the Soviets are probably much more efficient at it than the Chinese, but for the same reason more rigid. The PLA's 'People's War' concept benefits from the flexibility of a less integrated command structure. The combat style of each country's troops is quite comparable. Both country's soldiers are tough, adaptable, and determined.

The strategic situation is highly unfavorable to China. Xinjiang in the west is lightly populated by mostly non-Han peoples, and is isolated from the rest of China except for one rail line. Yet, it is easily accessible to the Soviets from Central Asia or from the Mongolian People's Republic (MPR). From the MPR, a Soviet satellite, the Soviets can also strike south into the Kansu Corridor, and from there either east toward Beijing or south into central China. The Chinese territory facing this threat is again lightly inhabited and is not easily defensible although Han peoples are now in the majority. In the north-east is Manchuria, China's industrial center. It is surrounded on three sides by Soviet territory and hence is extremely vulnerable to a pincer movement. The PLA has concentrated

its best forces in the Beijing military region for this reason. These major routes are actually the traditional ones by which China has been invaded for the last 3,000 years. It is ironic that the PRC capitol is vulnerable--the Mongols situated it at Beijing during the only time in Chinese history when the threat came from the south.

In theory, the Soviets also have cause to worry. Should China ever realize the full might of its potential, the fears of Kuropatkin in 1916 might be valid: "China could strike through the Dzungarian Basin and thereby cut the Russian Empire in half."<sup>14</sup> In a more practical sense, the Soviets in Eastern Siberia are at the far end of a very long supply line. The Soviets are dependent on the Trans-Siberian railway for much of their new supplies. The only other routes are the northern (closed by ice eight months of the year) and southern sea lanes. The Trans-Siberian passes within ten miles of the Chinese border at some points, and thus is vulnerable to determined Chinese raids. The Soviets have alleviated this problem in two ways. They have prepositioned enormous stockpiles of military supplies, and they are constructing a second rail line, the Baikal-Amur (BAM), farther from the border.

In the final analysis, of course, the true test of the military balance can only be determined in actual war. Short of this, it would appear the Soviets have a definite advantage. A method of more definitely assessing

the military balance is proposed by R.H.S. Stolfi. In his estimate the factors of numbers of men, weapons, weapons characteristics, military doctrine and strategic framework are not simple aggregates.

Each factor contributes decisively to the strength of the combat forces, and the ineffectiveness of any single one could result in the collapse of the whole. In mathematical analogy, the factors are multiplicative and the product...is zero whenever any included factor is zero.<sup>15</sup>

This method highlights the Chinese inferiority. They are crucially weak in numbers and quality of weapons and their subsequent military doctrine. Unless Chinese leaders are bent on suicide, the choice of military confrontation lies entirely with the Soviets.

The options available to the Soviets, if they were to decide on military action, must now be considered.

### 3. Military Planning Considerations

#### a. Soviet Military Options

The field of military operations available to the Soviets is very wide. The concern of this section is to examine the entire range of options solely by the criteria of military feasibility. In this regard, the study by Donald Daniel and Harlan Jencks is very appropriate.<sup>16</sup> They present six graduated military options for the USSR that are representative of the entire spectrum of options. With each option they consider the probable Chinese response. Since these scenarios would be affected by any

intervention of the US, possible US responses are also evaluated for each Soviet option. This is an extremely useful model and is presented in condensed form below.

(1) Option One: Sponsoring Rebellion

This Soviet option would be intended to take advantage of the non-Han majority residing in Xinjiang. These Muslim peoples have been subjected to harsh Sinification and are certainly disaffected with their Chinese rulers, especially when they compare the relatively benign treatment the related minorities in Soviet Central Asia have received. Along the rest of the border the Han are now in the majority, but if sufficiently incited, or even armed, minorities could cause considerable disruption. As mentioned elsewhere, it has been reported that the Soviets have already used this tactic to indicate their displeasure with the PRC.

The immediate Chinese response would be to forcibly quell any disturbances. The only long-term solution is to redress the injustices done to the minorities and begin to raise their standard of living. This has been addressed by the current Chinese leadership. Attempts by the Chinese to use this option against the Soviets would be difficult in view of their past record of intense Sinification and subjugation of minorities.

The best assistance the US could provide would be to boost PRC propaganda capabilities with communication equipment.

(2) Option Two: Maritime Disruption

The Soviets have wide latitude to interrupt Chinese merchant and fishing fleets and offshore drilling. This could range from interference with, to attacking, these targets. Their loss would be serious in itself, not counting the future damage to the Chinese economy.

The Chinese response depends on where the Soviets choose to operate. If the interdiction occurs outside the East and South China Seas, the PRC would be helpless. Within these seas the PRC would still have trouble with Soviet submarines, and if used, mines. Only closer in to the mainland would the PRC navy be able to hinder Soviet operations. Any attacks on Soviet shipping by the PRC would likely be thwarted by rerouting shipping out of the threat area.

US aid in the form of intelligence data and escort services could greatly help the PRC, but the latter risks conflict with the Soviets. If the US and USSR were willing to enter limited naval engagement, US aid could be extended to minesweeping and pacifying the coastal seas. Clearing them would require more assets than the US could

afford to devote--this is even truer regarding open ocean areas.

(3) Option Three: Bombard China

The USSR could easily penetrate the PRC to conduct selected--or general--bombing. This would be the optimum method to provide flexible, controlled destruction. Depending on intent, the targets could range from military outposts to industrial centers. The attack could be either conventional or nuclear. A successful Soviet first strike would eliminate enough Chinese launchers to ensure a minimal PRC counter-response.

Since PRC air defenses are almost non-existent, they could not stop such an attack. Their air fields and nuclear missiles would probably be pre-emptively destroyed. The choice of launching their surviving nuclear missiles could only provoke a massive counter-attack. A possible response could be large scale guerrilla raids into Soviet territory. They might do significant damage to the Trans-Siberian Railroad and local populace before being stopped. It might also escalate to a Soviet response in kind.

In this instance, US aid would be of limited value. Arms transfers of anti-war weapons and intelligence would be best, but adequate amounts of material simply could not be provided.

(4) Option Four: Punitive Raids

The Soviets could send troops onto Chinese territory at their discretion. Their mission character could be repeats of the earlier border incidents or destructive raids reaching deep into China. Depending on the mission the number of troops might total several divisions.

The Chinese would, of course, attempt to meet the intruding forces and destroy them. But once the Soviets are across the border, the PLA would be hard pressed to keep up with a highly mobile force. Only a large raid of long duration would be subject to guerrilla attrition. As in Option Three, a Chinese counter raid would risk escalation.

The most practical US aid in this case would be intelligence forewarning the raid.

(5) Option Five: Dismemberment

In this option, the Soviet objective would be occupation of the PRC's most vulnerable territories: Xinjiang and Manchuria. Both these targets would require Soviet mobilization to succeed. Xinjiang would be a much easier target because of its weak defenses, shorter Soviet supply lines and possibly welcoming population. The Soviets would be virtually assured of success. Manchuria would be a much more difficult task. It is strongly defended, its border terrain is more defensible, it has a large anti-Soviet population and Soviet logistics are more difficult. Jencks

estimates it would cost ten divisions and require twenty to thirty more for occupation, but it could be done.

The Chinese would try to stop either assault at the border passes. In Xinjiang, the best they could do would be to slow the Soviet advance. Once through the passes there is little hope of containment. Reinforcements could not arrive in time. In Manchuria, there is a slight possibility the Soviets might not break through before entailing unacceptable losses. Once through, the Soviets would still face stiff resistance from the PLA's best units and a hostile population. It is unlikely the Soviets would use tactical nuclear weapons for fear of full-scale retaliation by the PRC. For their part, the Chinese would hesitate to initiate massive Soviet retaliation by launching a nuclear first strike.

As in Option Four, there is little aid beside forewarning intelligence the US could provide the PRC.

(6) Option Six: Invasion

This scenario is similar to Option Five in its initial stages. The difference is that once through the passes the Soviets would continue south all the way to the Yangtze River. It would require a proportionally greater Soviet effort in men and material. To go beyond the Yangtze would probably require committing most of the Red Army.

It is noteworthy that the Chinese are best prepared to respond to this most severe scenario. Their traditional strengths of large scale, protracted guerrilla warfare while operating out of remote bases is fully applicable. The PLA would succeed in making Soviet losses very heavy. Factories in the south would be able to provide an adequate supply of small arms indefinitely. It would be extremely difficult for the Soviets to afford the long-term costs of such an operation.

The US is well able to support the PRC under this option. Key weapons shipments including portable anti-tank and anti-war missiles, and electronic warfare devices would be invaluable. Surprisingly, the most important item the US might supply a war-torn PRC is food. This has the added benefit of being non-provocative.

As a final matter, the US responses have generally assumed the US was not at war with the USSR. A state of war would make little difference in the amount of direct aid the US could provide China given America's global commitments. Indirectly, however, using forward bases in China (as in WWII) to attack the USSR might significantly increase the military pressure on the USSR.

b. Employment Posture

The six options outlined above are available to Soviet military planners. They represent a graduated scale that gives Soviet political leaders great flexibility should

they choose to implement force to coerce the PRC. The question remains whether there is any indication the Soviets have even considered using their military might against the PRC. Equally valid is the PRC's perception of the answer to this question.

Soviet military writing offers ample evidence that they do seriously consider a conventional warfare confrontation with the PRC. It is typical of Soviet military planners to seek guidance for future operations from past history. In the case of war with the PRC they have repeatedly referred to the example of the 1945 Manchurian campaign; "...the lessons stressed in the analyses deserve note as probable indicators of elements in current Soviet strategic planning."<sup>17</sup> The Soviets were able to shift 1.5 million men across the continent within three months. The campaign stressed mobilization, superior logistics and armament, massed forces, speed of advance over improbably difficult terrain and guerrilla assistance from local minorities. It is no coincidence that the Soviets are currently ready and able to duplicate these principles. In spite of the costs--"it costs three times as much to maintain a division in the Far East as in European Russia"<sup>18</sup>--the Soviets have built up their land forces from fifteen divisions in the 1950's, thirty in the 1970's, to fifty plus in the 1980's. The Pacific Fleet has had a commensurate build-up. Erickson notes that the military command's,

"preparations to 'reactivate' the Far Eastern theatre of military operations [created for the 1945 Manchurian campaign and then disbanded]...were well in hand towards the end of 1972...."<sup>19</sup> He stresses that, "There can be no doubt over the strategic importance of this command organization, which includes some of the ablest and most experienced senior Soviet officers...."<sup>20</sup> It is obvious that the Soviets have purposefully taken the necessary steps to ensure they possess all the conventional military power regarding conflict with PRC. Their willingness to use this was attested by Deputy Defense Minister Zakharov's statement during the 1969 crisis that the USSR might initiate a "preventative war" should it be necessary.<sup>21</sup>

The same process is evident for nuclear warfare. The Soviets actually publically aired their consideration of nuclear force during the 1969 border clashes.<sup>22</sup> This probably was intended as a reminder and warning to Mao that the USSR could not be trifled with. Yet the Soviets have since significantly upgraded their nuclear forces in Asia: "...at the moment [1981] some 26 ICBM fields run north and south of the line of the Trans-Siberian Railway, comprising SS-18s, SS-19s, SS-17s and SS-11s, as well as the modern SS-20 IRBM, aimed at both China and Japan."<sup>23</sup> The potential threat to the PRC is as great as ever despite the PRC's own nuclear development. Though the PRC now possesses the beginnings of a diversified nuclear force it

is not a fully credible deterrent. The Soviets may not be able to destroy them all. Even so, as Green and Yost say, "The point, however, is not necessarily to destroy them all but to destroy enough, so that the initial Chinese prelaunch survivability problem becomes a penetrability problem...[and the Soviets are] perfecting their ability to counter this threat."<sup>24</sup> Certainly the Chinese believe the Soviet edge. As Jencks' translations of PRC press articles reveals, "the Chinese are under no illusions that the Soviets will refrain from using their weapons of mass destruction [in case of war with the PRC]."<sup>25</sup>

The Chinese generally recognize the inadequacy of their military to deal with the Soviet threat. Jencks notes that, "By the end of the 1970's the Chinese had developed a realistically gloomy appreciation for...warfare... with the Soviet Army."<sup>26</sup> They have therefore begun taking steps to modernize their forces. In spite of this, and that they believe the threat is real, they apparently believe there is no immediate danger from the USSR. Otherwise military modernization would not be the last of the 'Four Modernizations'. Nor would the Chinese continue to concentrate their military preparations for full-scale Soviet invasion. They are only concerned with the long-term threat: "...Chinese strategic planning seems steadfastly to disregard the more limited (and likely) Soviet [six military] options...."<sup>27</sup> The Chinese tested their belief

in the reluctance of the Soviets to employ their forces with the provocative 1979 invasion of Vietnam: "We dare not touch the rear end of the tiger and he didn't turn to fight us. We think the rear end of the tiger can be touched."<sup>28</sup>

#### 4. Political-Military Constraints

The preceding discussion shows that the Soviets have superior military forces compared to the Chinese, that they can employ them at will, and that the Soviets have been prepared to do just that. It seems inconceivable that the Chinese do not feel any imminent threat.

It is a fact that the Soviets have not employed their military against the PRC. Why not, since there is clearly a highly antagonistic relationship between them? The Soviets have thrice acted militarily to control anti-Soviet movements in other countries: Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968, and Afghanistan in 1978. Judging by these actions the Soviet leaders would move forceably if it was necessary and feasible. Therefore, it has not been necessary, or it has been unfeasible, to use military force against China. Which is the determining factor? And is it still valid?

The solution to the problem has three elements: 1) the USSR has had no need to use force; 2) the USSR had no need to but might in the future; and 3) the USSR would have used force but has been deterred.

The first case contends that the USSR has no need to use force because the PRC is simply not a military threat and it will never be one. In tandem with this thought is the belief that China will fall apart of its accord; then 'properly progressive' forces could reinstitute control. The events of the 'Great Leap Forward' and 'Cultural Revolution' certainly gave credence to the belief that the USSR only had to wait out the Chinese. From its period of affiliation with the PLA, the Soviet military must be well acquainted with the limitations of the PLA. The only events the Soviets have real cause to fear is if the PRC acquires massive amounts of Western military technology and aid, or if the PRC commits itself to an anti-Soviet alliance with Japan and the US. This explains the strident Soviet protests over the possibility of either option. In retrospect, the Soviets recognize they had little cause for alarm.<sup>29</sup> Failure of the Chinese to conclude any substantial arms deal with the West confirms William Tow's estimate that, "The principle of eventually relying on indigenous Chinese expertise to provide the PRC with a more credible military force...is still paramount."<sup>30</sup> After all, the PRC similarly rejected Soviet military development aid in 1958.<sup>31</sup> Likewise, Soviet leaders must realize that there are small prospects for a successful ChineseWestern alliance when Chinese leaders have repeatedly signalled, "that Chinese foreign policy will fly the banners of

'independence' and 'non-alignment'...."32 The Soviet scholar Juri Chudodeyev acknowledges that, "In many aspects it is important for China not only to demonstrate its independence but actually not finding itself 'tailoring' the US policy."33

The second case works on the assumption that whereas the above was true till now, China's new leaders seem to have hit upon a modernity program with a fair measure for success. This reflects upon comments such as Donald Zagoria's:

...since 1978, China has undertaken what amounts to nothing less than a socioeconomic revolution at home and a widespread opening up to the West...the reforms are producing results and seem likely to lead to further economic growth....The overall result has been a virtual dismantling of many Maoist institutions and practices and the beginning of a movement toward a more open society.34

The Soviets view any strengthening of China's economy, and hence its military industrial complex, and any moves toward a more open society as an anathema. Since in this case time is on China's side, the theory is that there are, "...powerful arguments for moving against China before the present margin of Soviet military superiority slips away...."35 In this context any pattern of Chinese and Western cooperation is a precedent that worries the Soviets. They, "frequently reflect what a Moscow academic called a '1941 complex': a tendency to see collusion among the USSR's neighbors."36 United State's policy is portrayed as

attempting to use China against the USSR, such as Britain and France (and Senator Truman) tried with Nazi Germany in 1941.

The third case is that the USSR would have used force had it not been deterred from doing so. The basic concept here is that the USSR believes it cannot afford the costs of military action against China. Any such action would incur both immediate economic, material and human costs and consequential strategic and political costs. Except for the political costs, their extent would be directly proportional to the level of military intervention. It is safe to assume the Soviets could easily absorb the physical costs of military Options One and Two, and low intensity bombing (Option Three) and raiding (Option Four). But the physical costs of escalating conflict increase logarithmically--an annexation of Manchuria would severely strain the Soviet economy. The exact extent is problematical, but no Soviet leader could face the prospect with equanimity. Since 1972, the lagging Soviet economy has three times forced the leadership to slash long-term growth investment.<sup>37</sup> Many Western economists predict that, "...in time, a slow-down in consumption or defense or both becomes unavoidable."<sup>38</sup>

Political and strategic costs are even more difficult to assess, but that element of risk applies equally to Soviet calculations. Any level of military force might

cement that which the Soviets fear--a PRC/Western alliance. Propaganda value to the West (and PRC) alone would be invaluable. It would likely subvert the growing 'peace movement' in Western Europe. It would certainly guarantee permanent Chinese enmity and shatter any lingering Soviet hopes of rapprochement. In any severe confrontation, there is the risk of involving the US and NATO in a two-front war, or losing its hold on Eastern Europe. Just as disastrous would be nuclear escalation worldwide. Brezhnev's 1980 comment that, "...after the destruction of Chinese nuclear sites by our missiles, there won't be much time for the Americans to choose between the defense of their Chinese allies and peaceful coexistence with us,"<sup>39</sup> is usually quoted for its ominous aspect. But it also clearly recognizes the risk of American involvement.

##### 5. Estimating the Potential for Conflict

There is only one situation that predicts any possibility of Sino-Soviet military confrontation. That is if the Soviets try to act unilaterally to preempt a long-term Chinese threat. This case postulates the Soviet's acceptance of incredible costs and risks for what is, after all, only worst case thinking in the far future. Daniel and Jencks estimate that even with US assistance, it would take three decades to modernize the PLA enough to defend against the Soviets, much less mount an invasion.<sup>40</sup> If the last three decades are any indicator, drastic alterations of

the political climate could obviate any PRC threat at all. Additionally, China's indigenous modernization is not at all certain of success: even Zagoria believes "...substantial obstacles remain," that might result in abandoning the program.<sup>41</sup>

The probability of a low intensity conflict occurring is much greater than a high intensity conflict. But as the intensity of conflict decreases, so do the objectives of the conflict (and the potential gain). The risks involved are not necessarily lowered. Political risks and the threat of escalation remain present. The cost-benefit analysis that in the past has precluded low level conflict is equally present now and in the future. Even more so as PRC capability increases.

Whether conflict has been determined by the Soviets to be unnecessary, too costly or simply that there are better diplomatic alternative to force, the answer remains the same: the Soviets are very unlikely to initiate military conflict in the foreseeable future. There is only one serious flaw in this judgment--it assumes the actors are rational.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER IV

1. Soviet authorities reserve the right to decide what constitutes a nationality. For example, the 1959 census listed 126 nationalities. For a listing of current Soviet nationalities see Basile Kerblay, Modern Soviet Society. Trans. Rupert Swyer (NY: Pantheon, 1983), p. 40.
2. For an excellent analysis of nationality problems in the military see S. Enders Wimbush and Alex Alexiev, The Ethnic Factor in the Soviet Armed Forces, (Rand Study, R-2787/1), March, 1982.
3. Alex Alexiev, Soviet Nationalities in German Wartime Strategy, 1941-1945. (Rand Study, R-2722-NA, August, 1982), p. 33.
4. Jeremy Azrael, "The Nationality Problem in the USSR: Domestic Pressures and Foreign Policy Constraints," The Domestic Context of Soviet Foreign Policy. (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1981), p. 143.
5. Khrushchev, Op. cit., p. 264.
6. Andrei Amalrik, Will the Soviet Union Survive Until 1984? (NY: Harper and Row, 1971), p. 58.
7. Kenneth Hunt, "Sino-Soviet Theatre Force Comparisons", Douglas T. Stuart and William T. Tow, eds., China, The Soviet Union, and the West, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1982), p. 109.
8. Harlan W. Jencks, From Muskets to Missiles: Politics and Professionalism in the Chinese Army, 1945-1981, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1982), p. 158.
9. Harlan W. Jencks, "Defending China in 1982," Current History, September 1982, p. 347.
10. Harlan W. Jencks, "'People's War Under Modern Conditions': Wishful Thinking, National Suicide, or Effective Deterrent?" (China Quarterly, forthcoming, 1983), p. 3.
11. Viktor Suvorov, Inside the Soviet Army, (NY: McMillan, 1982), p. 138.

12. Kenneth Hunt, Op. Cit., p. 109.
13. Jencks, "Defending China", Op. Cit., p. 247.
14. John Erickson, "The Soviet Strategic Emplacement in Asia," Asian Affairs, February 1981, p. 14.
15. F.W. von Mellenthin and R.H.S. Stolfi with E. Sobik, NATO Under Attack, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1984), p. 78.
16. Donald C. Daniel and Harlan W. Jencks, "Soviet Military Confrontation with China: Options for the USSR, the PRC, and the United States", Conflict, Vol. 5, Number 1, (1983), pp. 57-79.
17. William C. Green and David S. Yost, "Soviet Military Options Regarding China", China, the Soviet Union and The West, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1982), p. 138.
18. Erickson, Op. Cit., p. 14.
19. Ibid., p. 11.
20. Ibid., p. 12.
21. The Washington Post, 9 October 69, p. 27.
22. Pravda, ed., 28 August 1979 (in Current Digest of the Soviet Press, Vol. XXI, No. 35, 24 September 1979), pp. 3-5.
23. Erickson, Op. Cit., p. 10.
24. Green and Yost, Op. Cit., p. 138.
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## V. SOVIET POLICY TOWARD CHINA

The nature of the conflict between the USSR and PRC conditions Soviet policy toward China. What the goals and aspirations of Soviet Chinese policy are must be ascertained by examining what Soviet policy has been, and from this anticipate where it might lead. The underlying question is whether the Soviets have been operating on an ad hoc, reactive and flexible basis or on one of adamant adherence to basic principles. Examining Soviet diplomatic maneuvers, the position of Soviet leadership and Soviet evaluations of the PRC will hopefully provide the insight necessary to determine an answer.

### A. SOVIET GESTURES OF ACCOMMODATION

This category of Soviet policies regarding China may be likened to the 'carrot' side of a 'carrot and stick' characterization. Many Soviet scholars find the 'carrot and stick' characterization particularly apt for describing Soviet policy toward China.<sup>1</sup> Why this is so is not clear, as it appears justifiable to so ascribe all diplomatic maneuvering. Nonetheless, Soviet enticements, as opposed to warnings, will be considered here.

The on-going negotiation process itself has been a forum for Soviet concessions to the Chinese. Formal negotiations are a complex process that contain many nuances. One such

attaches to the party that attempts to initiate negotiations. Depending on the circumstances, some connotations that may accrue to the initiator are: suing for peace, operating from a weak position, conceding the existence of the opponent's position and, not least, recognizing the equal status of the opponent. After the flare up of border fighting on March 2, 1969, the Soviets publicly called for negotiations three times--late March, April 12 and April 26--before the Chinese acceded. As the cycle of talks ebbed and waned, the Soviets consistently attempted to keep them going or proposed new avenues of approach. This was displayed in 1971, 1973, 1976, 1979 and 1981. Now, the USSR was clearly not in the position of the weak supplicant. This made their gestures all the more magnanimous. It made negotiations possible (since the Chinese were weaker, they could not have begun the process without doing harm to their position), and simultaneously soothed the Chinese. But the repeated gestures by Moscow in itself gives credence to the strength of the Chinese position. The Soviets have in addition consented in principle to Chinese counter-proposals--as in 1971 when they agreed to a statement of the border's status quo and in 1982 about mutual troop reductions along the border--that in effect were tacit concessions over prior Soviet positions. The Soviets had also indicated the importance they attached to the talks, and could be interpreted as a gesture of respect to the Chinese, by

naming Vasily Kuznetsov, the second highest official in their Foreign Ministry, to head their delegation.

As opposed to symbolic gestures, the Soviets have also proposed measures for accommodation in their own right. The primary example of this is the non-aggression treaty the Soviets first proposed in 1971 and have reiterated frequently since. Theoretically, such a treaty should assuage Chinese fears of their (as the Chinese say) imperialistic and hegemonial neighbor. Another index of relaxation of tensions is the settlement of bi-national agreements other than those in question. The best example of this is the joint Sino-Soviet Commission for Navigation on Boundary Rivers. Again on Soviet initiative, the Commission has met, albeit irregularly, and reached agreement on technical matters of border river navigation. Although such agreements are obviously mutual, they are indicative of Soviet willingness to settle some matters peaceably.

The Soviets have also availed themselves of technically non-political conciliatory gestures. As early as September, 1970, they reported 'local' trade agreements by provincial officials with the Chinese.<sup>2</sup> This and later such agreements were certainly sanctioned by the central government. The central governments themselves gradually negotiated trade agreements beginning in November, 1970. Soviet commercial assistance to the PRC reached a quarter of the

1960 (the year the Soviets had severed all trade agreements with China) volume by 1970, and that figure was doubled in 1981.

Perhaps the most public gesture of dampened hostilities is in the field of propaganda. Given the steady stream of polemics directed against the PRC, any cessation of over a few months duration gives an immediate signal to the Chinese that the Soviets are particularly interested in good relations. This has happened six times since the 1960 Sino-Soviet clash: in late 1969, 1971, 1976, 1979, 1981, and 1982. Since the Chinese have not reciprocated in like fashion, this is tantamount to a unilateral Soviet concession.

### 3. SOVIET SIGNALS OF INTIMIDATION

The previous heading contains ample indicators of Soviet employment of the 'carrot' side of diplomacy. This section considers those actions distinctly not intended for goodwill. 'Gesture' can also imply 'pretext'. The accommodating moves discussed above may also be self-serving to the Soviets.

The inception of the dispute has not tempered Soviet policies to appease the Chinese. The principal motive of these policies may not have been directed at the PRC, but they have an anti-Chinese content. One of the first examples of this is the issue of nuclear non-proliferation. As early as 1958, the Chinese made it clear to the Soviets

that they would not support Moscow on the nuclear test ban treaty then being negotiated with the US and U.K. Moscow's later support for expanding the test ban (signed in 1963) to non-proliferation incensed the Chinese, who considered such an action to be directed at them and a violation of their sovereignty. The Soviets persisted, and signed the treaty in 1968.

Another area of a long standing anti-Chinese policy is minority nationalities. The Chinese territory in the Sino-Soviet border regions is sparsely populated, but this population is largely non-Han. The Czars and Soviets both played upon the Chinese programs of Sinification to foment discontent in the border regions. In 1970, the Soviets went so far as to openly promote a 'Free Turkestan' movement for the liberation of Xinjiang province from the PRC.<sup>3</sup> The Chinese claim the Soviets subverted the 200,000 Uigurs who fled to the USSR and are even now using them to incite the Moslem peoples of China.

The Soviets have also made a concerted effort to isolate the Chinese in the international system, in both the socialist and non-socialist arenas. The character of Soviet alliances within the socialist camp since the dispute illustrates this. The Soviet-Mongolian People's Republic (MPR) in 1966, Soviet-Czechoslovakian (1970), and Soviet-Vietnamese (1978) treaties all have an anti-Chinese character.<sup>4</sup> This is displayed by two common traits:

1) they give juridical force to the principle of Soviet intervention; and 2) they are alliances against Chinese aggression. As a socialist country in its own eyes--and in Soviet--the PRC obviously does not counterance Soviet intervention in either the treaties or as elaborated in the Brezhnev Doctrine (1968). The anti-Chinese military content of the treaties derives from their unlimited character. This is not quite as vague as it sounds. Prior to 1966, all Soviet treaties were specifically directed at Communist or capitalist countries. Lifting this restriction to include all countries, including socialist, has ominous implications for the PRC. This is especially true in the MPR's case. Since the MPR borders no countries other than the USSR and PRC, its treaty with the USSR is almost blatantly anti-Chinese.

The Soviets have made recurrent attempts to construct a general anti-Chinese agreement as well. Soviet proposals for an Asian Collective Security System from the first were regarded as anti-Chinese by all the member states concerned, and hence rejected. The Soviets have made it more obvious since 1976, when the Soviet proposals suggested the exclusion of the PRC. In spite of the lack of success of the proposals, they are no less effective in portraying Soviet discontent with the PRC.

The Soviet military has been an effective instrument in Soviet policy regarding China. The steady build-up of the

army along the border--both in numbers and quality--worries the Chinese. The Soviet military always had a relative advantage over the Chinese along the border. The PRC cannot escape the threat implied by Moscow as it has upgraded its forces. This includes the latest addition of two Class I airborne divisions in 1981 as well as the massive infusion after the 1969 border clashes. The Soviet navy has added another dimension to the military threat since 1973. February of that year began the continuous deployment seen since in the South China Sea and other waters off the PRC. The PRC cannot effectively counter either of these threats.

Then there are those items mentioned as accommodations that are possible of additional interpretations. Moscow's image as the initiator in the negotiation process has also given an image as the reasonable and peace-loving participant. This has been useful in garnering support for the Soviet view among other members of the world socialist movement. Nor has it meant that the Soviets necessarily have given up any advantage whatsoever in the negotiation process. The concessions the Soviets have made, although genuine, have all been minor and on specific issues. There has been no relenting over the principal obstacle, an agenda. "Russian strategy has been to start with an 'agreement on general principles,' allowing 'intractable' specific issues to be taken up subsequently--whether they be resolved or remain unsettled."<sup>5</sup> The Soviets have been successful

at this. They have succeeded in achieving an exchange of ambassadors (1966) and in getting the character of the talks shifted from the border itself to normalization. The minor changes they have espoused on individual issues have been minor indeed. For instance, the latest Soviet proposal on troop reductions was not only unofficial, but actually a statement that such reductions might be possible to negotiate. They did not agree to negotiate reductions. In fact, no reductions were negotiated. Additionally, the proposals themselves may only seem innocuous. As pointed out elsewhere, a Chinese concession on a nonaggression treaty could have disastrous effects on internal Chinese politics. The status of the Soviet negotiator has also changed. Kuznetsov was replaced by Leonid F. Ilyichev in late 1970, a lower ranking Deputy Foreign Minister in the Far East Department of the Foreign Ministry. In the sphere of propaganda, it must be remembered that polemics have always begun again. Finally, fostering Chinese dependence on Soviet trade would provide the Soviets with a useful lever over China.

Other examples of the tough side of Soviet diplomacy are the out-of-hand rejection of a Chinese proposal for a non-aggression treaty in 1974 (it contained objectionable clauses such as 'mutual force reductions'...),<sup>6</sup> Soviet attempts to subvert the Chinese code word 'hegemonism' in the 1979 negotiations, and the political pressure the

Soviets placed on Japan not to sign the 1978 Sino-Japanese Treaty.

Such an unrelenting posture in Soviet diplomacy accords well with the Soviet ideological position as mentioned earlier. It is the Chinese who must make the major concessions before their relations can be normalized.

#### C. THE VIEW WITHIN THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP

When considering the view of individual Soviet leaders on Soviet policy toward China great liberties have to be taken with the information available. It is so scant that only the most general conclusions can be reached, and those only by inference.

Perhaps the single most important piece of evidence is the almost complete unanimity, and constancy, of the leadership's public statements since 1969. There is no waffling on the nature of the dispute. The Chinese were at fault, are at fault and will be at fault (unless they recant). Polemical and ideological castigations today are virtually identical with those of a decade ago, barring changes in tone that vary with the tenor of international events. Oleg B. Rakhmanin, a very influential Soviet Sinologist, published a 1982 article that could have lifted its criticism of China right out of his official (Soviet) history of Sino-Soviet relations published in 1971.<sup>7</sup> As pointed out above, neither has the Soviet position on the negotiations

changed. The gist of all this was stated by Rakhranin in his article, "It is up to China to take initiatives to improve relations; the Soviet Union has done all it can."<sup>8</sup> The significance of this consistency of views may not be apparent unless one considers the tremendous amount of material on China published in the USSR. It all could not be so constant, over so long a time, except as a reflection of genuine unanimity in the top leadership. There are no tentative proposals for a change in policy (as is seen in other areas of foreign policy or military affairs), or any critiques of past Soviet policy. Khrushchev's words are as valid today as they were when he said of Soviet Chinese policy, "...I gather our government's position hasn't changed. In fact, I think today the Soviet Union is pursuing the same policies which were conducted when I was head of the government and the party".<sup>9</sup> In fact, the only exception this writer has noted is Suslov's 1979 suggestion that the PRC is no longer a socialist country.<sup>10</sup> He was later overruled by Brezhnev.<sup>11</sup> Little else could be as indicative of the hard line toward China that seems to be held by all the top Soviet leaders.

Given that there are few, if any, disparities of view among Soviet leaders on their Chinese policy, what can be determined by the effect of their position on their careers? The evidence is again sketchy. In this regard, Donald Zagoria makes an interesting statement, "...every new Soviet

leader since Stalin's death has attached a high priority to trying to improve relations with China."<sup>12</sup> It is a sweeping statement that is not supported by much evidence. It is generally conceded that Khrushchev's Beijing visit in October, 1954, demonstrated his priority over Malenkov. Yet, this only demonstrates the utility of an important ally for symbolic importance. Despite his later assertions that the seeds of the dispute lay with Stalin's policies, Khrushchev did not significantly alter those policies. The dispute with China exacerbated under Khrushchev exactly because he subordinated relations with the PRC to other Soviet goals. On Brezhnev's succession in October, 1964, Mao apparently had hopes of an improvement in relations. The hope was almost immediately dashed by Chou En-Lai's futile Moscow visit the succeeding month, and confirmed by breaking off of the boundary negotiations Khrushchev initiated. As for Andropov, his tenure marked the beginning of a new round of polemics after one of the seemingly most promising lulls since the dispute began. Where are the Soviet efforts to improve relations Zagoria implies? If anything, each succession has displayed the Soviet trend of a hard-line status quo regarding Soviet Chinese policy.

Another recognizable figure in the Soviet leadership is their chief delegate in the talks, Leonid Ilyichev. His thirteen-year tenure is typical of the stability of Soviet leadership, but also testifies to his successful performance

in protecting Soviet interests. What has more bearing is his prior career. In 1960, he was the head of the Soviet Central Committee agitation and propaganda sector for non-Russian Republics. He was an instrumental figure in devising the massive ideological campaign launched in 1960 to justify Khrushchev's policies and prevent domestic deterioration.<sup>13</sup> He was recognized as Khrushchev's chief ideologist at the time of the succession, and thereafter promoted to Deputy Foreign Minister. The point is twofold. The USSR staffed the post with a party ideologist, which is a testament to the importance of ideology in the dispute. And Ilyichev had helped formulate Khrushchev's policies but was nonetheless trusted with a rather sensitive post. His ideology could not have been suspect, and was appropriate for the mission. Finally, he was recently promoted within the ranks of the Deputy Foreign Ministers.

The thrust of the evidence all lies in one direction. Soviet leadership since the inception of the dispute has been in agreement about the policies to pursue with the PRC, and has consistently applied those policies. They have implemented a tough, hard line with China's leaders and only deviate from it for minor tactical gains.

#### D. THE SOVIET VIEW OF PRC POLITICAL TRENDS

In formulating their China strategy, Soviet leaders must consider the Chinese side of the equation. They must

structure their position in accordance with their evaluation of the political situation in China so that they may achieve the best results. This poses Soviet leadership much the same problems Western observers have. Soviet leaders from Brezhnev on down have mentioned the difficulty in getting accurate information about events in China. They pay great attention to events in China, but the element of uncertainty inhibits their conclusions.

The Soviets see domestic policy as the determinant of PRC foreign policy. The links are substantial and pervasive. During the initial stages of the dispute, the Soviets believed that Mao and Maoism were the obstacles to normal relations. It was Mao's egotism and xenophobia that led him to eschew the Soviet political model, and hence Soviet military and economic aid. Of course, this resulted in the trampling of pro-Soviet elements within the Party and military. There is some truth to this. There was a relatively open debate within the Chinese leadership 1957-1958 that resulted in rejecting Soviet assistance in building up the military on the grounds that it would create an unwanted dependence on the USSR. This was soon extended to the economic sphere as well (1960). Regardless, the Soviets firmly believe the attacks on the USSR and Soviet policies were calculated to, "...bring major dividends to China's international politics [while not] bringing much harm to the PRC in the domestic front."<sup>14</sup> Thus the Soviets were confounded

when the death of Mao did not bring about a reversal of Chinese policy under Hua. The advent of Deng seemed more reasonable to them, but again a distinct break with Maoism has not resulted in a more pro-Soviet policy, only a moderation of tension. The Soviets are nothing if not tenacious, and rather than reverse their interpretation of the dispute place their hopes in what they see as contradictory policies in China.

The Soviets firmly believe that Mao's personal status and prestige were required to allow the CCP leadership to impose his policies on China. Any Maoist policies without Mao create a 'crisis of confidence' among the Chinese people.<sup>15</sup> In addition, the new Chinese leaders admit the deplorable state of China's economy. This is tantamount to official recognition of the negative results of Maoism associated with socialism. So, "...propaganda attacks on the USSR now can be construed with attack on the rightfulness of socialism."<sup>16</sup> Chinese leaders can continue this policy only at their peril. (Incidentally, this 'explains' the recent moderation of anti-Soviet polemics.)

Another Chinese internal 'contradiction' results from the importance now given to improving the Chinese economy. The prime goal is now to restore the economy. To succeed will require outside help. The PRC now turns to the West for such assistance, but this will only add to instability. This is because 1) the PRC is not ready for the

technological and economic dependence on the West which will result; and 2) there is a strong political faction opposed to the present ideological bias towards the West.<sup>17</sup> The stability of the leadership will fall apart if this continues.

The Soviets believe that there will be an inevitable growth of pro-Soviet factions that will overturn the anti-Soviet bias in Chinese policy. The alternative--China's rejection of socialism--is impossible, in the Soviet view, because of China's historical political traditions and culture.<sup>18</sup>

In the meantime, the Soviets admit that the anti-Soviet bias will continue until the contradictions are resolved. In spite of Deng's break with overt Maoism, Oleg Rakhranin, first deputy head of the Central Committee's Department for Relations with Socialist and Workers' Parties, states:

The ideological orientation now underway in China is simply designed to make Maoism more flexible, while retaining its essence of Sinified Marxism plus a hegemonistic foreign policy and anti-Sovietism. The changes in China's domestic policy are not significant and they are aimed at providing a more dependable basis for Beijing's anti-Sovietism.<sup>19</sup>

The uncertainty principle, and past differences between Soviet expectations drawn from their ideology and reality, lead the Soviets to hedge their bets. Usually found under headings of remaining Maoist tendencies, or Western anti-Soviet imperialism, are factors which mitigate the Chinese impulse to return to the Soviet sphere. The PRC has been a

socialist country for thirty years, true, but more than two-thirds of that time has created a tradition of anti-Sovietism. Pro-Soviet factions have been 'decimated' by frequent purges, especially during the cultural revolution. The resurgence of an anti-Western faction does not necessarily equate to a pro-Soviet faction. Most important of all is the dawning realization that an independent Chinese foreign policy is not necessarily a hold-over from Maoism. The Chinese seem to believe it is in their national interest to keep their freedom of maneuver! These all indicate that it might be a long time before the contradictions materialize....

Chinese foreign policy has given the Soviets some concern, and as far as they are concerned, exacerbated the nature of the dispute. The trend in Chinese foreign policy has been for better relations with the West. Continued Chinese association with the West is an anathema to the Soviets.

The first shock to the Soviets was the PRC's reconciliation with the US. The Soviet press picked up on the impending US/PRC detente early in 1971, well before Kissinger's secret visit to China. Ever since the improvement in American and Chinese relations has been a thorn in the side of the Soviets. The improvement in relations is variously characterized as a US ploy to threaten the Soviets via a dangerous 'puppet' (the '1941 complex') or a Chinese move to

threaten the USSR with a two-front war. In either case, the Soviets perceive an American and Chinese alliance as a very serious threat to their security. After Nixon's 1972 Beijing visit, there was a perceptible hardening in Soviet propaganda that was continued further after US and PRC relations were normalized in 1979. Other than Soviet hope in the long-term contradiction between a communist/capitalist alliance, the Soviets place their faith in the belief that US aid to the PRC in the amounts necessary is not credible.<sup>20</sup> The other single most disturbing event to the Soviets is the successful negotiation of the Sino-Japanese Treaty in 1978, in the face of stiff Soviet pressure to the contrary. The Soviets found it incredible that the Chinese placed their antipathy to the Japanese aside in favor of increased commercial contacts. But the Soviets were well aware of the benefits the dynamic and advanced Japanese economy could confer to the Chinese, as the Soviets have long wooed the Japanese for much the same reasons. Thus the treaty was a double affront to the Soviets: it provides the potential to develop the Chinese into an even more worrisome threat, and it was a public coup by the PRC over the Soviets.

What the Soviets fear most, however, is a melding of the above two sets of circumstances. An American, Japanese and Chinese alliance would pose a disastrous threat to the USSR. Combined with the existence of Western Europe to their west,

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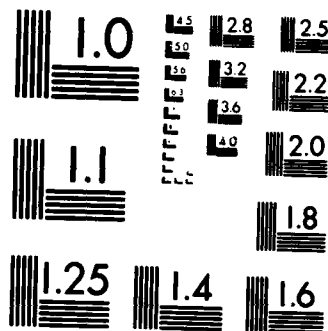
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the Soviets would be surrounded by the world's most powerful states. As William Hyland says, "No Soviet leader in his right mind would passively watch the growth of Chinese power sponsored by the United States, Japan and Western Europe."<sup>21</sup> Such an alliance is beyond doubt what the Soviets fear most, and is what they direct much of their foreign policy to prevent.

Quite simply, the Soviets: do not trust the Chinese, believe they manifest a strong anti-Soviet bias, and foresee no change in this relationship for some time. Dieler confirms this, "Indeed, there exists a genuine belief among the Soviet leaders and the population as a whole that the Chinese are committed to a long-term, aggressive, anti-Soviet policy."<sup>22</sup>

#### E. EVALUATION OF SOVIET POLICY ALTERNATIVES TOWARD CHINA

The Soviets have four options they may pursue in their relations with China: rapprochement, detente, the status quo, and war. They will be considered in this order.

Rapprochement, or friendly relations, would provide benefits to the Soviets other than avoiding the risk of war. Under the conditions Moscow has already set for such a circumstance, it would gain a new 'client' state subservient to its wishes. This would solidify the world communist movement and be a strong lever against the US. As the Soviets face a declining economy and labor pool, a decrease in

tension that could allow demobilizing their eastern border would be very welcome. But rapprochement would also bring problems. The PRC is too strong a state to be completely subservient. To prevent another, possibly permanent, rift the Soviets would have to make concessions to their junior partner. This would inevitably generate friction that could de-stabilize the Soviet leadership. Worse, the Soviet economy is already struggling, and the strains of supporting an undeveloped country the size of China could be very serious. Finally, the Soviets would have to work strenuously to overcome their deep-seated suspicions of the Chinese before rapprochement could work. It is doubtful whether they would even try to do this, much less be capable of it.

The relaxing of tensions characterized by 'detente' would be a much easier proposition to conclude. Again, the risk of war is lessened, and some border de-mobilization might be possible. It would not require complete capitulation by the Chinese, and hence would be much more flexible. Nor need 'detente' incur economic support beyond reasonable bounds. The possibilities of a 'China card' to use against the US would be weaker, but still there. It would entail minimal cultural interaction and not provoke Russian xenophobia. This is an excellent set of benefits. The major offset is that the PRC would retain too much autonomy. The Soviets would be forced to tacitly accept policies that they might strenuously object to, such as continued Western

economic aid to a country not certainly their ally. This would again be a difficult conflict to accept by the Soviet leadership.

The status quo as it is now might be very acceptable to the Soviets. The risk of war is relatively low, and they would have to make no compromises to maintain it. The latter is a very strong point. The USSR is lacking very little in the way of natural resources, and would not gain very much else with increased trade with China above current levels. The PRC is still an undeveloped country that faces enormous difficulties before it can challenge and rival Soviet power. It may well be that China's problems are insurmountable. After the first shock of American and Japanese normalization with the PRC, the Soviets perceive relatively little improvement since. Their fears of a PRC/US/Japanese alliance may never materialize. Since doing nothing will maintain the status quo, it certainly has the best chance of continuing.

The final solution to the Chinese problem is also fraught with the most dangers. The only way to test the full strength of China's military is to test it. Such a test could literally mean failure, especially if the US entered on a two-front war. The cost to the Soviets would be phenomenal, and given the existing internal strains (the economy, minority nationalism, weak loyalties in Eastern Europe), the USSR would risk internal destruction. Any

theory that the Soviet Union is preparing for an attack on the PRC to provide itself with the security of a buffer zone, as advocated by Edward Luttwak and considered by William Kennedy, is not tenable.<sup>23</sup>

NOTES FOR CHAPTER V

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## VI. CONCLUSION

The history of Sino-Soviet relations has more often than not been marked with strife and tension. Czarist Russia expanded in Asia mostly at China's expense. There was only a brief hiatus in conflict after the Soviets wrested power from the Czars. Once China consolidated itself under the Communists, a brief period of friendly relations existed. But irreconcilable differences in ideology and national interest soon forced these two states back into conflict. This reached the extent of armed border clashes in 1969. Over the next decade and a half tensions gradually relaxed as both sides perceived the dangers of war too great to risk. But the fundamental ideological and national interest differences remain.

The Soviets believe their foreign and domestic policy is a proper blend of communist ideology (as they have interpreted it) and their national interest. Indeed, they do not even recognize a difference, and consider them identical concepts. The contradictions that occur are only surface contradictions of a tactical nature. The strategical principles that underlie the ideological foundations of their policies cannot be tampered with without regressing on the socialist path. The self-evident success of the Soviet

model confirms its propriety for the entire world communist movement.

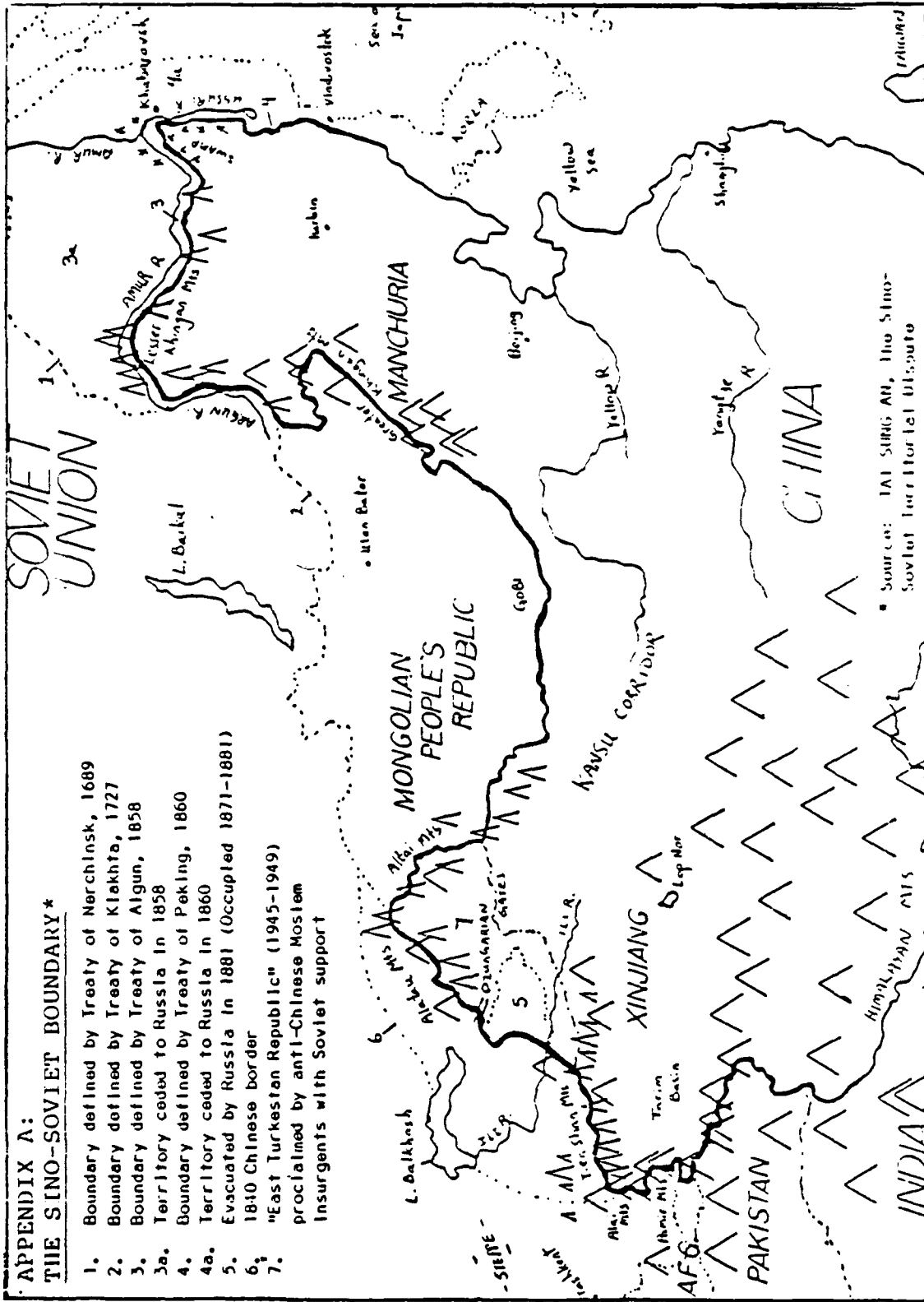
Regretfully, the PRC has chosen to deviate from this model. The result was predictable. From the moment the Chinese began to accept incorrect interpretations of Marxism-Leninism, their development was arrested, and even regressed. Their economy is a shambles, the military was weakened, and internal political instability resulted. This is unfortunate, but the serious problem is that the misguided Chinese Communists have also impeded the progress of the Soviet Union. By giving way to Maoism and emotional xenophobia they have falsely presented the USSR as a threat to their sovereignty and communism in general. Though undeveloped, the PRC is too large, populous and potentially powerful to ignore when it consciously works contrary to Soviet policy, and even threatens military action.

Therefore, the Soviet Union has reacted firmly against the PRC. Its military forces along the border have been strengthened to forestall any rash moves by the Chinese. Meanwhile, it has constructed its foreign policy to contain and isolate the Chinese until they realize, in the long term, the folly of their ways.

Sino-Soviet relations will most likely continue as they are. The Soviets would welcome an improvement in relations, but it must be on their terms. They cannot violate the ideological principles of their stance without removing the

justification for their leadership. Since the Chinese are in much the same position, and this fact was the primary contributor to beginning the dispute, rapprochement is unlikely. The possibility of detente suffers from this to a lesser degree, but suffer it does. This explains why although the Soviets would like improved relations, they have done very little to achieve them. Soviet policy is as firmly anti-Chinese as they believe the PRC's is anti-Soviet.

Since the Soviets will not compromise to ameliorate the very real threat they perceive posed by the PRC, and worse its potential when developed by Western aid, they have consistently acted to intimidate China by strength. This policy is only offset by tactical concessions necessary to maintain the relaxed tensions acceptable by both parties, and no more. In the long run, no more is needed, since the forces of history will ensure Soviet success.



**APPENDIX A:  
THE SINO-SOVIET BOUNDARY \***

1. Boundary defined by Treaty of Nerchinsk, 1689
2. Boundary defined by Treaty of Kiakhta, 1727
3. Boundary defined by Treaty of Aigun, 1858
- 3a. Territory ceded to Russia in 1858
4. Boundary defined by Treaty of Peking, 1860
- 4a. Territory ceded to Russia in 1860
5. Evacuated by Russia in 1881 (Occupied 1871-1881)
6. 1840 Chinese border
7. "East Turkestan Republic" (1945-1949) proclaimed by anti-Chinese Moslem insurgents with Soviet support

\* Sources: IAI SURG AIR, The Sino-Soviet Territorial Dispute

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