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THESIS

**CHINA AND THE SPLITTING OF ALLIANCES:
HISTORIC CASES AND IMPLICATIONS FOR NORTH
KOREA**

by

Joseph L. Pruce, V

March 2014

Thesis Advisor:
Second Reader:

Christopher Twomey
Michael Glosny

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IMPLICATIONS FOR NORTH KOREA**

Joseph L. Pruce, V
Lieutenant, United States Navy
B.A., Virginia Military Institute, 2005

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March 2014**

Author: Joseph L. Pruce, V

Approved by: Christopher Twomey
Thesis Advisor

Michael Glosny
Second Reader

Mohammed Hafez
Chair, Department of National Security Affairs

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ABSTRACT

What causes alliances to split between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and its allies and how can this information be used to predict Beijing's relationship with North Korea? Since its founding in 1949, the PRC has become engaged in several alliances, formal and informal; however, the majority of these friendships fell to the wayside. The Soviet Union, Mongolia, and North Vietnam all gained and lost China as an ally. This thesis identifies which factors led to the deterioration and splitting of these alliances. It argues that factors concerning national sovereignty have a heavy significance when combined with the involvement of another competitive power. The explanations for the collapse of these historical alliances provide critical insight into China's current friendship with North Korea. This thesis shows that the conditions that led to alliance splits in the historical cases are not present in the current relationship with North Korea. It then concludes that the Sino-North Korean alliance will remain viable for the foreseeable future.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|-------|--|
| CCP | Chinese Communist Party |
| CPSU | Communist Party of the Soviet Union |
| CPVEF | Chinese People's Volunteer Engineering Force |
| DPRK | Democratic People's Republic of Korea |
| DRV | Democratic Republic of Vietnam |
| ICP | Indochinese Communist Party |
| IR | international relations |
| KMT | Kuomintang Party |
| MPR | Mongolian People's Republic |
| MPRP | Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party |
| NATO | North Atlantic Treaty Organization |
| NSC | National Security Council |
| PRC | People's Republic of China |
| ROC | Republic of China (Chinese Nationalist Government) |
| SEATO | Southeast Asian Treaty Organization |
| U.S. | United States |
| USA | United States of America |
| USSR | Union of Soviet Socialist Republics |

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION

This thesis examines the factors that have caused China and its allies to split from each other in the hopes of deepening our understanding of the factors that might lead to a rupture in Sino-North Korean relations in the future. Specifically, what led to the deterioration and splitting of Beijing's formal and informal alliances since the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949? This thesis explores three historic PRC alliance cases, the Soviet Union, Mongolia, and North Vietnam, while addressing the following questions over a series of five chapters.

- First, why did China and the Soviet Union split from their 14 February 1950 alliance?
- Second, why did China's 1950s amity with Mongolia falter, as shown through the January 1966 Soviet-Mongolian pact?
- Third, why did China terminate support to North Vietnam during its war of unification by 1974 and then invade a united communist Vietnam on 17 February 1979?
- Fourth, has a pattern developed over these cases?
- Finally, does the current relationship with North Korea share similarities with any of these cases and give insight into the future of this alliance?

To frame these questions, this thesis draws upon Stephen Walt's definition of an alliance as a "formal or informal commitment for security cooperation between two or more states."¹ Also, "the defining feature of any alliance is a commitment for mutual military support against some external actor(s) in some specified set of circumstances."² In adopting this definition, the thesis broadens to include states that had informal arrangements that exhibited similar characteristics to formal alliances. Additionally, this thesis describes splits as phased events that include a period of deterioration followed by alliance collapse.

¹ Stephen Walt, "Why Alliances Endure or Collapse," *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy* 39, no. 1 (1997), 157.

² Ibid.

Upon addressing these questions, the thesis discovers that two factors combined to produce PRC alliance splits. A junior partner's concern for some aspect of national sovereignty provided the first element. This motivated the junior partner into accepting aid and influence from a willing and able competitive power. These two factors led to China's fear of encroachment into its near periphery and resulted in China splitting from its junior allies. The thesis then determines that similar conditions do not exist with the PRC's present-day North Korean ally. This situation and other motivating factors will maintain the Sino-North Korean alliance for the foreseeable future.

B. IMPORTANCE

U.S. officials have expressed the need to refocus America's attention on the Asia-Pacific. This region has seen the largest economic growth in recent history and is also the location most affected by the rise of China's industrial, military, and diplomatic power. Some of Asia's most contentious areas involve states, such as Pakistan, Myanmar, and North Korea, which are formally or informally aligned with the PRC. As China grows and the United States becomes more entwined in the region, understanding China's alliances will have increasing importance.

To meet this challenge, U.S. analysts must understand the sources of strength and durability of the PRC's alliances. This comprehension then allows them to determine the extent of Chinese power in East Asia. Allies may act as long-term extensions of PRC influence or they may act as temporary bedfellows. If analysts can determine the resilience of these alliances, they can understand how much partnerships such as the Sino-North Korean relationship really contribute to China's overall strength.

To do so, U.S. analysts must understand the factors that undermine these friendships by avoiding assumptions and examining patterns. During the early years of the Cold War, China's alliances with the Soviet Union, Mongolia, and North Vietnam led many analysts to assume that the PRC belonged to a monolithic communist force.³ The

³ S. Nelson Drew, ed., *NSC-68: Forging the Strategy of Containment* (Washington DC: National Defense University, 1994), 25.

mainstream consensus in the U.S. intelligence community incorrectly prescribed to this assessment for over 10 years.⁴ Eventually fissures in these partnerships became overt and led to a belated U.S. recognition of power limits in the communist bloc. Although the timing and circumstances of these example cases may differ from the current North Korean relationship, they still provide critical insight. From understanding these examples, analysts can either anticipate alliance deterioration or continuity in partnerships that project PRC policies. This analytic success would then reward policymakers with better options and leverage when dealing with Beijing or Pyongyang.

North Korea has remained a Chinese ally since 1950 and its post-Cold War economic deprivation has made this state extremely dependent on Chinese aid.⁵ Despite this, Pyongyang sometimes acts against Beijing's interests. Over the past decade, it has conducted several nuclear tests and missile launches. These actions have made this state Northeast Asia's primary security threat and increasingly complicate China's security position. For example, U.S.-Republic of Korea (ROK)⁶ and U.S.-Japan⁷ missile defense cooperation has strengthened as a result. Short of complete alliance collapse, the significant distancing of this relationship, as seen with other former allies, could readjust North Korea's calculus and U.S. methods in dealing with the rogue state.

Deciphering the factors that undermined China's relationships with its previous partners may provide the United States diplomatic leverage when dealing with North Korea. For example, policymakers can better comprehend the conditions under which China's willingness to support a volatile Pyongyang will remain strong. This in turn offers opportunities to exploit fissures in their relationship and promote U.S. policy.

⁴ Harold P. Ford, *Calling the Sino-Soviet Split* (Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency Center for the Study of Intelligence, 1999), 57.

⁵ Dick K. Nanto and Mark E. Manyin, *China-North Korea Relations* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2011), 99.

⁶ Defense Security Cooperation Agency, *The Republic of Korea—Patriot Anti-Tactical Missiles* (Washington, DC: Defense Security Cooperation Agency 2013), <http://www.dsca.mil/major-arms-sales/republic-korea-patriot-anti-tactical-missiles>.

⁷ Defense Security Cooperation Agency, *Japan—AEGIS Weapon System Upgrade* (Washington, DC: Defense Security Cooperation Agency, 2012), <http://www.dsca.mil/major-arms-sales/japan-%E2%80%93-aegis-weapon-system-upgrade>.

Although the ability to drive a wedge between these two may be an extreme outcome, if ideal, an understanding of China's alliance weaknesses could have the simple benefit of revealing why China continues to sponsor allies who may appear more of a liability than an asset.

C. LITERATURE REVIEW

To address this topic, this thesis draws on literature concerning historic PRC alliances, and international relations (IR) theories. Some cases have a greater abundance of works available for sourcing than others. For the Sino-Soviet and Sino-North Vietnamese cases, extensive material exists to describe the history and nature of these breakdowns. For example, the split between Moscow and Beijing had tectonic implications for great power dynamics during the Cold War and, as a result, an extensive amount of analysis exists for examination. In contrast, the Sino-Mongolian alliance, receives less attention and research because of its low impact on the Cold War political environment. Yet the thesis can still effectively draw upon the available literature and assign split-causing factors to three general categories: great power politics, political ideology, and national sovereignty.

1. Great Power Politics: Discussions in Literature

This thesis uses great power politics as a broad category to include threat balancing and great power competition for smaller allies. Some IR scholars identify threat balancing as a factor driving alliance breakdowns; if a member of an alliance perceives a growing threat from its partner, it will be inclined to split. While addressing this topic, Walt concludes that threat perceptions based off of aggregate power, proximate power, offensive power, and offensive intentions cause alliances to form or break.⁸ Like the work of IR scholars, such as John Mearsheimer, this thesis uses the database Correlates of War Project to provide a basis of standards for evaluating power and

⁸ Stephen Walt, "Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power," *International Security* 9, no. 4 (1985), 9.

applying it to Walt's theory.⁹ As such, balance of threat applies well to the Sino-Soviet split between two great powers. It becomes, however, less applicable to the breaks between a great power and a smaller state where the ratio of power is highly disproportionate. With these cases, great power politics manifests itself through competition with China for influence over the smaller ally.

Several history scholars focus on the importance of this competition for small allies. They argue that China sought to compete with other great powers for a junior ally and when Beijing failed, they abandoned the ally. For example, in the North Vietnam case, Robert Ross concludes that China aimed to limit the influence of outside great powers in Southeast Asia.¹⁰ This began with French and later U.S. involvement in the region. Through the 1950s and 1960s, China supported North Vietnamese resistance against these two powers as a means to limit their influence.¹¹ Once the United States began to withdraw, China saw the increased Soviet presence in the region as a threat and this led to a row with Hanoi. Qiang Zhai supports this assessment and sees the 1972 Sino-U.S. rapprochement as China's reaction to growing Soviet influence in its near periphery.¹² Additionally, these assessments support Timothy Crawford's IR theories on how a third power can drive a wedge between allies¹³ and Glenn Snyder's emphasis on the ability of non-substitutable aid to do so.¹⁴ Thus this literature becomes important in the North Korean case as China may be attempting to preclude other powers from accessing Pyongyang.

⁹ Douglas Lemke, "Great Powers in the Post-Cold War World: A Power Transition Perspective," in *Balance of Power: Theory and Practice in the 21st Century*, eds. T. V. Paul, James J. Wirtz and Michael Fortmann (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), 58.

¹⁰ Robert S. Ross, *The Indochina Tangle: China's Vietnam Policy, 1975-1979* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1988), 2-3.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹² Qiang Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 194.

¹³ Timothy W. Crawford, "Preventing Enemy Coalitions: How Wedge Strategies Shape Power Politics," *International Security* 35, no. 4 (2011), 159-161.

¹⁴ Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), 168.

2. Political Ideology: Discussions in Literature

This thesis uses Mark Haas's definition of political ideology as "the principles upon which a leadership group attempts to legitimate its claim to rule."¹⁵ It also notes how both historical and IR literature identify how allies' debates over political ideology may cause legitimacy concerns and splitting. Walt suggests that shared ideologies may have a negative effect on authoritarian alliances because a single hierarchical leader threatens the legitimacy of other leaders in the same movement.¹⁶ This leads to inevitable quarreling between the allies that may then result in splitting.¹⁷ Similarly, Haas argues that the greater the ideological divide between state leaders, the greater potential for elevated threat perceptions.¹⁸

Chen Jian's historical works concur with these IR arguments as Soviet destalinization undermined the legitimacy of Mao Zedong's domestic, economic, and military policies.¹⁹ To emphasize the ideological tensions in this case, former British intelligence officer²⁰ Edward Crankshaw presents a list of multi-sourced reminiscences of Khrushchev as released by the Soviet Union. This provides a firsthand source of Moscow's assessment on the split.²¹ In this compilation of statements, the split derives from Mao's value of Stalinism, his desire to lead the world communist movement, and his noncompliance with Soviet policy.²² In the modern North Korean case, Cha also discusses ideology. For him, little suggests that recent North Korean trends toward

¹⁵ Mark L. Haas, *The Ideological Origins of Great Power Politics: 1789–1989* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), 5.

¹⁶ Walt, "Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power," 21.

¹⁷ Walt, "Why Alliances Endure or Collapse," 163.

¹⁸ Haas, *Ideological Origins*, 4.

¹⁹ Jian Chen, *Mao's China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 66–67.

²⁰ Wolfgang Saxon, "Edward Crankshaw is Dead at 75; Author on Soviet and Hapsburgs," *New York Times*, December 4, 1984, <http://www.nytimes.com/1984/12/04/obituaries/edward-crankshaw-is-dead-at-75-author-on-soviet-and-hapsburgs.html>.

²¹ Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev and Edward Crankshaw, *Khrushchev Remembers* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1970), 461.

²² *Ibid.*, 461, 470.

ideological orthodoxy threaten Beijing's legitimacy. He does note, however, that Pyongyang is highly sensitive to outside influences on its public.²³ Thus, Beijing's adoption of capitalism could threaten North Korean regime legitimacy.

3. National Sovereignty: Discussions in Literature

Several history scholars identify national sovereignty issues as key to the deterioration and splitting of PRC alliances. This thesis uses national sovereignty concerns as a broad category to include the control of national assets, disputes over national territory, and extensions of the nation state. Drew Middleton claims that disputes over national territory damned the Sino-Soviet relationship from the very beginning. Instead of a doctrinal feud between Nikita Khrushchev and Mao Zedong, the split resulted from hundreds of years' worth of distrust and expansionist desires.²⁴ To back his claim, Middleton provides historic examples referencing China's subjugation by Western powers;²⁵ however, this argument does not explain the current cordial relationship among Moscow and Beijing, which includes border agreements and arms sales between the Russian Federation and China.²⁶

Other proponents of the national sovereignty argument make a stronger case for the Sino-Mongolian example. Disputes over national existence played a contributing role in undermining this relationship. Former U.S. National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski and author Sergey Radchenko attribute this alliance fracturing to Mongolia's inherent fears of being reabsorbed by an opportunistic China.²⁷ Their sourcing includes

²³ Victor D. Cha, *The Impossible State: North Korea, Past and Future* (New York, NY: Ecco 2012), 164–165.

²⁴ Drew Middleton, *The Duel of the Giants: China and Russia in Asia* (New York, NY: Scribner, 1978), 38–39.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Stephen J. Blank, *The Dynamics of Russian Weapons Sales to China* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 1997), v.

²⁷ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Soviet Bloc, Unity and Conflict* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), 403.

statements from high ranking Mongolian, Chinese, and Soviet officials.²⁸ This argument seems the most credible and would explain why Mongolian leadership sided with Moscow despite Chinese aid offers. Also, Walker Connor notes how national self-determination provides state legitimacy.²⁹ Delegitimizing the state also delegitimizes its government and regime.³⁰ In this way, PRC hints at re-annexing the Mongolian state played a vital role in their split.

Several sources credit Hanoi's goal of extending its national sovereignty over South Vietnam as playing a contributing role to the Sino-North Vietnamese split. Authors such as Robert Ross note how Hanoi's 1950s–1970s war for national liberation and incorporation of South Vietnam made it care little about Beijing's sensitivities to Soviet presence in the region.³¹ Additionally, Stephen Van Evera notes how new states and bifurcated nationalities increase the likelihood of conflict in their regions.³² Similarly, Cha and Lankov mention the importance of national sovereignty issues to the Sino-North Korean alliance. The Korean national community remains bifurcated while a sizable Korean minority exists in China. These factors could then increase the likelihood of conflict and strain in the Beijing-Pyongyang relationship.³³

D. METHODS AND SOURCES

The second, third, and fourth chapters of this thesis examine the Soviet, Mongolian, and North Vietnamese historic cases systematically. To do so, it draws on a multitude of secondary sources to account for events in these alliance breakdowns with

28 Sergey Radchenko, "The Soviets' Best Friend in Asia: The Mongolian Dimension of the Sino-Soviet Split" (working paper, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington, DC, 2003), 2.

29 Walker Connor, "Nationalism and Political Illegitimacy," in *Ethnonationalism in the Contemporary World: Walker Connor and the Study of Nationalism*, ed. Daniele Conversi (New York, NY: Routledge, 2002), 41–42.

30 Ibid.

31 Ross, *Indochina Tangle*, 5.

32 Stephen Van Evera, "Hypotheses on Nationalism and War," *International Security* 18, no. 4 (1994), 21–22.

33. Andrei N. Lankov, *The Real North Korea: Life and Politics in the Failed Stalinist Utopia* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press 2013), 181.

China. Published books and academic articles account for the majority of these sources. This literature incorporates quotations from witnesses, media excerpts, and official transcripts. Other sources include theoretical findings by various political science academics that help provide analytic perspective to the evidence.

Using this sourcing, these three chapters will briefly summarize the events of each historic case. Each will then seek the causal factor(s) for each split by analyzing the role of great power politics, political ideology, and national sovereignty. In doing so, the historic case chapters will address the following questions:

- What relationship did China have with these countries before the PRC?
- What type of relationship did the PRC have with each ally?
 - When did the alliance peak, deteriorate, and split?
 - Did either partner attempt to mend the deterioration?
- What was the role of great power politics?
 - Did it involve threat balancing?
 - Did it involve a willing and able competitive power encroaching into China's near periphery?
- What was the role of political ideology?
 - Was there a threat to legitimacy because of ideological differences?
- What was the role of national sovereignty?
 - Did the allies have disputes over control of national assets?
 - Did the partners have disputes over national territory?
 - Was China inadequate in helping the ally attain its goals for extending its nation state?
- Did China decide to make the final split?

With the fifth chapter, the thesis compares the various alliance-splitting factors and identifies a pattern. Splits with junior partners resulted from combining concerns for national sovereignty with another great power's willingness and ability to compete for influence and encroach into China's periphery. The sixth chapter then applies these identified factors to China's current relationship with North Korea. It examines the nature of Sino-North Korean relations and determines that conditions for splitting do not match

the historic cases. Finally, the seventh chapter concludes that North Korea lacks the motivation to allow another great power to compete for influence and encroach up the peninsula. Unlike previous allies, Pyongyang has no pressing ideological threat or national sovereignty concerns to incentivize it to accept another great power to contend for influence. As a result, this denial of other powers from China's periphery perpetuates the Sino-DPRK alliance. Ultimately, it will continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

II. THE SINO-SOVIET SPLIT

A. INTRODUCTION

This thesis begins its exploration of PRC alliance dissolutions by focusing first on the Sino-Soviet split. This case offers an example of a formal alliance where both Moscow and Beijing obliged themselves to mutual defense. While the majority of Chinese alliances involved smaller states, the Sino-Soviet alliance still holds analytic value. It provides insight into Beijing's views on an outside power's ability to contribute to Chinese security. Additionally, the Sino-Soviet split provides the historic backdrop for understanding the Sino-Mongolian and Sino-North Vietnamese splits and the role great power competition has in such relationships.

The 1950 alliance between Moscow and Beijing became a crucial milestone in the Cold War and significantly changed the balance of power between the communist and Western worlds. Despite the proximity and offensive capability of the Soviet Union,³⁴ Beijing wanted to balance against an ideologically-opposed and perceivably more threatening United States. Following an initial period of amiable relations between the PRC and USSR, however, ideological contentions altered this threat perception. Despite growing U.S. capabilities, the Sino-Soviet alliance soured and led to a period of degraded relations followed by a clear split by Moscow in 1963–1964. These events show that the Sino-Soviet split resulted primarily from ideological factors that altered Beijing's threat perception of Soviet power in the region. This chapter will proceed by covering a brief history of Sino-Soviet relations to include the periods of amity, deterioration, and splitting. It will then make an analytic assessment by exploring the pertinence of great power politics, political ideology, and national sovereignty in the split.

³⁴ Walt, "Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power," 8–9.

B. HISTORY OF THE ALLIANCE: AMITY, DETERIORATION, AND SPLIT

1. Relations Leading to Alliance: pre-1949

China's relationship with the Soviet Union began 30 years before the founding of the PRC. During the chaos of the warlord period, the Chinese Nationalists saw the USSR as a possible benefactor. After failing to secure substantial aid from the Western powers, Sun Yat-sen began negotiations with Moscow in 1923.³⁵ The resulting KMT-Soviet cooperation advanced the creation of a Chinese military academy, reorganization of the Kuomintang (KMT), and its acceptance of communist members.³⁶ Throughout the 1920s–1930s, however, the relationship between Moscow and Beijing became volatile as various factions within both states vied for power and influence. Such circumstances nearly led to war in 1929 when disputes over Manchurian possessions resulted in border clashes.³⁷ Other incidents led to mistrust between the two countries. When Japan expanded into Manchuria in 1931, Moscow negotiated with Tokyo over its assets in that province.³⁸ Additionally, Soviet neutrality until the closing months of World War II led to Chinese discontent.

Moscow's actions in the aftermath of the war also detracted from its relationship with Beijing under the Nationalists. The Soviet Union entered the conflict under the pretext of the Yalta Agreement and invaded Japanese-occupied Manchuria in August 1945. Yalta also stipulated that Moscow would receive joint control of the Chinese Eastern and South Manchuria Railways, have access to Port Arthur and Darien, and maintain Outer Mongolia's independence.³⁹ As Soviet troops advanced, they looted Manchuria of its industrial capacity while Moscow also infiltrated Xinjiang.⁴⁰ Within weeks of this roughshod liberation, the Soviets signed a treaty of friendship and

³⁵ Henry Wei, *China and Soviet Russia* (Princeton, NJ: D. Van Nostrand Company, 1956), 40.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 43–45.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 101.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 108.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 332.

⁴⁰ Ford, "Calling the Sino-Soviet Split," 63.

allegiance with the Nationalists that further enforced the Yalta provisions.⁴¹ Over the following years, however, Moscow delayed its troop withdrawal and its forces routinely clashed with the Chinese Nationalists over the occupation of Port Arthur and Darien.⁴² Additionally, the Soviets aided Chinese Communists with captured Japanese materiel and continued to assist their movement until the final defeat of Nationalist forces on the mainland in 1949.⁴³

2. Initial Amiable Relations: 1950–1956

Despite a history of distrust and contention between Moscow and the preceding Nationalist regime, the newly formed PRC decided to align with the Soviet Union. Mao identified the ideologically opposed United States as the target to balance against. He stated, “It was the possibility of military intervention from imperialist countries that made it necessary for China to ally itself with other socialist countries.”⁴⁴ By February 1950, the PRC and USSR signed their treaty of friendship. The first test of this alliance came with the advent of the Korean War when Joseph Stalin encouraged Mao to bear the responsibility for fighting on the peninsula as a means to prevent the expansion of a broader war into Europe. In return, Moscow provided air support, weapons, and economic aid, which increased as the war progressed and Stalin’s confidence in the PRC grew.⁴⁵ For example, the Soviet share in Chinese trade increased from 30 percent in 1950 to 56.3 percent in 1953.⁴⁶

Following Stalin’s death, Moscow and Beijing reached their peak in diplomatic and economic cooperation. In 1954, Khrushchev led a delegation to China in which the Soviets signed a number of agreements. Moscow renounced its claims on Port Arthur, provided 520 million rubles worth of loans, and supported 156 industrial projects for

41 Chen, *Mao’s China and the Cold War*, 52.

42 Wei, *China and Soviet Russia*, 183, 201.

43 *Ibid.*, 195.

44 Chen, *Mao’s China and the Cold War*, 50.

45 *Ibid.*, 58.

46 *Ibid.*, 60.

China's initial five-year plan.⁴⁷ China in turn supported the creation of the Warsaw Pact, the signing of a peace treaty with Austria, and the recognition of West Germany.⁴⁸ An exemplary moment of Sino-Soviet cooperation occurred during the 1954 Geneva Conference. At this occasion, Vyacheslav Molotov and Zhou Enlai persuaded Vietnamese communists into accepting the seventeenth parallel division of their country and concluding France's war in Indochina.

3. Deterioration of the Alliance: 1956–1963

A period of deteriorating relations then ensued from 1956 until the polemics of 1963 when the alliance had effectively ceased to function. This began when Khrushchev denounced Stalin at the 1956 Twentieth Party Congress.⁴⁹ After this event, and the follow-on destalinization campaign, tensions grew. Beijing protested this new stance and became more confrontational with Moscow. This included policy conflict when, Mao called for direct confrontation with the West and for a collective communist international strategy.⁵⁰ Also, China acted independently in its foreign affairs. During the latter half of the decade, Beijing committed itself to several unilateral actions that often prompted international conflicts. For example, in 1958, Mao initiated a second Taiwan Straits Crisis as a means to mobilize the population for the Great Leap Forward.⁵¹ Yet Mao did not explain his intentions to Moscow beforehand.⁵² After a rushed visit by Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko to Beijing, Moscow provided its verbal support to China during the crisis.⁵³ The following year, China became embroiled in a border dispute with India. During this conflict, however, the Soviets did not provide verbal support, which

⁴⁷ Ibid., 62.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 399.

⁵⁰ Middleton, *Duel of the Giant*, 41.

⁵¹ Thomas J. Christensen, *Worse than a Monolith: Alliance Politics and Problems of Coercive Diplomacy in Asia* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 151.

⁵² Ibid., 154.

⁵³ Chen, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, 77–78.

Beijing interpreted as an affront.⁵⁴ In 1962, China again engaged India, fighting a successful border war that drove New Delhi closer to Moscow.⁵⁵

During this period of deterioration, continual rhetorical attacks from Beijing soon resulted in Moscow cutting back on its investments in the PRC. Additionally, the Soviets became irritated by Chinese insistence on equal influence in the Third World when Moscow had loaned the PRC over \$2 billion by 1957.⁵⁶ To showcase their power, China began offering loans to Third World countries despite its own economic disparity. As an example, the PRC offered a 260 million ruble loan to Mongolia made possible only because of Soviet aid to China.⁵⁷ Between the PRC's continued solicitation for aid and its newfound independence because of aid, Soviet leadership became frustrated. Khrushchev noted, "Unlike Stalin, I never tried to take advantage of Mao. In fact, just the opposite happened: the Chinese tried to take advantage of us."⁵⁸

As a further sign of growing distrust, Beijing rejected Soviet offers for joint basing. In 1958, Moscow proposed to build a long-range radio installation in China for communication to Soviet submarines.⁵⁹ Beijing would only accept this offer if it could assume ownership of the station.⁶⁰ Along with the communications facility, the Soviets offered to construct a joint submarine base in China.⁶¹ Mao emphatically rejected this proposal and railed at Ambassador Pavel Yudin saying, "[Y]ou may accuse me of being a nationalist or another Tito, but my counterargument is that you have extended Russian nationalism to China's coast."⁶² This diplomatic row caused Khrushchev to make a state

⁵⁴ Ibid., 80.

⁵⁵ John P. D. Dunbabin, *The Cold War: The Great Powers and their Allies* (New York, NY: Longman Publishing, 1994), 238.

⁵⁶ Kurt Müller, *The Foreign Aid Programs of the Soviet Bloc and Communist China*, trans. Richard H. Weber and Michael Roloff (New York, NY: Walker, 1967), 233.

⁵⁷ Middleton, *Duel of the Giants*, 44.

⁵⁸ Khrushchev and Crankshaw, *Khrushchev Remembers*, 465.

⁵⁹ Christensen, *Worse than a Monolith*, 154.

⁶⁰ Chen, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, 73–74.

⁶¹ Christensen, *Worse than a Monolith*, 154.

⁶² Chen, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, 74.

visit in July 1958.⁶³ Again Mao stressed his ideas on “big-power chauvinism” and later noted that “the overturning of [our relations with] the Soviet Union occurred in 1958; that was because they wanted to control China militarily.”⁶⁴

In 1959, Khrushchev again visited Beijing in an attempt to solve the issue on the radio station and submarine basing.⁶⁵ Mao refused any sort of deal to include offers for reciprocal basing of Chinese submarines in Murmansk.⁶⁶ Khrushchev quoted him as saying, “No! We don’t want anything to do with Murmansk, and we don’t want you here.”⁶⁷ Mao continued by stating, “We’ve had the British and other foreigners on our territory for years now, and we’re not ever going to let anyone use our land for their own purposes again.”⁶⁸

Also during this period, China propelled the deterioration of its Soviet alliance by attempting to pull communist states into its own sphere of influence. Few countries were swayed by this offer except Albania, which lost Soviet economic and technical aid as a result.⁶⁹ Soviet leadership attributed China’s seduction of Albania to a mutual fear of Soviet-style reform in communist leadership.⁷⁰ As a result, Moscow withdrew eight submarines stationed in Durazzo and Valona, Albania by 1961.⁷¹ As Khrushchev noted, “We [the Soviet leadership] gradually became aware that the Albanians were conspiring with the Chinese against us.”⁷² Despite attempts to pull Eastern European and Third World partners into a Maoist camp, these efforts largely failed. At the turn of the decade,

63 Ibid., 75.

64 Ibid.

65 Khrushchev and Crankshaw, *Khrushchev Remembers*, 473.

66 Ibid.

67 Ibid.

68 Ibid.

69 Middleton, *Duel of the Giants*, 45, 47.

70 Khrushchev and Crankshaw, *Khrushchev Remembers*, 477.

71 “The Military Balance.” *International Institute of Strategic Studies* 61, no. 1 (1961), <https://www.iiss.org/en/publications/military-s-balance>, 5.

72 Khrushchev and Crankshaw, *Khrushchev Remembers*, 476.

communist countries became less willing to accept Moscow's supreme control; however, they were also unwilling to accept Beijing's leadership.⁷³

By the early 1960s, the Soviets had lost their patience with Beijing's ideological criticisms, independent ventures, and factionalism.⁷⁴ Moscow decided to withdraw aid. For example, in 1959, the Soviets used their Geneva negotiations with the United States as an excuse to dishonor their 1957 agreement with the PRC to supply nuclear weapons and technology.⁷⁵ Along with the pulling of technology and advisors, Moscow lowered economic and military assistance, which resulted in a bilateral trade drop from \$1.64 billion in 1960 to \$816.5 million in 1962.⁷⁶

4. Alliance Split 1963–1964

The deterioration of the alliance continued until 1963–1964 when rhetoric between the two countries became entirely confrontational. At this point, the alliance had effectively ceased to exist. Only after Mao's withdrawal from Chinese politics following the disastrous Great Leap Forward and the fall of Khrushchev did PRC officials make a last-ditch attempt to save the relationship. In November 1964, Zhou Enlai visited Moscow to explore ways to salvage the alliance.⁷⁷ Yet the Soviet Defense Minister reportedly encouraged him to overthrow Mao.⁷⁸ Interactions like this only verified suspicions of both the West and the Soviets, which prompted China to take an isolationist role in the international community and effectively terminate the Sino-Soviet alliance.

In the aftermath of the alliance's dissolution, tensions continued to mount. During the Cultural Revolution, enmity between Moscow and Beijing flared, motivating both countries to increase military force strength along their mutual boundaries. Border incidents in 1969 nearly led to a full scale war. At the peak of the crisis, Moscow even

⁷³ Middleton, *Duel of the Giants*, 49.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁷⁵ Chen, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, 78–79.

⁷⁶ Middleton, *Duel of the Giants*, 47.

⁷⁷ Chen, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, 84.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

considered launching a preemptive nuclear strike against China.⁷⁹ Following this near catastrophe, China sought rapprochement with the United States. Initial courting eventually led to state visits by Henry Kissinger and Richard Nixon who laid the framework from which China and the United States could construct a strategic partnership balancing against the Soviet Union.⁸⁰

C. ANALYSIS OF THE SPLIT

The following section will draw upon the history of the Sino-Soviet alliance and attempt to determine the causal factors in its deterioration and splitting. It examines the roles of great power politics, political ideology, and national sovereignty. In doing so, it finds that the PRC's alliance with the Soviet Union deteriorated as a result of shifting perceptions of ideological threats from Moscow. The final split resulted, however, from Soviet impatience with China's ideological disputes and Moscow's effective termination of the alliance.

1. Great Power Politics: Balance of Threat

As Walt claims, the most apparent catalyst for an alteration in threat perception would come from changes in balance of power.⁸¹ This viewpoint would insinuate that either an overwhelming rise in Soviet power or a substantial drop in U.S. power would change China's threat perception.⁸² Yet the United States greatly increased its power position over the course of the decade while the Soviets made relatively steady gains. Despite this, Beijing reevaluated its alliance with Moscow and saw the Soviets as a greater threat. This policy reversal reveals how threat measured by aggregate, proximate, and offensive power had a cursory effect on the Sino-Soviet split. During the 1950s, these balance-of-threat factors should have made China perceive an increasing danger from the United States that would drive it closer to Moscow. Instead, the opposite occurred.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 240.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 275.

⁸¹ Walt, "Why Alliances Endure or Collapse," 158.

⁸² Walt, "Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power," 5.

U.S. and Soviet aggregate power experienced a moderate rise that should not have readjusted Beijing's threat calculus. From 1950–1960, U.S. wealth, as represented by total population, urban population, steel production, and energy consumption, increased at a moderate pace. For example, its population rose from 152 to 180 million while iron and steel production increased from 87 to 90 million tons.⁸³ Meanwhile, the Soviet Union did not achieve any unforeseen leaps in these sectors either. The total population of the USSR increased from 180 to 214 million and the urban population jumped from 33 to 51 million.⁸⁴ Moscow's iron and steel production more than doubled from 27 to 65 million tons while primary energy consumption tripled from the equivalent of 273 to 629 million tons of coal.⁸⁵ Despite these rises, China still had a wide margin advantage in population, which climbed from 571 to 657 million by the end of the decade.⁸⁶ Additionally, China's urban population doubled by 1960 as it reached 65 million.⁸⁷ Iron and steel production leaped from 606,000 to 18 million tons while energy consumption skyrocketed from 29 to 291 million tons of coal.⁸⁸

During the same timeframe, changes in U.S. and Soviet proximate power should have solidified Beijing's threat perception of Washington—but did not. U.S. proximate military power rose while Soviet proximate military power decreased. Following the Korean War, upsurges in the defense spending and garrisoning in Japan, South Korea, and Okinawa amplified U.S. proximity.⁸⁹ Additionally, its proximate power increased through the establishment of various U.S.-led alliances across the region. These included the 1951 defense treaties with Australia, New Zealand, Japan, the Philippines, and the 1953 treaty with South Korea.⁹⁰ It also included the formation of the Southeast Asian

⁸³ “National Material Capabilities V4.0,” Correlates of War Project, accessed August 23, 2013, <http://www.correlatesofwar.org/datasets.htm>.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Dunbabin, *Cold War*, 101.

⁹⁰ Christensen, *Worse than a Monolith*, 135–136.

Treaty Organization (SEATO) in 1954.⁹¹ In contrast, Moscow had withdrawn the Red Army in Mongolia away from China's periphery.⁹² This decrease in force coincided with an increase in economic accessibility. After the signing of the Sino-Soviet alliance, Ulaanbaatar became a connecting bridge between the two powers.⁹³ The planning and construction of a Trans-Mongolian Railroad exemplified this as it acted as a trade route and a transit line between Beijing and Moscow.⁹⁴ These changes in Soviet and U.S. proximate power failed, however, to bolster the Sino-Soviet alliance.

Additionally, U.S. offensive power increased exponentially. The United States tripled its military spending within two years of the Sino-Soviet alliance's signing.⁹⁵ By the end of the decade, Washington spent over \$45 billion on defense annually.⁹⁶ Meanwhile, the Soviets and Chinese increased their military spending at a similar rate, which did little to change their power gap over 10 years. At the start of the decade, the Soviet Union spent over \$15.5 billion on its armed forces.⁹⁷ This spiked at \$29.5 billion in 1955 and dipped for two consecutive years before climbing again; in 1960, it reached nearly \$40 billion.⁹⁸ Comparatively, China spent \$2.5 billion on its military in 1950.⁹⁹ Six years later it spiked to 5.5 and then rose to \$6.7 billion by 1960.¹⁰⁰ Moscow's military expenditures more than doubled over the 1950s, but China spent at nearly the same rate.¹⁰¹ Yet the new U.S. advantage in offensive power still failed to fortify the Sino-Soviet alliance.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Robert A. Rupen, *How Mongolia is Really Ruled: A Political History of the Mongolian People's Republic, 1900–1978* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1979), 74.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ "National Material Capabilities V4.0." Correlates of War Project.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

Nuclear weapons could challenge China's population advantage; however, U.S. advances in the 1950s still did not strengthen the Sino-Soviet alliance. Both Washington and Moscow had nuclear capabilities before the signing of the Sino-Soviet pact although the United States had an advantage in numbers throughout the decade. From 1950–1960, the United States increased its inventory from 299 to 18,638 weapons.¹⁰² The Soviets, in comparison, increased their nuclear inventory from five to 1,627.¹⁰³ Although both nuclear arsenals represented a substantial threat to a non-nuclear China, the significantly larger U.S. inventory still failed to strengthen China's commitment to balance with the Soviets. Mao dismissed the destructive potential of these weapons against population centers and military targets.¹⁰⁴ Instead, he labeled U.S. nuclear strength a "paper tiger."¹⁰⁵

2. The Role of Political Ideology

Contention over political ideology became the driving factor that altered Beijing's threat perception, deteriorated the alliance, and led to Moscow's splitting. Signs of Beijing's ideological discontent with Moscow became apparent within months after the signing of the 1950 alliance. During the run-up to the Korean War, Stalin acted pragmatically with his commitment of military support to China. For the sake of national interests, he made vague pledges for weapons and air support to encourage Mao to shoulder the costs of war¹⁰⁶ and then expected China to pay for the materiel afterwards.¹⁰⁷ Mao became disenchanted with Stalin's apparent neglect of communist solidarity and saw himself as morally superior.¹⁰⁸ This led to what Chen Jian describes as

¹⁰² Hans M. Kristensen and Robert S. Norris, "Global Nuclear Weapons Inventories, 1945–2013," *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* 69, no. 75 (2013), 78.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ Khrushchev and Crankshaw, *Khrushchev Remembers*, 470.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ Christensen, *Worse than a Monolith*, 97–98.

¹⁰⁷ Chen, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, 61.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 59.

the “conceptual and psychological” beginnings of the split.¹⁰⁹ Although the Korean War made the PRC more dependent on Soviet loans and aid, it gave the Chinese an ideological superiority complex.¹¹⁰

Also, Walt notes that “when each regime’s legitimacy rests on ideological principles that prescribe obedience to a single central authority, they will inevitably quarrel over who should occupy the leading position.”¹¹¹ As such, the communist movement called for a single authoritarian leader and this resulted in a clash between the PRC and USSR. Mao’s attempts at undercutting Soviet leadership during the 1956 Polish and Hungarian uprisings reflected this mindset. During a meeting between Zhou and opposition leader Wladyslaw Gomulka, the Chinese attempted to coax the Poles into proposing Mao as leader of the Communist bloc.¹¹² Additionally, Mao made a secret offer to the anti-Moscow Yugoslavia to co-sponsor an international communist meeting to highlight Soviet ineptitude.¹¹³ As Khrushchev reflected, “Mao would never be able to reconcile himself to any other Communist Party being in any way superior to his own within the world Communist movement.”¹¹⁴

Additionally, Walt claims that “when differences arise, the different factions will regard their own views as entirely justified and the views of their opponents as heretical.”¹¹⁵ For example in 1956, Khrushchev began the policy of destalinization at the Twentieth Party Congress. Yet Mao had adopted Stalin’s centralized planning, rural collectivization, heavy industry, military development, and authoritarian leadership.¹¹⁶

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 61.

¹¹¹ Walt, “Why Alliances Endure or Collapse,” 163.

¹¹² Chang and Halliday, *Mao: the Unknown Story*, 405–406.

¹¹³ Ibid., 406.

¹¹⁴ Khrushchev and Crankshaw, *Khrushchev Remembers*, 462.

¹¹⁵ Walt, “Why Alliances Endure or Collapse,” 163.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

Denouncing Stalin could only delegitimize Mao's own position, undermine his ability to consolidate his leadership, and threaten his visions for continuous revolution.¹¹⁷ Khrushchev recalled Mao's dilemma.

The Chinese knew that they were in a dangerous position in the world Communist movement after the Twentieth Party Congress. They understood the implications for themselves of the Congress's repudiation of personality cults, autocratic rule, and all other antidemocratic, anti-Party forms of life. Stalin was exposed and condemned at the Congress for having had hundreds of thousands of people shot and for his abuse of power. Mao Tse-tung was following in Stalin's footsteps.¹¹⁸

Also ideological differences arose on how to approach the West.¹¹⁹ Mao believed that the international communist movement should ardently spread revolution. Meanwhile, Moscow remained unwilling to accept Mao's confrontational policies.¹²⁰ Instead, the Soviets promoted peaceful coexistence. During a September 1959 visit to Beijing, Khrushchev attempted to promote the importance of coexistence with the West.¹²¹ To this, Mao claimed that the Soviets had become revisionist and averred that the Chinese would continue sponsoring revolution.¹²² By the early 1960s, the ideological differences became widely advertised. For example, an August 1963 statement from Beijing announced, "It is our proletarian internationalist duty to point out that they [the Soviet leaders] have now betrayed the interest of the Soviet people and the entire socialist camp."¹²³ The PRC also noted the ideological threat from the Soviet Union because "since the Twentieth Party Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), its leaders have tried, on the pretext of 'combating the personality cult,' to

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Khrushchev and Crankshaw, *Khrushchev Remembers*, 471.

¹¹⁹ Walt, "Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power," 21.

¹²⁰ Middleton, *Duel of the Giants*, 41.

¹²¹ Chen, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, 83.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Middleton, *Duel of the Giants*, 47.

change the leadership of other fraternal Parties to conform to their will.”¹²⁴ These polemic quarrels reflected how the ideological gap between Moscow and Beijing significantly widened and resulted in the increased threat perceptions that would lead to an alliance split.¹²⁵

3. The Role of National Sovereignty

Some historians contend that Chinese sensitivities towards national sovereignty, based on territorial disputes, doomed the Sino-Soviet split from the beginning. Beijing’s loses to Moscow through several treaties to include the 1689 Treaty of Nerchinsk, the 1858 Treaty of Aigun, the Tehcheng Protocol, and the Treaty of Ili heated nationalist sentiments within the PRC leadership.¹²⁶ Additionally, China’s junior role in the Soviet alliance exacerbated this.¹²⁷ These historians credit hundreds of years’ worth of animosity and suspicion between two great powers with nationalist goals as making the alliance inherently unsustainable.¹²⁸

Yet nationalism and defense of national sovereignty still fall short in explaining the discourse between China and the Soviet Union. Many analysts consider the submarine basing issue as a dispute over the control of national assets and indicative of China’s sensitivity for sovereignty that underscored a victim mentality fatal to the alliance.¹²⁹ Yet this issue occurred late in the 1950s, when tensions in the alliance had already elevated. Also, antagonistic nationalism cannot explain the cooperative relationship today’s Russian Federation shares with the PRC. As seen with border

¹²⁴ “The Leaders of the CPSU are the Greatest Splitters of our Times: Comment on the Open Letter of the Central Committee of the CPSU,” *People’s Daily and Red Flag*, February 4, 1964.

¹²⁵ Haas, *Ideological Origins*, 4.

¹²⁶ Middleton, *Duel of the Giants*, 38–39.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ Alfred D. Low, *The Sino-Soviet Dispute: An Analysis of the Polemics* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1976), 16.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 16–17.

agreements and joint military exercises in the twenty-first century, nationalism and historic animosities exacerbated by Soviet policymaking have not eternally shaped perceptions of offensive intentions.¹³⁰

D. CONCLUSION

China's balancing alliance with the Soviet Union spawned from threat perceptions of the United States based primarily on political ideology. Both the Soviets and Americans had demonstrated their impressive power ratios in 1950. Washington represented, however, an ardent anti-communist force in the world. This led PRC officials to align with the Soviets against the United States. After 1956, however, China's alliance with the Soviet Union deteriorated because of changing perceptions of ideological threats from Moscow. This factor altered China's view on threat balancing, led to polemic disputes with the Soviets, and provided the motivation for Moscow to firmly abandon the alliance by 1963–1964. In turn, the split led to a competition for allies in the communist world that would shake China's relations with other friendly countries.

¹³⁰ "China and Russia Sign Border Deal," *BBC*, July 21, 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7517380.stm>.

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III. THE SINO-MONGOLIAN SPLIT

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the break between the PRC and the Mongolian People's Republic (MPR). Although these two countries did not have a formal alliance, they both joined the Soviet camp by the early 1950s, which made significant cooperation between Beijing and Ulaanbaatar implicit and fitting to the parameters of this thesis. Besides from the informal nature of this arrangement, it proved different from the Sino-Soviet relationship in other ways. Unlike the Sino-Soviet split, ideological differences proved of cursory importance. Instead, Ulaanbaatar's perception of Beijing during their communist-era alliance fell under the shadow of historic mistrust and underlying threats to Mongolia's national sovereignty. By the mid-1950s, China's ideological conflict with the Soviet Union resulted in Mongolia having to choose between the two. In this way, the involvement of great power competition played a heavy role in the Sino-Mongolian split. As relations between Moscow and Beijing deteriorated, both attempted to contend for Ulaanbaatar's loyalty until 1963 when China abandoned attempts to reorient Mongolia.¹³¹

The Sino-Mongolian alliance's deterioration resulted from a combination of worsened PRC-Soviet relations and Ulaanbaatar having to choose between a supportive Soviet Union and a historically threatening China. The final split resulted, however, from China's failed attempt to compete with Moscow and it eventually seeing Mongolia as an inseparable conduit of Soviet power in the region. This chapter will proceed by briefly covering the history of this informal alliance followed by an analysis of great power politics, political ideology, and national sovereignty in the split.

¹³¹ Rupen, *How Mongolia is Really Ruled*, 77.

B. HISTORY OF THE ALLIANCE: AMITY, DETERIORATION, AND SPLIT

1. Relations Leading to Alliance: pre-1949

Throughout the early twentieth century, a sovereign Mongolia became dependent on Moscow for aid and protection from Chinese re-annexation. Mongolian suspicion of China originated from its subjugation by the Qing dynasty from 1691–1911.¹³² During the chaotic fall of the dynasty from 1911–1912, Mongolia separated from China and then sought Russian support in maintaining its separate status.¹³³ For the next 10 years, domestic infighting and Chinese warlordism kept Mongolia from exercising full autonomy. In 1921, however, the Soviet Union, as a successor to the Russian Empire, sponsored the Mongolian People’s Revolutionary Party (MPRP) and established the world’s second communist regime, the MPR.¹³⁴ Yet Chinese businesses and immigrants still had a stronger presence in Mongolia. In 1925 for example, 400 Chinese firms operated within the country compared to only 50 Russian firms.¹³⁵ To remove this influence, Ulaanbaatar and Moscow drove away the majority of Chinese immigrants during the late 1920s and early 1930s. Reflecting this policy, Chinese laborers accounted for 63 percent of the work force in 1929 but shrank to 10 percent by 1932.¹³⁶

Over the next 20 years, Mongolia remained in the Soviet fold and became effectively penetrated by Moscow. In 1941 for example, Cyrillic replaced the traditional Uighur script.¹³⁷ Additionally, primary, secondary, and university education conformed to the Soviet model.¹³⁸ Russian became a second language as Russian-speaking schools

¹³² Bat-Erdene Baabar, *Twentieth Century Mongolia* (Cambridge, UK: The White Horse Press, 1999), 93, 102.

¹³³ Radchenko, “The Soviets’ Best Friend in Asia,” 3.

¹³⁴ Morris Rossabi, *Modern Mongolia: From Khans to Commissars to Capitalists* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005), 31.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 226.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 32.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

for the elite multiplied throughout Ulaanbaatar.¹³⁹ Aside from sponsoring the Mongolian National University in 1942, the Soviet Union also educated the vast number of Mongolian elites in its own universities and those of its Eastern European satellites.¹⁴⁰

Meanwhile, various factions in China harbored aspirations to reacquire their lost province. During this time, Chinese leaders on both sides of the political spectrum made re-annexation their policy. In the 1930s, Mao Zedong gave interviews with journalist Edgar Snow in which he asserted his intention to retake Mongolia following communist victory in China.¹⁴¹ Chiang Kai-shek also sought to reincorporate Mongolia. In the closing days of World War II, he petitioned his allies to acknowledge China's claim for re-annexation. Stalin refused Chiang's request and at the Yalta Conference in 1945, Chiang acquiesced to Stalin and Roosevelt's insistence on a Mongolian plebiscite.¹⁴² In October of that year, nearly 100 percent of the Mongolian population voted for independence from China.¹⁴³ Yet a 1947 border dispute along the Mongolian-Xinjiang border gave Chiang the excuse to renounce the plebiscite and Chinese forces infringed on Mongolian borders in the Baytagbogd region.¹⁴⁴ With Soviet assistance, Mongolia repelled this invasion, while the Nationalist government accused Mongolia of attacking the disputed city of Peitashan.¹⁴⁵ Altercations with the Nationalists were short-lived, however, as CCP forces soon swept Chiang from the Chinese mainland. On 8 October 1949, Mongolia cut its ties with the Nationalist government and recognized the PRC.¹⁴⁶

Also during the late-1940s, the CCP and the MPR began to collaborate militarily. In the final month of World War II, the MPR entered the war against Japan. In response,

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 226.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Alan J. K. Sanders, *The People's Republic of Mongolia: A General Reference Guide* (London, UK: Oxford University Press, 1968), 183

¹⁴⁴ Rossabi, *Modern Mongolia*, 226.

¹⁴⁵ Sanders, *People's Republic of Mongolia*, 183.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 184.

the Chinese Communist Eighth Route Army Headquarters ordered its forces to “coordinate with the Outer Mongolian People’s Republic’s army’s entry into the region (Inner Mongolia).”¹⁴⁷ Additionally, Mongolian troops reportedly delivered captured armaments to the CCP at war’s end and CCP operatives used Mongolia as a haven during the Chinese Civil War.¹⁴⁸ By the end of the decade, both the MPR and newly formed PRC aligned with Moscow and implicitly with each other. Thus, they fulfilled the criteria of showing a “significant level of security cooperation.”¹⁴⁹

2. Initial Amiable Relations: 1950–1956

During the early years of the informal Sino-Mongolian alliance, Mongolia’s relationship with China reached its peak and led to a period of amiable relations from 1950–1956. Mongolia soon became a connecting bridge between Moscow and Beijing.¹⁵⁰ In 1952, MPR leader Yumjaagiin Tsendenbal met Zhou Enlai and Stalin in Moscow to negotiate a Sino-Soviet railroad through Mongolia.¹⁵¹ This would act as a trade route and line of communication from Beijing to Moscow.¹⁵² The railroad opened in January 1956 and provided a major source of revenue for Ulaanbaatar.¹⁵³

Additionally, China and Mongolia made several trade agreements during the early 1950s. Soon after his 1952 railroad negotiations, Tsendenbal traveled to Beijing to sign a ten-year economic agreement.¹⁵⁴ Various Sino-Mongolian arrangements over the next two years resulted in China providing loans and grants for railroads, apartment

¹⁴⁷ Xiaoyuan Liu, *Reins of Liberation: An Entangled History of Mongolian Independence, Chinese Territoriality, and Great Power Hegemony, 1911–1950* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2006), 378.

¹⁴⁸ Liu, *Reins of Liberation*, 379–380.

¹⁴⁹ Walt, “Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power,” 9.

¹⁵⁰ Rupen, *How Mongolia is Really Ruled*, 74.

¹⁵¹ Rossabi, *Modern Mongolia*, 226.

¹⁵² Rupen, *How Mongolia is Really Ruled*, 74.

¹⁵³ Sanders, *People’s Republic of Mongolia*, 184.

¹⁵⁴ Rossabi, *Modern Mongolia*, 226.

complexes, roadwork, a paper mill, and a textile factory.¹⁵⁵ Additionally, in 1956, Beijing provided a 36 million ruble grant, which financed the construction of brick and glass factories, a stadium, and a sports palace in Ulaanbaatar.¹⁵⁶ It also had 10,000 Chinese laborers contributing to economic growth and infrastructure as Mongolia lacked the labor force necessary to drive these projects.¹⁵⁷ Additionally, Mongolia saw cultural benefits during this period as both the Soviet Union and China tolerated Mongolian customs and religion. In 1954 for example, Mao allowed the interment of Genghis Khan's remains in Ejen Khor.¹⁵⁸ Two years later, the Soviets built a Buddhist temple in Ivolginsk.¹⁵⁹

3. Deterioration of Alliance: 1956–1963

After six years of amiable Sino-Mongolian relations, the alliance entered a period of deterioration from 1956–1963 as a result of Chinese annexationist ambitions and Sino-Soviet competition. Fears of China arose from PRC leaders exploring the possibility of re-annexation despite initial assurances. In the 1950 Sino-Soviet alliance treaty, China acknowledged the “independent status of the Mongolian People’s Republic.”¹⁶⁰ Also, after meeting with Mao, Soviet envoy Anastas Mikoyan felt assured that “they [the Chinese] were not defending the chauvinistic policy of greater China and they will not raise this question about unification of Mongolia.”¹⁶¹ Within a few years, however, Mao reintroduced the question of Mongolian re-annexation to Khrushchev.¹⁶² Mao recalled that, “In 1954 when Khrushchev and Bulganin were in China we took up the question [on

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 227.

¹⁵⁶ Radchenko, “Soviets’ Best Friend in Asia,” 3.

¹⁵⁷ Sergey Radchenko, “Mongolian Politics in the Shadow of the Cold War: The 1964 Coup Attempt and the Sino-Soviet Split,” *Journal of Cold War Studies* 8, no. 1 (2006), 98–99.

¹⁵⁸ Rupen, *How Mongolia is Really Ruled*, 75.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Low, *Sino-Soviet Dispute*, 58.

¹⁶¹ Radchenko, “Soviets’ Best Friend in Asia,” 4.

¹⁶² Ibid., 5.

Mongolia's status] but they refused to talk to us.”¹⁶³ This issue came up yet again two years later. After Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin, Zhou Enlai and Liu Shaoqi met with Mikoyan in April 1956. They claimed that Mongolian independence accounted for “one of Stalin's mistakes.”¹⁶⁴ Liu continued by stating that the Chinese leaders “deeply regret the fact of Mongolia's secession from China” and “consider Mongolia, like Taiwan, a part of their territory.”¹⁶⁵

Also, following Khrushchev's 1956 destalinization and the deterioration of Sino-Soviet relations, Mongolia found itself at the center of one of the main foreign policy conflicts of the twentieth century. As a result, Mongolia became a competition ground instead of a bridge.¹⁶⁶ Moscow increased its assistance to Ulaanbaatar while creating organizations such as the Soviet Mongolian Friendship Association, which aimed to attract Mongolian loyalty to the USSR while veering it away from China.¹⁶⁷ Additionally, the Soviets hosted 1,000 Mongolian university students in the late 1950s.¹⁶⁸ To match an August 1956 aid package from China, the Soviets provided their own agreement in May the following year.¹⁶⁹ This arrangement included the transfer of jointly owned companies to Ulaanbaatar's control.¹⁷⁰ Superficially, this situation would appear ideal for a Mongolia showered with foreign aid from both sides. During the same time period, fence-straddling countries such as North Korea sustained themselves by playing Moscow and Beijing against each other.¹⁷¹ Yet Soviet penetration and Ulaanbaatar's suspicions of Beijing precluded Mongolia's ability to take advantage of this. Furthermore, Mongolia suffered at times from this competition.

¹⁶³ Brzezinski, *The Soviet Bloc, Unity and Conflict*, 171.

¹⁶⁴ Radchenko, “Soviets' Best Friend in Asia,” 5.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ Rupen, *How Mongolia is Really Ruled*, 77.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁹ Sanders, *People's Republic of Mongolia*, 184.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁷¹ Brzezinski, *Soviet Bloc, Unity and Conflict*, 389.

Along with the increase in bribery, the Soviets began undercutting Beijing's contributions. In May 1955, thousands of Chinese laborers provided the work force necessary for the various construction projects in Mongolia.¹⁷² This continued for two years until the Bulganin-Tsedenbal joint statement reversed the flow of Chinese laborers and blocked Chinese expansion into Mongolia.¹⁷³ This move stemmed from Soviet and Mongolian officials noting the large settlement of Han Chinese into Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, and Manchuria. Such migrations caused them to suspect that China had similar designs for the MPR.¹⁷⁴ As a result of Zhou and Liu's 1956 claims on Mongolia's status, Mikoyan warned Tsedenbal against Chinese generosity by saying "You should develop your own working class, so that the Chinese do not comprise the majority of your workers."¹⁷⁵ By May 1962, the last Chinese laborers departed.¹⁷⁶

Because of the purging of Chinese labor, the Sino-Soviet competition caused a delay in Mongolian economic development. To fill the gap in skilled workers, Moscow provided 600 million rubles in training for Mongolian laborers.¹⁷⁷ The Soviets appropriated a Chinese-led development project in Darkhan because this town lay north of Ulaanbaatar and could have cut off the capitol from the Soviet Union.¹⁷⁸ Yet Soviet investments in this project fell short.¹⁷⁹ Additionally, activity on the Mongolian railroad plummeted and the revenues it generated decreased by 75 percent from 1960–1963.¹⁸⁰

Beijing attempted to make counteroffers in aid and assistance. China signed a May 1960, treaty of friendship and mutual assistance that offered Mongolia economic

¹⁷² Rupen, *How Mongolia is Really Ruled*, 75–76.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Radchenko, "Soviets' Best Friend in Asia," 5.

¹⁷⁶ Rupen, *How Mongolia is Really Ruled*, 82.

¹⁷⁷ Rossabi, *Modern Mongolia*, 227.

¹⁷⁸ Sanders, *People's Republic of Mongolia*, 184.

¹⁷⁹ Rupen, *How Mongolia is Really Ruled*, 82.

¹⁸⁰ Radchenko, "Mongolian Politics in the Shadow of the Cold War," 99.

aid.¹⁸¹ Yet Mongolia viewed Chinese counteroffers for aid with suspicion. In 1960, Zhou Enlai met Tsedenbal and attempted to pry Mongolia away from its Soviet benefactor.¹⁸² In doing so, Zhou offered to build a steel mill in the MPR and supply a 300,000-man workforce.¹⁸³ This offer failed because it played into Mongolian fears of China using such a workforce to overwhelm the Mongolian population.¹⁸⁴ Mongolia's negative reaction to Chinese proposals became apparent through the rhetoric of its officials. The Chairman of the Mongolian Trade Unions illustrated this attitude.

Beginning with 1960, the Chinese leadership started to exert open political and economic pressure on Mongolia in an attempt to undermine the traditional fraternal friendship of the Mongolian people with the Soviet people and the peoples of other socialist countries, to put the Mongolian people under the influence of Mao Tse-tung's ideas, and to compel Mongolia to pursue a pro-Maoist policy.¹⁸⁵

Additionally, Ulaanbaatar decided to join the United Nations in October 1961, which was an essentially anti-Chinese move since the PRC remained excluded from this institution since its founding.¹⁸⁶ Even after a 1962 border agreement, Mongolia continued to side with Moscow.¹⁸⁷ That same year, it joined the Soviet-backed Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA).¹⁸⁸ Also in 1962, Tsedenbal sided with Moscow over the Sino-Indian border dispute.¹⁸⁹

4. Alliance Split: 1963–1964

Ulaanbaatar's suspicions of Chinese intentions and Beijing's perceptions of a northern threat led to China abandoning its informal Mongolian alliance by 1963–1964.

¹⁸¹ Sanders, *People's Republic of Mongolia*, 185.

¹⁸² Rupen, *How Mongolia is Really Ruled*, 77.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 81.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁶ Sanders, *People's Republic of Mongolia*, 185.

¹⁸⁷ Radchenko, "Mongolian Politics in the Shadow of the Cold War," 99.

¹⁸⁸ Rupen, *How Mongolia is Really Ruled*, 79.

¹⁸⁹ Radchenko, "Soviets' Best Friend in Asia," 9.

As an example of its suspicions of Chinese assistance, Ulaanbaatar criticized the PRC even during desperate times. In the winter of 1963–1964, Mongolia suffered record low temperatures that devastated livestock and the national economy.¹⁹⁰ China provided unconditional aid amounting to 10,000 tons of corn, 30,000 yuan worth of medicine, and 200 million yuan in cash.¹⁹¹ In response, Tsedenbal blamed his economic woes on China claiming that Beijing boycotted the railroad, withdrew its workers, and reneged on previous aid promises.¹⁹² As China blamed poor weather and the Soviets for the catastrophe of the Great Leap Forward, so too did Mongolia blame weather and the Chinese for its own economic problems.¹⁹³

The PRC's actions also reflected a dismissal of the alliance. By 1963–1964, Mao acknowledged the border insecurities and the Soviet threat on his northern frontier to include Mongolia.¹⁹⁴ The more the MPR acquiesced to Moscow, the more Beijing's investments in Inner Mongolia, the neck to Manchuria, and nuclear facilities in Xinjiang came under threat.¹⁹⁵ Also in October 1964, Mongolian Deputy Prime Minister Sonomyn Luvsan visited China in search of foreign aid. Zhou turned him down and suggested Mongolia switch sides in the Sino-Soviet split to get it.¹⁹⁶ This refusal for aid marked China's abandoning of the alliance and within two years, increasing Sino-Soviet competition led to the January 1966 Soviet-Mongolian Mutual Defense Treaty.¹⁹⁷

C. ANALYSIS OF THE SPLIT

The following section will draw upon the history of the Sino-Mongolian alliance and attempt to determine the causal factors in its deterioration and splitting. It examines

¹⁹⁰ Radchenko, "Mongolian Politics in the Shadow of the Cold War," 98.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 99–100.

¹⁹⁴ Chen, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, 84.

¹⁹⁵ Rupen, *How Mongolia is Really Ruled*, 85.

¹⁹⁶ Radchenko, "Mongolian Politics in the Shadow of the Cold War," 99.

¹⁹⁷ Rupen, *How Mongolia is Really Ruled*, 84.

the roles of great power politics, political ideology, and national sovereignty. It finds that threats to Mongolia's national sovereignty combined with China's failure to compete with the Soviet presence in the MPR led to the PRC splitting from Ulaanbaatar.

1. Great Power Politics: Competition for the Junior Ally

The involvement of an additional great power in Sino-Mongolian relations provided a critical factor in the alliance split. With the Soviet Union as a benefactor, Mongolia found itself in an environment in which it could avoid possible re-annexation by China. Walker Conner claims that the modern international environment protects newly independent states from immediate absorption by stronger neighbors.¹⁹⁸ In Mongolia's case, the Soviet Union provided this protection and led to Ulaanbaatar's dependence on Moscow well before the Sino-Mongolian split. This explains how Mongolia saw Moscow as a guarantor against Chinese annexation and why Ulaanbaatar chose to align with Moscow during the course of the Sino-Soviet split.

Additionally, Moscow's involvement began 30 years before the Sino-Soviet and Mongolian alliances and allowed the Soviets to effectively penetrate their Mongolian ally. Besides from monetary and developmental aid, Moscow also left its cultural footprint. As Walt would support, such an effective penetration led to the enhancement of the Soviet position over its ally.¹⁹⁹ This form of penetration became so extensive that it caused China to see Mongolia as an extension of the Soviet Union. During post-war negotiations in 1945, Stalin promised that "we [the Soviet Union] will respect the independence and territorial integrity [of Mongolia] so that you [China] don't think we will annex [it]."²⁰⁰ To this, the Chinese representative, T.V. Soong replied, "You don't need to [annex it], you are on such good terms."²⁰¹

¹⁹⁸ Connor, *Nationalism and Political Illegitimacy*, 33.

¹⁹⁹ Walt, "Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power," 33.

²⁰⁰ Radchenko, "Soviets' Best Friend in Asia," 4.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

Also, as the Sino-Soviet relationship began to sour, bribery to Mongolia became a method of either initiating realignment towards Beijing or cementing loyalty to Moscow. As Timothy Crawford claims, states use wedge strategies to effect the alignment of other states through coercion or bribery.²⁰² China attempted to do so by using economic aid as bribes. Yet the targeted state may be less inclined to respond to such bribery and reorient itself; Crawford describes this scenario as countervailing.²⁰³ Since Mongolia perceived a Chinese threat of re-annexation, Beijing's attempts to woo Ulaanbaatar fell into this category. If China posed less of a threat or provided non-substitutable aid, countervailing could have worked. Instead, the Soviets conducted what Crawford describes as a reinforcing strategy where they provided larger quantities of aid and successfully cemented Mongolia's pre-inclination to lean towards Moscow.²⁰⁴

China gained little leverage in its attempts to bribe Mongolia, became frustrated, and ended the informal alliance.²⁰⁵ As Walt claims, alliance strength depends on the stronger member's willingness to put in the effort and expenditures into keeping allies from straying.²⁰⁶ Similarly, when an alliance no longer serves a purpose, states will be less likely to bear these costs.²⁰⁷ Tsendenbal made his decision to support the Soviet Union and as a result, China began to pull economic aid.²⁰⁸ With China's abandonment of wedging, it became clear that it had given up on Mongolia and the Sino-Mongolian alliance had effectively ended. Thus the Soviet Union's role as a willing and able competitive power acted as a critical factor in the Sino-Mongolian alliance split.

²⁰² Crawford, *Preventing Enemy Coalitions*, 159.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 159–161.

²⁰⁵ Rupen, *How Mongolia is Really Ruled*, 79.

²⁰⁶ Walt, "Why Alliances Endure or Collapse," 164.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 158.

²⁰⁸ Radchenko, "Mongolian Politics in the Shadow of the Cold War," 99.

2. The Role of Political Ideology

Political ideology played an insignificant role in the Sino-Mongolian split. Mongolia did not elevate a competing leader or interpretation of ideology to threaten the PRC's legitimacy. If anything, ideological concerns could have strengthened Ulaanbaatar and Beijing's relationship. During the early 1950s, both countries defaulted to Moscow's leadership in the communist world order. At this time, the dictators Khorloogiin Choibalsan and Yumjaagiin Tsedenbal ruled Mongolia.²⁰⁹ From 1940–1952 Choibalsan led a personality cult comparable to Stalin and Mao.²¹⁰ Nikita Khrushchev's 1956 denunciation of the Soviet dictator could have delegitimized Choibalsan's successor Tsedenbal just as it could have upset Mao's legitimacy. Additionally, Tsedenbal felt threatened by any spillover of Soviet political reform occurring at the time.²¹¹ Such democratization of the communist party opened Choibalsan's personality cult to criticism and by association opened Tsedenbal to criticism.²¹²

Despite this mutual ideological threat, Ulaanbaatar and Beijing reacted differently to Moscow. Tsedenbal successfully transitioned Mongolian politics from personality cult to bureaucracy while continuing to fill the role of Soviet proxy.²¹³ Yet this bending to Moscow agitated Chinese leadership. While meeting Tsedenbal in 1962, Zhou Enlai asked, "Are you blindly following the CPSU?"²¹⁴ Such dialogue shows that Beijing's point of contention with Ulaanbaatar did not originate from differences in Sino-Mongolian communist ideology. Instead, it manifested from Mongolia's willingness to accommodate a third power in the region.

²⁰⁹ Rupen, *How Mongolia is Really Ruled*, 73.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Radchenko, "Mongolian Politics in the Shadow of the Cold War," 96.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Rupen, *How Mongolia is Really Ruled*, 73.

²¹⁴ Radchenko, "Mongolian Politics in the Shadow of the Cold War," 99.

3. The Role of National Sovereignty

Fears of infringement on national sovereignty provided the second critical factor in the Sino-Mongolian split. Despite the 1950–1956 era of constructive relations with China, the threat to national sovereignty had a detrimental effect on Sino-Mongolian relations. Even as their relationship assumed the characteristics of an alliance, it remained abnormal. Multiple academic theories can explain why the Sino-Mongolian relationship remained abnormal during the peak of the alliance and led to annexationist aspirations from Chinese leadership. Stephen Van Evera suggests that national self-determination increases the likelihood of conflict in a region.²¹⁵ It leads to new states that create an immature regional environment where relations have yet to normalize.²¹⁶ By this rationale, Mongolian self-determination disrupted a 220-year status quo and required a period of readjustment.²¹⁷

China and Mongolia's relationship had yet to fully normalize because China did not fully accept MPR sovereignty. Walker Connor labels national self-determination as an "assertion of political legitimacy."²¹⁸ He then lists three distinct levels of legitimacy to include regime, government, and state legitimacy.²¹⁹ Regime legitimacy depends on the right for an individual or a particular administration to rule while government legitimacy depends on the right for a particular form of government to rule.²²⁰ State legitimacy depends, however, on the right for the state to exist at all.²²¹ When Chinese leaders repeatedly questioned Mongolian state legitimacy, they also threatened Ulaanbaatar's regime and government. As Connor states, delegitimizing a regime does not undermine the government nor does delegitimizing the government undermine the state.²²²

²¹⁵ Van Evera, *Hypotheses on Nationalism and War*, 10.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 11.

²¹⁸ Connor, *Nationalism and Political Illegitimacy*, 26.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 27.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*

²²¹ *Ibid.*

²²² *Ibid.*

Delegitimizing the state, however, undermines all three.²²³ As a result, Mongolian unease continued over the next decade and prompted Tsedenbal to lean towards Moscow.

The lack of state legitimacy combined with unsettled national borders increased the likelihood for confrontation.²²⁴ Also, as Van Evera notes, insecurities from unrecognized boundaries increase when they are difficult to defend.²²⁵ This scenario perfectly matched a Mongolia with ambiguous southern borders and indefensible steppe geography. For these reasons, Ulaanbaatar celebrated the 1962 settlement as a near guarantee of independence.²²⁶ Two years later, however, Mao commented to a group of Japanese reporters that, “About a hundred years ago the area east of Baikal became Russian territory, and since then Vladivostok, Khabarovsk, Kamchatka and other points have become territories of the Soviet Union. We have not yet presented the bill for this list.”²²⁷ This exasperated Mongolian officials as Mao’s claim included the entirety of their country. The Chinese attempted to downplay the remarks in the following months.²²⁸ Such threats to Mongolian national sovereignty show how Ulaanbaatar would lean towards a less threatening Moscow during the Sino-Soviet split.

D. CONCLUSION

The Sino-Mongolian alliance deterioration resulted from China’s competition with the Soviet Union combined with Mongolia’s fears of infringement on national sovereignty. Because of the imperial legacy, Mongolia did not trust China and welcomed Soviet involvement.²²⁹ This in turn made Mongolia a threat as it represented a foothold of Moscow’s power in the region once the Sino-Soviet alliance began to deteriorate. When it saw it could not reverse Soviet involvement in Mongolia, China effectively split

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Van Evera, *Hypotheses on Nationalism and War*, 22.

²²⁵ Ibid., 21.

²²⁶ Radchenko, “Soviets’ Best Friend in Asia,” 7–8.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Ibid., 2.

with the MPR by withdrawing its attempt at bribery. In conclusion, the Sino-Mongolian split resulted from the combination of Mongolian concerns for national sovereignty and China's failure to compete with another great power for Ulaanbaatar's loyalties. This led to Beijing seeing the MPR as a conduit of Soviet presence and its splitting of the Mongolian alliance.

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IV. THE SINO-NORTH VIETNAMESE SPLIT

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on China's unofficial alliance with the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV). As with the Mongolian case, the high degree of cooperation and assistance over an extended period of time showed how this relationship had characteristics similar to a formal alliance, per the framework laid out in the introductory chapter. In turn, it becomes a valuable example for understanding the characteristics of other formal and informal PRC alliances, and their potential to break.

The Sino-North Vietnamese friendship began with the 1950 PRC recognition of the communist regime in Hanoi.²³⁰ During the subsequent amiable period between the two, however, the DRV did not solely align with Beijing. Instead, the Sino-Soviet split gave North Vietnam another great power to benefit from during its costly war for national unification. This led to competition between the USSR and China and concerns over Moscow's advances in the region. As a result, Beijing admonished Hanoi for accepting Soviet aid and eventually came to terms with Washington as a means to limit Moscow's power.²³¹ This history shows that the deterioration of the Sino-North Vietnamese alliance stemmed from a combination of Sino-Soviet competition for allies and the DRV's tenacity to fulfil its goal of extending national sovereignty over the entirety of Vietnam. The final 1974–1975 split occurred, however, when Beijing saw the DRV as a conduit for Soviet power in the region. This chapter will proceed with a historic overview of this informal alliance followed by an analytic study of the role of great power politics, political ideology, and national sovereignty.

²³⁰ Ross, *Indochina Tangle*, 19.

²³¹ Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars*, 136.

B. HISTORY OF THE ALLIANCE: AMITY, DETERIORATION, AND SPLIT

1. Relations Leading to Alliance: pre-1949

Long before the Sino-North Vietnamese split, China and Vietnam had a tumultuous relationship. Over the series of two thousand years, Vietnam resisted numerous Chinese invasions or incursions.²³² Yet Vietnam also cooperated with China as various political groups in Hanoi became interdependent with their northern counterparts.²³³ This trend continued after 1883 when Vietnam became colonized by France.²³⁴ As a French Communist Party member during the 1920s, Ho Chi Minh collaborated with his Chinese equivalents to include Liu Shaoqi and Zhou Enlai.²³⁵ Also, throughout the decade he actively supported labor movements in southern China.²³⁶ After founding the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP) in 1930, he created a liaison network for ICP members in southern China.²³⁷ By 1941, Ho led the effort to create the Viet Minh as a nationalist organization and following Japan's surrender in 1945, seized power in Hanoi and declared the establishment of the DRV.²³⁸

During the remainder of the 1940s, the DRV harbored Chinese Communist units fighting against the Nationalists. In return, CCP troops trained Viet Minh fighters for their conflict with France and provided sporadic funding to Hanoi.²³⁹ This continued until 1949 when Mao established the PRC and the DRV sent envoys seeking substantial Chinese assistance.²⁴⁰ Beijing responded by recognizing Hanoi and entering into a period

²³² Ross, *Indochina Tangle*, 5.

²³³ Kim Ninh, *Vietnam: Struggle and Cooperation in Asian Security Practice: Material and Ideational Influences*, ed. Muthiah Alagappa (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 445.

²³⁴ Oscar Chapuis, *A History of Vietnam: From Hong Bang to Tu Duc* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995), 195.

²³⁵ Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars*, 10.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 11.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 12.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

of collaboration that reached a “significant level of security cooperation,”²⁴¹ and attained one of the conditions described by this thesis as comprising an alliance.

2. Initial Amiable Relations: 1950–1966

For 16 years following Beijing’s January 1950 recognition of the DRV, the unofficial Sino-North Vietnamese alliance went through a golden period.²⁴² During this time, historic animosities fell to the wayside as China and North Vietnam enjoyed amiable relations before other factors initiated the deterioration in their relationship. After officially opening ties with the DRV,²⁴³ Beijing became the primary benefactor to Hanoi’s war with France by providing weapons, delivering aid, and sending a large contingent of personnel to assist in the conflict. Between 1949 and 1954, China trained 40,000 North Vietnamese soldiers while upwards to 7,000 of its own troops and advisors became involved in the conflict.²⁴⁴ The PRC also oversaw the war’s conclusion in 1954 when it partnered with the Soviet Union and negotiated a peace agreement at the Geneva Accords.²⁴⁵ Although many in the DRV leadership resented China’s willingness to compromise on Vietnamese unity,²⁴⁶ Hanoi continued accepting Beijing as its main sponsor.

Over the next six years, China became the primary aid giver to the DRV by providing food, technical expertise, and training to North Vietnamese workers.²⁴⁷ Beijing also delivered grants for various projects to include a cement plant, power station, and cotton mill.²⁴⁸ The DRV reciprocated when China’s relationship with the Soviet Union deteriorated and Hanoi initially sided with Beijing.²⁴⁹

²⁴¹ Walt, “Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power,” 9.

²⁴² Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars*, 15.

²⁴³ Ross, *Indochina Tangle*, 19.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁵ Ninh, *Vietnam: Struggle and Cooperation*, 448.

²⁴⁶ Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars*, 58.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.* 70–71.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁹ Ross, *Indochina Tangle*, 20–21.

By the late 1950s, however, the Sino-Soviet alliance deterioration began to intensify and resulted in competition for the allegiance of fellow communist states. Both China and the Soviet Union began to use bribery and penetration as means to attract adherents to their own ideological camps. This proved crucial for the loyalties of a DRV still embroiled in a costly war of unification. After 1958, the Soviets began offering more aid, which caused North Vietnam to sympathize with Moscow.²⁵⁰ Although this provided a setback for Beijing, China could downplay the loss because Hanoi still shared the same confrontationalist policy against the West.²⁵¹ Yet by 1962, the pendulum swung back. Khrushchev demanded that North Vietnam take a firm position in the Sino-Soviet dispute and when it failed to do so, the Soviets decided to disengage from Indochina and reduce their aid to Hanoi.²⁵² Predictably, this policy change made North Vietnam more dependent on China and resulted in support for the PRC.²⁵³ As a result, in December 1964, Beijing and Hanoi signed a military assistance agreement in which China sent PLA forces into the DRV to free North Vietnamese troops for combat in the south.²⁵⁴

After Khrushchev's fall in 1964, however, Soviet leadership no longer forced North Vietnam to choose between the PRC and USSR.²⁵⁵ Moscow instead increased its support to the DRV, and Hanoi gradually swung back to the Soviet camp.²⁵⁶ This reversal began when a February 1965 delegation led by Premier Alexei Kosygin visited Hanoi, arranged economic and military aid, and formulated a joint communique that Moscow regarded as a major military commitment to North Vietnam.²⁵⁷ Additionally,

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Nicholas Khoo, *Collateral Damage: Sino-Soviet Rivalry and the Termination of the Sino-Vietnamese Alliance* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2011), 22–23.

²⁵³ Ross, *Indochina Tangle*, 22.

²⁵⁴ Khoo, *Collateral Damage*, 30.

²⁵⁵ Ibid., 22.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 25.

Soviet officials attempted to work closely with their North Vietnamese counterparts and did not pressure them to choose sides when Beijing attempted to match their commitments.²⁵⁸

Additionally, Soviet aid proposals aimed to drive wedges between the PRC and DRV by proposing a united front between communist states that China would surely reject. Despite their own alliance split, Moscow and Beijing formulated a limited scale of coordinated aid to Hanoi. On 30 March 1965, the Soviets and Chinese made an agreement in which Moscow could transport aid through China via ground transportation.²⁵⁹ Yet Mao did not agree to this purely out of communist solidarity and reconciliation. An outright refusal to the Soviets would damage his relations with North Vietnam. Yet such cooperation had its limitations. On 3 April 1965, the Soviets proposed a large-scale coordinated response to the Vietnam War.²⁶⁰ Moscow requested that China allow the transit of 4,000 Soviet troops, Soviet use of Chinese airfields, and an access corridor over Chinese airspace.²⁶¹ Mao flatly rejected this, accused Moscow of trying to control China and colluding with the United States.²⁶² This refusal in turn damaged China's image in the communist world and its relationship with the DRV.

Additionally, Beijing delayed Soviet aid that transited through China even when it conformed to the March 1965 agreement. The Soviet Union had an array of technically advanced weaponry that could help provide a defense to U.S. air bombardment that China could not. After the introduction of U.S. combat troops and heavy bombing campaigns in 1965, the Soviet Union and North Vietnam signed a joint communique in March and then a military assistance agreement in July.²⁶³ Yet the SA-2s, radar, and

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ Ibid.

crated MIG-21s²⁶⁴ that the DRV highly prized for air defense often remained held-up at Chinese borders.²⁶⁵ From the beginning of the aid-transit agreement through the remainder of the decade, trainloads of surface to air missiles and antiaircraft guns became choked in PRC inspections and the disorder of the Cultural Revolution.²⁶⁶ Indeed, these inspections led to suspicions of Chinese of pilfering as certain equipment would have missing components once delivered to North Vietnam.²⁶⁷

To dispel this apparent lack of commitment and to compete with Soviet aid, Beijing increased its own assistance to Hanoi. In the spring of 1965, China announced its intentions to defend North Vietnam by sending a message of deterrence to the United States indirectly through Pakistani President Ayub Khan and British diplomat Donald Charles Hopson.²⁶⁸ As a means to avoid confrontation with Washington, the Chinese agreed not to enter the war as long as U.S. troops remained below the seventeenth parallel.²⁶⁹ Besides from offering a deterrent from U.S. invasion, the PRC contributed a vast amount of personnel and materiel to Hanoi. From August 1965–March 1969, China sent 320,000 troops to North Vietnam.²⁷⁰ Over the same period, China sent 868,700 guns, 22,700 artillery pieces, and 674 million rounds of ammunition.²⁷¹

Although it donated heavily to the DRV, Beijing became increasingly vocal in its dissatisfaction in North Vietnam's acceptance of Soviet aid. For example, In March 1965, Chinese officials began warning Hanoi about becoming too close to the Soviets. Zhou Enlai told Ho Chi Minh:

²⁶⁴ Central Intelligence Agency, *The Sino-Soviet Dispute on Aid to North Vietnam* (Langley, VA: Central Intelligence Agency, 1968), 3.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 2–3.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, iii.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

²⁶⁸ Khoo, *Collateral Damage*, 31.

²⁶⁹ Ross, *Indochina Tangle*, 24–25.

²⁷⁰ Khoo, *Collateral Damage*, 31.

²⁷¹ Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars*, 136.

We should keep an eye on their [the Soviets] activities namely their transportation of weapons and military training. Otherwise, the relations between our two countries [China and North Vietnam] may turn from good to bad, thus affecting cooperation between our two countries.²⁷²

This was followed by additional meetings in October and November 1965 when Zhou again criticized Moscow's increasing access to the DRV.²⁷³ In effect, these early criticisms foreshadowed the next 10 years of Sino-North Vietnamese relations. Beijing and Moscow's bribery turned into a bidding war and resulted in the straining of Sino-North Vietnamese relations and an end to their 1950–1966 golden era.

3. Deterioration of the Alliance: 1966–1974

As the war progressed, North Vietnamese actions exacerbated Chinese suspicions of Soviet penetration in the region. In March 1966, DRV leader Le Duan traveled to Moscow and declared the Soviet Union his other homeland.²⁷⁴ This statement caused consternation among Chinese leadership and prompted Beijing to decrease aid to Hanoi.²⁷⁵ Because of his comments, China refused the DRV's request to retain a Chinese People's Volunteer Engineering Force (CPVEF) division and instead withdrew this unit.²⁷⁶ Also, Chinese volunteers reported a dramatic cooling from their Vietnamese hosts, causing them to feel that "something was wrong in the Chinese-Vietnamese relationship."²⁷⁷

Additionally North Vietnamese leadership began disregarding Chinese advice on war strategy. Starting from 1967–1968, to China's dismay, DRV leaders entertained notions of negotiating with the United States.²⁷⁸ China objected to this course of action; however, on 3 April 1968, North Vietnam accepted talks at the Paris Peace Conference,

²⁷² Khoo, *Collateral Damage*, 33.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, 34.

²⁷⁴ Chen, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, 232.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 230.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 234.

which frustrated Beijing.²⁷⁹ This led to confrontation as exemplified by Foreign Minister Chen Yi and Chief Negotiator Le Duc Tho engaging in a heated exchange over the issue and accusing each other of making fundamental errors in foreign policy.²⁸⁰ Additionally, the DRV began ignoring advice from Beijing on military strategy in favor for Moscow. China preferred a mid-intensity conflict that would preclude a U.S. expansion and undercut the need for Soviet advanced equipment.²⁸¹ Yet Hanoi opted for general offensives and positional warfare that necessitated modern Soviet weaponry.²⁸² For example, the DRV launched the Tet Offensive contrary to PRC military suggestions for “protracted war, guerrilla warfare, [and] small battles.”²⁸³ As Beijing failed to compete with Moscow, PRC antiaircraft and engineering troops began departing North Vietnam from 1969–1970.²⁸⁴

By the end of the decade, an increase in Beijing’s threat perceptions of Moscow, partially attributed to the Soviet-North Vietnamese relationship, led to a shift toward rapprochement with Washington. This policy had the risk, however, of agitating Hanoi and driving it closer to Moscow. To ameliorate this, Chinese leaders made several state visits to reassure DRV leadership.²⁸⁵ Also, to make amends for the U.S. rapprochement, the PRC increased small arms shipments to North Vietnam. For example, the PRC supplied 101,800 firearms to Hanoi in 1970.²⁸⁶ This increased over the series of two years and reached to 233,600 in 1973.²⁸⁷

²⁷⁹ Khoo, *Collateral Damage*, 39.

²⁸⁰ Chen, *Mao’s China and the Cold War*, 234.

²⁸¹ Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars*, 178–179.

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ Ibid.

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

²⁸⁵ Ibid., 194.

²⁸⁶ Ibid., 136.

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

Yet such moves did not assuage a disgruntled DRV. After Henry Kissinger's second trip to China in 1971, Prime Minister Pham Van Dong visited Beijing.²⁸⁸ He met both Mao and Zhou and asked them to cancel the upcoming Richard Nixon visit.²⁸⁹ He claimed that the DRV had supported PRC recognition in the UN and in return Beijing betrayed Hanoi.²⁹⁰ The Nixon visit continued, however, and despite a follow-on trip by Zhou to Hanoi, the North Vietnamese saw the Chinese as selling-out the international communist movement for national self-interest.²⁹¹ To attempt to dispel these concerns of PRC betrayal, Beijing continued to herald its support to North Vietnam. It sent vessels to conduct mine-clearing operations in Haiphong from July-August 1972. It also built oil pipelines between the two countries in May 1972.²⁹²

4. Alliance Split: 1974–1975

Within a few years, the alliance between the two had become overly strained, which resulted in territorial bickering between Hanoi and Beijing. For example, North Vietnam wanted to prospect for oil in the Tonkin Gulf; however, disagreements over maritime boundaries derailed this effort. Additionally in January 1974, China seized several of the Paracel Islands from the much weakened South Vietnam. In the following year, the DRV occupied several of the Spratly Islands that were also claimed by China. Previously, these issues had remained sidelined; however, they now became indicative of an impending alliance split.²⁹³

Over the next year, Beijing dismissed a soon to be unified Vietnam as a Soviet satellite and shrank its assistance while Soviet aid increased. For example, Moscow fully funded Hanoi's final 1975 assault on the South, while China aided North Vietnam's rival

²⁸⁸ Ibid., 198–199.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

²⁹¹ Ibid., 201.

²⁹² Ibid., 203.

²⁹³ Ibid., 208–210.

the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia.²⁹⁴ Additionally, Vietnam had ambitions of controlling the remainder of Indochina and needed Soviet support to do so. In mid-1975, Hanoi took control of Laos and then began prosecuting a war against the Chinese-backed Khmer Rouge.²⁹⁵ The Soviets continued to fund these efforts. In May 1975, Moscow cancelled all of Hanoi's debt, valued at \$450 million.²⁹⁶ In April 1976, Soviet deputy prime minister Ivan Arkhipov agreed to continue economic assistance to Vietnam.²⁹⁷ Additionally, in December 1976, Moscow pledged \$11–13 billion to Hanoi's next five year plan.²⁹⁸ Also, from 1976–1979, bilateral trade between Moscow and Hanoi rose from \$392.8–\$942.5 million.²⁹⁹

As an example of how the Sino-North Vietnamese alliance had deteriorated by this point, China made overt commitments to assist a besieged Saigon prior to final reunification. At an April 1975 banquet for South Vietnamese officials in Beijing, Vice Premier Li Xiannian committed a shipment of humanitarian assistance for Saigon as the city became engulfed in the DRV invasion.³⁰⁰ The South Vietnamese delegation interpreted this stance as both a signal for continued contacts with their government and an admonishment to Hanoi for its dependence on the Soviets.³⁰¹ Additionally, Beijing refused to provide postwar reconstruction to a then united Vietnam while it gave Hanoi's rival in Cambodia a five-year aid package of \$1 billion.³⁰² With this clear split between the PRC and DRV, animosity grew over the next five years and eventually led to a formal Soviet-Vietnamese alliance and a Sino-Vietnamese border war only four years later.³⁰³

²⁹⁴ Khoo, *Collateral Damage*, 100.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 115.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 111.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 99.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*

³⁰² Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars*, 213.

³⁰³ Khoo, *Collateral Damage*, 136.

C. ANALYSIS OF THE SPLIT

The following section will draw upon the history of the Sino-North Vietnamese alliance and attempt to determine the causal factors in its deterioration and split. It examines the roles of great power politics, political ideology, and national sovereignty. As a result it determines that Beijing ended the alliance after the DRV allowed its ambitions for extending national sovereignty to facilitate a willing and able competitive power into the region.

1. Great Power Politics: Competition for the Junior Ally

The involvement of another great power provided a critical factor in the unraveling of the Sino-North Vietnamese alliance. This manifested through Soviet assistance after 1964 when Moscow offered aid without the Khrushchev-era condition for the DRV to choose sides in the Sino-Soviet polemics. When the Soviets did so, they enacted what Timothy Crawford describes as a general linkage where bribes remained free of specific conditions.³⁰⁴ This offer gave North Vietnam access to a substantial amount of material assistance while retaining political freedom. As such, Soviet aid became more appealing and Moscow began to replace Beijing as the main benefactor to Hanoi. Additionally, this replacement of Chinese sponsorship coincided with what Crawford identifies as compensation for losses incurred from abandoning the original benefactor.³⁰⁵ As such, Soviet assistance offered the DRV rewards that outweighed the costs of veering away from China.³⁰⁶

Hanoi had a high level of dependence on external actors; however, Soviet aid gave the DRV flexibility in its relationship with the PRC. As Stephen Walt claims, bribery rarely gives the benefactor political leverage because the recipient state can usually substitute this aid from somewhere else.³⁰⁷ This theory held true because China

³⁰⁴ Crawford, *Preventing Enemy Coalitions*, 167–168.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 159.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 164.

³⁰⁷ Walt, “Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power,” 28–29.

provided aid that Moscow could easily substitute. As such, North Vietnamese dependence on China decreased while its leverage increased. As Glenn Snyder claims, if a recipient has a low degree of dependence on a benefactor, the credibility of the benefactor's threats will be low.³⁰⁸ Thus the decreased dependence on Beijing made the DRV impervious to China's admonishments over war tactics. Additionally, the DRV's lower dependence on China allowed it to protest PRC actions it considered unacceptable. Beijing's rapprochement with the United States damaged the Sino-North Vietnamese relationship and resulted in a backlash from DRV leadership. Hanoi claimed that Chinese leaders provided aid to "cover up their betrayal and to appease the Vietnamese people's indignation."³⁰⁹ It is hard to imagine such rhetoric if the DRV did not have the Soviets as a substitute benefactor. Had the Soviet Union remained out of the region, the Sino-North Vietnamese alliance would probably have remained intact as Hanoi would have no alternative and no leverage over Beijing.

Additionally, Moscow better accommodated the DRV by providing non-substitutable assets.³¹⁰ Both China and the Soviet Union had North Vietnam as an ally in the early 1960s and, as Walt theorized, bribery provided a useful tool to enhance their alliances.³¹¹ Yet Moscow better used this tool because of Crawford's assertion; the DRV valued its commodities, the commodities were non-substitutable, and the Soviets had a monopoly on them.³¹² The DRV reassessed the benefits of Soviet and Chinese aid by the mid-1960s as strategies that defeated France and strained South Vietnam became inadequate. This occurred after the United States became involved in the Vietnam War and Hanoi needed the advanced equipment only Moscow could provide.³¹³ The DRV saw the Chinese-styled people's war, which involved small arms tactics, as ineffective

³⁰⁸ Snyder, *Alliance Politics*, 168.

³⁰⁹ Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars*, 196.

³¹⁰ Crawford, *Preventing Enemy Coalitions*, 158.

³¹¹ Walt, "Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power," 9, 15.

³¹² Crawford, *Preventing Enemy Coalitions*, 161.

³¹³ Ross, *Indochina Tangle*, 22.

against the United States.³¹⁴ This appraisal held especially true when considering U.S. bombing campaigns that required advanced surface to air missiles and systems China could not deliver.³¹⁵

Beijing responded to Soviet aid by continuing to provide conventional weaponry that could easily be replaced. Predictably, China's attempt to compete with small arms, ammunition, and vehicles failed to pull the DRV away from Soviet assistance. The advanced weaponry that Hanoi prized, such as SA-2s and modern radar suits, were only available from the USSR. As Snyder claims, a state will resist bargaining when asked to give up a high-value commodity for a low-value commodity in return.³¹⁶ As such, this lower-valued, substitutable Chinese aid could not break the DRV's growing dependency on Moscow.³¹⁷ Yet Beijing continued to offer assistance for a decade despite this trend. Walt would suggest that this occurred because a supplier remains reluctant to withdraw aid because it fears total loss of its ally.³¹⁸ This scenario exacerbates when the benefactor considers the recipient particularly important.³¹⁹ This theory held true for a China that considered the security of its southern periphery as crucial to preventing encirclement by the United States and the Soviet Union. When the DRV became irretrievably dependent on the Soviets, however, the PRC no longer saw the utility in bearing the costs of aid provision.³²⁰ It abandoned its attempts at mending and instead broke off the alliance. With this relinquishment, Beijing effectively ended the Sino-North Vietnamese alliance.

2. The Role of Political Ideology

Political ideology played a nominal role in the split. Prior to the establishment of the DRV, ideology provided a political framework for the Vietnamese national

³¹⁴ Khoo, *Collateral Damage*, 25.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*

³¹⁶ Snyder, *Alliance Politics*, 170.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 167.

³¹⁸ Walt, "Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power," 28–29.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*

³²⁰ Walt, "Why Alliances Endure or Collapse," 158.

movement. As seen with Hanoi's seesawing between the PRC and Soviet Union, however, ideological interpretations mattered little when compared to the immediate conflict for national sovereignty through independence and unification.

Similarly, during the 1960s–1970s, the PRC showed little interest in Hanoi's domestic and economic policies.³²¹ Unlike the vitriolic rhetoric stemming from the Sino-Soviet split, no strong North Vietnamese anti-revisionism campaign existed in China.³²² As a result, Beijing and Hanoi did not have the same bitter round of attacks seen during the Sino-Soviet Nine Polemics from 1963–1964.³²³ Despite the de-emphasis of ideological differences between Hanoi and Beijing, the PRC still needed to cautiously frame its realignment with the United States after 1972. By this time, China wanted to counterbalance the Soviet Union; however, it did not want to ruin its reputation in the communist world either.³²⁴ To do so could thwart its position as a leader in the Marxist-Leninist camp and diminish its ability to compete with its main rival, the Soviet Union.

3. The Role of National Sovereignty

The DRV pursuit of extended national sovereignty led to 30 years of war, provided motivation to accept PRC and Soviet war aid, and became the second critical factor in the Sino-North Vietnamese split. Stephen Van Evera would suggest that this movement did so by creating a disrupted political environment. Hanoi had yet to normalize its relations with its neighbors to include its counterpart in the South and this led to instability.³²⁵ Additionally, two attributes of nationalism applied to the Vietnamese case that increased the likelihood of conflict. These included unrealized independence prior to 1954 and the fragmentation of the nation thereafter.³²⁶ Unlike Mongolia, Chinese annexationist ambitions did not endanger North Vietnamese national sovereignty.

³²¹ Ross, *Indochina Tangle*, 17.

³²² *Ibid.*

³²³ Khoo, *Collateral Damage*, 16.

³²⁴ Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars*, 207–208.

³²⁵ Van Evera, *Hypotheses on Nationalism and War*, 11.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, 10.

Instead, France, the United States, and South Vietnam provided the threat to this movement. Initially, France blocked Vietnamese independence. Later, South Vietnam and the United States blocked Vietnamese unification. Thus, North Vietnam took a position on this conflict that Van Evera describes as diaspora-annexing.³²⁷ Diaspora-annexing policy involves the national movement seeking union through territorial conquest, which then leads to conflict.³²⁸ Hanoi had such a stance against Saigon, as it attempted to annex and unify the entirety of the Vietnamese nationalist movement. In turn, unrealized independence and fragmentation led to decades of war that required substantial foreign assistance.

The costs in obtaining national sovereignty would require acceptance of aid from any willing party. Walt downplays the relevance of bribery in alliance building, instead seeing it as a result of an alliance rather than the cause.³²⁹ Yet in order to realize its goals, Hanoi had to rely on outside support to match the superior resources of Western powers. In this way, China and the Soviet Union became critical benefactors to the North Vietnamese cause. The Sino-Soviet split then offered a situation where bribery played a more important role to alliance sustainment than Walt would suggest. The necessity for war aid combined with this rivalry created a zero-sum game where two rivals competed for the loyalty of their mutual North Vietnamese ally. In this way, national sovereignty became a key factor in the split-causing equation.

D. CONCLUSION

Like Mongolia, the Sino-North Vietnamese case shows how China's alliances falter when the junior partner allows contending powers into Beijing's near periphery. The DRV waged a costly war for national sovereignty that required outside assistance. A willing Soviet Union engaged North Vietnam by attempting to supply aid and mentorship while China attempted to compete. By the mid-1970s, however, Beijing saw Hanoi as an irrecoverable channel for a rival power. These factors then led to China splitting with the

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, 12.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*

³²⁹ Walt, "Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power," 8.

newly unified Vietnam by the mid-1970s. The Sino-North Vietnamese split thus shows that the pursuit of extended national sovereignty provided the motivation for a junior ally to accept another great power's aid, facilitate its entry into the region, and suffer Beijing's termination of the alliance.

E. INTRODUCTION

The Soviet, Mongolian, and North Vietnamese cases offer unique scenarios for analyzing PRC alliance splits. Additionally, all three provide potential insight into Beijing's future relations with great and small partners. To appreciate the applicability to today's environment, however, it becomes essential to recognize trends and patterns in these splits. In the Soviet case, ideological differences led China to perceive its one-time ally as an impending threat. Yet confronting the USSR indirectly endangered PRC alliances with smaller mutual partners to include Mongolia and North Vietnam. In these cases, concerns for national sovereignty caused weaker allies to lean toward the competing Soviets and their alliances with China entered a period of deterioration. Eventually, China perceived them as irreconcilable conduits of Soviet power in the region, and split with them. In today's environment, Mongolia and North Vietnam offer the most applicable case studies as they reveal how alliances degrade and break when junior allies facilitate other great powers into China's periphery.

F. GREAT POWER SPLITS

In the Sino-Soviet case, China formed an alliance with a neighboring great power as a means to counter-balance the hazard of an ideologically threatening United States. After Soviet political reforms, however, Chinese leadership saw Moscow as a greater emerging threat to their legitimacy. Independence in Chinese foreign policy and Beijing's verbal attacks set about a period of steadily degrading relations. Since Moscow did not yield to Beijing's criticisms and demands for parity, rhetorical attacks increased, cooperation decreased and the alliance became ineffective by 1963–1964. These events show how China's alliance with another great power became strained and eventually broke because of an ideological factor that inflated China's threat perception and caused it to rebalance against that threat.

G. LESSER POWER SPLITS

The equation that led to the Mongolian and North Vietnamese splits was more complicated. When China and the Soviet Union split, these mutual allies found themselves balancing between the two sides. In both cases, concerns for some aspect of national sovereignty drove them towards China's competitor and deteriorated their PRC alliance. Mongolia had a history of subjugation by China that when combined with re-annexationist rhetoric from the PRC made Ulaanbaatar wary about its relationship with Beijing. Additionally, North Vietnam fought a war for national liberation and unification that made it willing to accept any means necessary to achieve its goal. This included the acceptance of outside aid from powers other than China.

These factors motivated these countries into increasing the access of a willing and able competitive power. The Sino-Mongolian alliance deteriorated when PRC threats to national sovereignty combined with an increase of Soviet competition for Ulaanbaatar. Similarly, the Sino-North Vietnamese alliance deteriorated when DRV aspirations to extend national sovereignty combined with Moscow's competition for Hanoi. In both cases, Beijing and Moscow used material aid in an attempt at bribery. The inability of the PRC to compete resulted, however, in the final split by Beijing. This outcome shows that PRC alliances became brittle when based on bribery and bidding wars.

Mongolia and North Vietnam's position in the alliance makes these two examples the most relevant for today's environment. Presently, the PRC's informal and formal allies consist of small states. Countries such as Pakistan, Myanmar, and North Korea may exhibit some of the same traits that would initiate the deterioration of relations followed by an eventual split by China. Since another great power's access to China's near periphery provides a critical factor into China's split with allies, it becomes important to recognize if and when these states might provide such access. Additionally it is important to identify any factors that would provide them the motivation to do so. In modern East Asia, concerns over political ideology or national sovereignty may still provide the second critical factor for a split.

H. CONCLUSION

When junior partners provide a conduit for a competing power, they prompt Beijing to terminate the alliance. The Mongolian and North Vietnamese cases reveal that ambitions to defend or extend national sovereignty provide the motivation for these junior partners to do so. As China's alliances with small states are most applicable in today's environment it becomes more essential to apply these lessons of the past to a contemporary case such as North Korea. In doing so, this thesis can determine if North Korea's condition satisfies the equation of a small Chinese ally having similar concerns for ideology or national sovereignty that would motivate it into accepting support from another power that is willing and able to compete with China.

V. THE SINO-NORTH KOREAN ALLIANCE

A. INTRODUCTION

The next chapter of this thesis will focus on the formal Sino-North Korean alliance and its potential to split. For over 60 years, Pyongyang has aligned with Beijing despite occasional tension in their relationship. Currently, North Korean noncompliance with nuclear and missile negotiations creates tension between the two allies. Although Beijing punishes its junior partner with temporary oil withholdings and support for UN sanctions, North Korea still benefits from Chinese security and assistance.

The Sino-Soviet, Sino-Mongolian, and Sino-North Vietnamese splits provide a framework for analyzing the durability of the current Sino-North Korean alliance. As seen with the small-state cases, PRC alliances deteriorate when the lesser partner provides regional access to a competing great power. In the modern environment, the PRC has several regional and world contenders that could substitute for Soviet competition. The likelihood of Pyongyang taking this route is low; however, as North Korea remains unthreatened by ideological competition with Beijing and an extension of its national sovereignty is undesirable. Additionally, opening to the new competitors such as Washington, Tokyo, or Seoul would likely have a destabilizing effect on the regime. Since North Korea cannot afford to provide access to China's competitors and Beijing desires to maintain the status quo, the Sino-North Korean alliance will remain intact despite missile and nuclear provocations. This chapter will proceed by briefly covering the history of the Sino-North Korean alliance. It will then examine the potential for great power politics, political ideology, and national sovereignty to undermine the relationship. Finally, this chapter will explore the various reasons for China to maintain the alliance.

B. HISTORY OF THE ALLIANCE

1. Relations During the Cold War: 1950–1989

Beijing's emphasis of the strategic importance of the Korean peninsula stems back hundreds of years. This neck of territory often became a conduit of invasion into China's northern provinces. To protect its interests, Beijing has historically attempted to

secure Korea. In the nineteenth century, for example, China tried to deny Japanese access to the peninsula as Tokyo's 1876 opening of Korea represented a competing power's encroachment on China's near periphery.³³⁰ Yet the resulting Sino-Japanese War in 1894 saw China lose suzerainty over the area. For the next 50 years, Korea became a springboard of invasions into mainland China until Japan's defeat in World War II.

After the establishment of the PRC, China again fought for control of the Korean peninsula as a means to deny access to a competing power. Beijing's determination to do so, while enduring institutional inexperience, endemic poverty, and a lack of preparation, shows the importance placed on this goal.³³¹ Although unsuccessful in securing the entire peninsula, the salvaging of North Korea as a separate state provided an adequate bulwark against the West. To support this buffer, China provided food, clothing, equipment, and monetary loans to Pyongyang throughout the war.³³² When the conflict ended, it cancelled these debts and repaired North Korean infrastructure.³³³ These actions along with PRC rhetoric highlighted the importance placed on North Korea. In November 1953, Mao stated, "without Korean people's heroic struggles, there is no guarantee for the security of Chinese people . . . Whereas North Korea is the frontline, China constitutes the second line"³³⁴ Through the remainder of the decade China reiterated this notion by continuing its aid flow. From 1954–1957, China provided grants in the amount of \$320 million while trade accounted for 27 percent of North Korea's total.³³⁵

Despite its reliance on Chinese aid and security, however, Pyongyang acted independently and often agitated Beijing. It did so because Kim Il-sung remained

³³⁰ Donald S. Zagoria, "China, Russia and the Two Koreas," in *Korea and China in a New World: Beyond Normalization*, ed. Kim, Ilpyong J., Lee, Hong Pyo (Seoul, KR: Sejong Institute, 1993), 64.

³³¹ Ralph N. Clough, *Embattled Korea: The Rivalry for International Support* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1987), 259.

³³² *Ibid.*, 262.

³³³ *Ibid.*

³³⁴ Jae Ho Hung and Myung-hae Choi, "Uncertain Allies Or Uncomfortable Neighbors? Making Sense of China-North Korea Relations 1949–2010," *The Pacific Review* 26, no. 3 (2013), 246.

³³⁵ Clough, *Embattled Korea*, 262.

suspicious of China's intentions to limit North Korean autonomy.³³⁶ In 1956, Kim had pro-Chinese officials purged and demanded the withdrawal of PRC troops who departed two years later.³³⁷ Additionally, North Korea tried to remain neutral during the Sino-Soviet dispute. Like Hanoi, Khrushchev's pressure on wavering communist states alienated Pyongyang.³³⁸ This position then led to North Korea leaning towards China and in July 1961, Pyongyang signed a mutual security treaty with Beijing.³³⁹ Also, North Korea gave support to China during its conflicts with India and disputes with Moscow.³⁴⁰ After Khrushchev's removal, however, Pyongyang sought to strengthen its ties with the Soviet Union, which subsequently damaged its relations with Beijing.³⁴¹

By the mid to late-1960s, relations continued to sour due to Pyongyang's better relationship with Moscow and the ill effects of the Cultural Revolution. During the upheaval of this period, China made territorial claims on North Korea, which resulted in border clashes from 1967–1969.³⁴² Illustrating this low point, trade decreased between the two and accounted for only 13 percent of the North Korean total by 1970.³⁴³ This figure paled in comparison to the 40 percent share from the Soviet Union.³⁴⁴ Although relations improved in the early 1970s, the 1978 Chinese treaty of friendship with Japan and the normalization of relations with the United States in 1979 were in contradiction with North Korean policy.³⁴⁵ Kim pressed for confrontation with the United States while Chinese leaders instead sought rapprochement.

³³⁶ Hung and Choi, "Uncertain Allies," 247.

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ Clough, *Embattled Korea*, 265.

³³⁹ Ibid., 259.

³⁴⁰ Ibid., 265.

³⁴¹ Ibid.

³⁴² Ibid., 260.

³⁴³ Ibid., 262.

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

³⁴⁵ Ibid., 265–267.

As the Cold War abated, China continued supporting North Korea but also changed its strategy to secure the peninsula. During the 1980s, Beijing offered discounted prices on oil while Chinese and North Korean delegations regularly conducted visits.³⁴⁶ Yet China began its own economic reforms and pursued closer ties with historic rivals as a means to modernize. This new policy reflected in its Korean strategy. Beijing now committed itself to multi-party talks to stabilize the peninsula while encouraging Pyongyang to accept its style of economic reform.³⁴⁷ These changes added to North Korean distrust for Beijing and the growing incentive to develop ballistic missiles and nuclear weapons.³⁴⁸

2. Relations Following the Cold War: 1990–Present

With the end of the Cold War and the disappearance of the Soviet Union, China has become the single benefactor to North Korea. This continues despite Pyongyang's pursuit of rockets and nuclear weapons, which often leads to international crises and strains in the Sino-North Korean alliance. The first such strain occurred during North Korean nuclear testing from 1993–1994.³⁴⁹ China's subsequent warnings to its junior partner eventually led to negotiations with the United States and a postponement of Pyongyang's nuclear program.³⁵⁰ Later in the decade, while following its New Security Concept policy, Beijing continued to promote multilateral approaches to address security concerns on the peninsula.³⁵¹ This position reflected in China's strong participation in the Six Party Talks to negotiate the nuclear issue.³⁵² Again, Beijing issued warnings to its ally to prompt its compliance. This harder stance from Beijing continued despite Kim

³⁴⁶ Ibid., 263.

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

³⁴⁸ Hung and Choi, "Uncertain Allies," 251.

³⁴⁹ Hochul Lee, "China in the North Korean Nuclear Crises: 'Interest' and 'Identity' in Foreign Behavior," *Journal of Contemporary China* 22, no. 80 (2013), 312.

³⁵⁰ Ibid., 321.

³⁵¹ Christopher Twomey, "China Policy towards North Korea and its Implications for the United States: Balancing Competing Concerns," *Strategic Insights* v, no. 7 (September 2006).

³⁵² Ibid.

Jong-il's attempt to revitalize the PRC-DPRK relationship with an official visit to China in 2000.³⁵³ Three years later, as a means to signal Pyongyang into accepting a three-party talk, Beijing briefly suspended an oil pipeline into North Korea and stationed PLA troops along the border.³⁵⁴

The Six Party Talks failed, however, to halt nuclear proliferation and over the past decade the PRC has displayed its disapproval of North Korean testing with limited punishments. Despite signaling from Beijing, Pyongyang conducted a nuclear test in October 2006.³⁵⁵ Still other tests occurred in 2009, and 2013. As a result, Beijing has taken steps to punish the DPRK by withholding oil supplies and consenting to further UN sanctions. Yet China has limited the extent of these punishments. Although it agreed to UN resolution 1874, which enacted sanctions, Beijing insisted on provisions that it would not inhibit North Korean sovereignty, security, and humanitarian assistance.³⁵⁶ Also, China continues to play an active role in managing dialogue concerning this issue. It arranges negotiations between Pyongyang and Washington, keeps talks moving forward, and assists on the resumption of dialogue.³⁵⁷

Still, North Korea has continued its cycle of provocations. In 2010 for example, Pyongyang did so several times. In March, the DPRK torpedoed and sank the South Korean warship *Choenan*.³⁵⁸ In November, it revealed a long-denied program to enrich uranium while later that year Pyongyang shelled the South Korean island of Yeonpyeong.³⁵⁹ Reflecting Beijing's annoyance with such actions, journalists and political commentators have been given permission to publicly criticize Pyongyang for

³⁵³ Bonnie Glaser and Brittany Billingsley, *Recording Chinese Priorities on the Korean Peninsula* (Washington DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2012) 7.

³⁵⁴ Twomey, "China Policy towards North Korea."

³⁵⁵ Nanto and Manyin, *China-North Korea Relations*, 3.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 11–12.

³⁵⁷ Lee, "China in the North Korean Nuclear Crises," 313.

³⁵⁸ Nanto and Manyin, *China-North Korea Relations*, 2.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

increasing tensions in the region.³⁶⁰ More recently, North Korea conducted a satellite launch in December 2012, which provided incoming PRC President Xi Jinping with his first foreign policy challenge.³⁶¹ Beijing answered by committing to a UN Security Council Resolution.³⁶² After Pyongyang's February 2013 nuclear test, the PRC Foreign Ministry issued an opposing statement and summoned its DPRK ambassador.³⁶³ This seemingly strong reaction culminated with China joining the United States in drafting UNSC Resolution 2094.³⁶⁴ Despite Beijing's position, tensions continued to increase as North Korea nullified the Korean Armistice Agreement and restarted its Yongbyon nuclear reactor while the United States made responsive shows of force.³⁶⁵

Such provocations from Pyongyang and reactions from Beijing led some analysts to speculate if China reached a juncture in its alliance with North Korea. Pyongyang's actions undermined Beijing's desire for a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula and justified Washington's continued presence in the region.³⁶⁶ This caused many in South Korea to speculate that China would shift from its special fraternal relationship with North Korea to a more normal relationship.³⁶⁷

Despite these strains in the alliance, however, the PRC has heavily invested in the DPRK. Over the past decade, China has developed a monopoly on North Korean trade, invested in its mining sector, and port infrastructure, which has increased Pyongyang's dependence on Beijing. Trade between the two began to rise in 2001³⁶⁸ and by 2010,

³⁶⁰ Ibid.,” 3.

³⁶¹ Scott Snyder and See-won Byun, “China-Korea Relations: Seeking Alignment on North Korean Policy,” *Comparative Connections* 15, no. 1 (May 2013).

³⁶² Ibid.”

³⁶³ Ibid.

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

³⁶⁵ Ibid.

³⁶⁶ Sukjoon Yoon, “South Korean Debates on China's North Korea Policy: Is President Park Listening?,” *PacNet* no. 55R (August 26, 2013), <https://csis.org/files/publication/Pac1355R.pdf>.

³⁶⁷ Ibid.

³⁶⁸ John S. Park and Song Sun Lee, *North Korea: Existential Deterrence and Diplomatic Leverage*, ed. Muthiah Alagappa (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), 284–285.

exceeded the total of North Korea's trade with all other countries.³⁶⁹ Illustrating this climb, in 2000 trade amounted to \$0.49 billion and increased to \$1.6 billion in 2005, \$3.4 billion in 2010, and then \$5.6 billion in 2011.³⁷⁰ Beijing also invested heavily in mining projects. For example, China Tonghua Iron and Steele Group invested \$875 million in the North Korean Musan Iron Mine.³⁷¹ Similarly, other groups have begun extraction for materials to include copper, molybdenum, and coal.³⁷² Also China has upgraded port facilities in North Korea in cities such as Rason and Rajin.³⁷³

C. ANALYSIS OF ALLIANCE DURABILITY

Throughout its history, China has placed a high value on securing the Korean peninsula and despite oscillations in Sino-North Korean relations, neither has strayed from their mutually beneficial alliance. When determining the reason for this durability it becomes important to examine the factors that affected previous alliance splits to include great power politics, political ideology, and national sovereignty. Also, since China made the decision to split with Mongolian and North Vietnam, it also becomes important to identify factors that motivate Beijing into retaining its alliance with the DPRK.

1. Great Power Politics: Why North Korea Rejects Competing Powers

Unlike previous Chinese allies, North Korea lacks the factors that motivate it to court another great power. During the Cold War, threats to national sovereignty did not influence Pyongyang to permanently lean toward Moscow like its contemporaries in Mongolia and North Vietnam did. The Soviet Union provided an alternative to PRC aid; however, without the urgency of a concern for national sovereignty, Pyongyang, did not commit to either side.³⁷⁴ Instead it played off Moscow and Beijing for additional

³⁶⁹ Lankov, *Real North Korea*, 179.

³⁷⁰ Park and Lee, *North Korea*, 284–285.

³⁷¹ Nanto and Manyin, *China-North Korea Relations*, 17.

³⁷² *Ibid.*, 17–18.

³⁷³ Cha, *Impossible State*, 239.

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 321.

commitments.³⁷⁵ Although this often resulted in lulls in the Sino-North Korean alliance, it kept the two from splitting. In the modern era, however, the Soviet Union has disappeared and the United States and its Western counterparts provide unlikely alternatives. The field of competing sponsors has narrowed and the implications of providing them access would destabilize the regime.

Since the fall of the Soviet Union, Westernized countries have become China's main competitors; however, the possibility of North Korea providing the West access is extremely remote. Opening to these challengers would almost certainly result in a series of destabilizing reforms for North Korea. Over the past 20 years, many outsiders have looked for North Korea to conduct these restructurings as a means to lift its population out of poverty, integrate with the world community, and begin the path toward economic modernization and recovery.³⁷⁶ Yet Pyongyang has failed to do so as these measures would lead to regime instability.³⁷⁷ Such reforms threaten the regime's hold on power as people would witness the higher living standards of other countries and demand further change.³⁷⁸

Inviting Western aid and influence would likely require Pyongyang to remove its society from international isolation. The regime maintains strict controls on the public's ability to communicate with the outside.³⁷⁹ North Korea has kept this policy in place as a means to cushion the regime from demands for economic and social reform. Even during times of increased cooperation with Seoul, Pyongyang has placed extreme limitations on North-South interactions. Limited exposure to South Korea would provide enough of a destabilizing factor. The economic disparity between the two would incentivize mass

³⁷⁵ Ibid.

³⁷⁶ Ibid., 14.

³⁷⁷ Lankov, *Real North Korea*, 109.

³⁷⁸ Ibid., 112.

³⁷⁹ Ibid., 113.

migrations of laborers and entrepreneurs across the border.³⁸⁰ This would likely cause demands for economic and political parity that Pyongyang could not provide.³⁸¹

Additionally, opening to the West would nullify the southern security threat as a major reason-for-being that provides the elite and the regime credibility. The DPRK would have to reappraise the danger posed by South Korea and the United States and explain this new relationship to its people.³⁸² This proves destabilizing as security threats have justified harsh state control measures for the past 60 years.³⁸³ To remove the southern threat would eliminate the need for a large army and internal security apparatus. The population would likely question the need to sacrifice precious food and resources for a now unnecessary military. This also applies to an internal policing structure that interferes with their daily lives under the auspice of protecting them from the West.³⁸⁴

North Korea's elites would not support opening to the West as such a move would threaten their livelihoods. As Timothy Crawford mentions, selective accommodation must offer the targeted state with rewards that would outweigh the costs of breaking with its coalition partners.³⁸⁵ Unlike other authoritarian states that undergo reformation or revolution, North Korea's elites have everything to lose and little to gain from another great power's involvement if it leads to regime change. If only including the security police, the top military personnel, and mid to high-ranking bureaucrats, the elite include five to seven percent of the population.³⁸⁶ Yet there are many lower ranking state employees that would stand to lose if an outside power encouraged domestic changes. From the low-level social workers to the Kim family dynasty, millions of people have non-transferable skills and jobs that would disappear with Western access and Stalinist collapse. As Andrei Lankov notes, a clerk or a military officer in Egypt could still expect

³⁸⁰ Ibid., 115.

³⁸¹ Ibid., 112.

³⁸² Ibid., 57–58.

³⁸³ Cha, *Impossible State*, 172.

³⁸⁴ Ibid.

³⁸⁵ Crawford, *Preventing Enemy Coalitions*, 164.

³⁸⁶ Lankov, *Real North Korea*, 115.

to have his job even after Hosni Mubarak fell.³⁸⁷ This is not so in North Korea as the lower elites have similar concerns as those at the top of the hierarchy.

The Pyongyang regime likely understands that a courtship of the West would lead to a Sino-North Korean split. Like with the Mongolian and North Vietnamese cases, unbridled encroachment of Western influence up the Korean peninsula would result in PRC aid withdrawal. As seen with North Vietnam, China began punishing Hanoi with the revocation of aid when the DRV firmly leaned towards the Soviets. As Snyder claims, a state's dependence on an alliance hinges on the benefits it receives compared to benefits from other sources.³⁸⁸ Although, South Korea, the United States, and Japan could fill the void of assistance, the immediate effects of Chinese aid withdrawal would likely have a destabilizing effect on the regime. Additionally, it remains skeptical if any of these potential competitors would be willing or able to contend with Beijing over Pyongyang. Besides from accepting an implicit confrontation with the PRC and upsetting the status quo, Western adoption of North Korea could become an overly expensive venture.

2. The Role of Political Ideology

Since different interpretations of mutual political ideology triggered the Sino-Soviet alliance split, it becomes essential to analyze its applicability to the Sino-North Korean alliance. During the Cold War, ideological differences provided some pretext to Pyongyang shifting between Moscow and Beijing. Khrushchev's destalinization campaign threatened Kim as much as it did Mao.³⁸⁹ This led to North Korea leaning towards China.³⁹⁰ During the Cultural Revolution, however, political instability and assertions of Kim being a revisionist caused North Korea to lean towards the Soviets.³⁹¹ By the 1970s, relations warmed again until the 1979 political and economic reforms by

³⁸⁷ Ibid.

³⁸⁸ Snyder, *Alliance Politics*, 166.

³⁸⁹ Cha, *Impossible State*, 29–30.

³⁹⁰ Ibid.

³⁹¹ Ibid.

Beijing.³⁹² Despite these oscillations in the relationship, ideology never led to an irreconcilable path of deterioration and split. Unlike the Sino-Soviet break, these differences never altered threat perceptions to the point of terminating the alliance. In today's environment, however, it becomes important to determine if ideological differences currently threaten either partner.

North Korea's recent refocus on ideological orthodoxy provides little threat to China. Kim Jong-un's regime has revived the *juche* interpretation of communism, which encourages self-reliance.³⁹³ This ideology promotes hardline state control of the social and economic system. The current regime advances it as a means to legitimize itself and garner memories of North Korea's most prosperous era during the 1950s–1960s.³⁹⁴ Given its confinement to North Korea and its dubious prospects, this ideology has little hope to compete with market growth and poses no threat to China's society or leadership. Thus, China has no pressing reason to split with Pyongyang based off of ideological differences.

Although ideological differences could threaten North Korea, Pyongyang's quarantine of its own people precludes instability. During the 1980s, China revised its interpretation of communism to include market-based growth while North Korea retained its orthodox model. After the end of the Cold War, China had an ideological stake in North Korea.³⁹⁵ It did not want to see the destruction of communism in Asia as had happened in Europe.³⁹⁶ Instead, it hoped to see its own style of reforms enacted by Pyongyang. Under Kim Jong-il, North Korea allowed minimal reforms as a means of preventing state collapse.³⁹⁷ Yet full ideological revisions threatened to undermine the regime. Meanwhile, China has continued embracing capitalist reforms while normalizing

³⁹² Ibid.

³⁹³ Ibid., 13.

³⁹⁴ Ibid.

³⁹⁵ Zagoria, *China, Russia and the Two Koreas*, 65.

³⁹⁶ Ibid.

³⁹⁷ Lankov, *Real North Korea*, 109.

relations with Pyongyang's main rival South Korea.³⁹⁸ The resulting prosperity of these policy decisions now provides an ever present example of North Korean inadequacy.³⁹⁹ As a result, Chinese ideological interpretations could threaten North Korean stability if China effectively pressed for change or if the regime opened to another great power more insistent on reforms.

3. The Role of National Sovereignty

Since concerns for national sovereignty laid the path for Mongolian and North Vietnamese accommodation to another great power, it becomes important to investigate the relevance of this factor in the North Korean case. Beginning in the late-1940s, both Koreas claimed national sovereignty over the other.⁴⁰⁰ For decades, Kim Il-sung sought a unified Korea under his control and promoted force to do so.⁴⁰¹ After the Korean War, however, the conflict became static as Beijing and Moscow saw high risk and little opportunity in reengaging Washington on the peninsula.⁴⁰² This difference in security environment precluded a situation comparable to the Vietnamese case. Since then, other factors have circumvented the pursuit of unification.

North Korea's Cold War-era pursuit of national sovereignty over the entire peninsula now provides a threat rather than a desirable goal. When the Cold War ended, unification evolved into a matter of a prosperous South absorbing a dysfunctional North.⁴⁰³ Since then, Seoul's politicians have debated the method, speed, and cost of doing so.⁴⁰⁴ In the North, however, unification by any means has become an undesirable vision. A negotiated path to even the loosest form of confederation would almost certainly involve unacceptable reform measures for Pyongyang. Such reforms to include

³⁹⁸ Hung and Choi, "Uncertain Allies," 252.

³⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid., 395.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid.

⁴⁰² Ibid., 250–251.

⁴⁰³ Cha, *Impossible State*, 401

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid.

the opening of society and renunciation of a southern threat would undermine the cohesion of the DPRK elite and regime. A united Seoul-led Korea would dispense with the oversized military, internal security sector, and planned economy of Pyongyang.⁴⁰⁵ All the important economic positions in a reunified northern Korea would be filled by South Koreans who have resources, education, and connections to fill new jobs.⁴⁰⁶ Even under a fantasy scenario of Pyongyang's domination of the South, unification would have the undesirable consequence of introducing an overwhelming demographic hostile to the Stalinist system. Thus North Korea has evolved from what Van Evera describes as a diaspora annexing position to a diaspora-accepting position.⁴⁰⁷

Also, Pyongyang likely recognizes that a path toward unification, would risk alienating its one remaining benefactor, China. Unlike North Vietnam in the 1960s, North Korea has no other great power ally. Its nuclear programs may agitate Beijing; however, the pursuit of national sovereignty over the South or deferral to the South would cross a line. Beijing anticipates that unification would result in a Seoul-led state, democratic, nationalistic, and allied with the United States.⁴⁰⁸ In this scenario, the PRC faces the likelihood of a nuclear-armed Seoul, backed by 28,500 U.S. troops, expanding to the Yalu River.⁴⁰⁹ Additionally, cross-border Korean nationalism concerns China. In a worst case scenario, a unified peninsula might inspire Korean claims on sections of Jilin province.⁴¹⁰ Illustrating these concerns, Beijing implemented the Northeast Project as a

⁴⁰⁵ Lankov, *Real North Korea*, 115.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁷ Van Evera, *Hypotheses on Nationalism and War*, 12.

⁴⁰⁸ Lankov, *Real North Korea*, 181.

⁴⁰⁹ Craig Whitlock, "Hagel Visit to South Korea Focuses Attention on Large U.S. Military Presence, Construction," *The Washington Post*, October 2, 2013, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/hagel-visit-to-south-korea-focuses-attention-on-large-us-military-presence-construction/2013/10/02/fca40e0c-2b52-11e3-83fa-b82b8431dc92_story.html.

⁴¹⁰ Lankov, *Real North Korea*, 181.

means to assert China's historical legacy within present-day borders.⁴¹¹ Given these factors, no plausible condition exists in which the current DPRK regime could move toward sovereignty over a unified nation.

Alternatively, some may speculate that China's monopoly of investments or political sway may pose a challenge to North Korean national sovereignty. Yet Pyongyang still acts independently of Beijing. The continued testing of nuclear weapons despite China's objections attests to this. Additionally, North Korea remains guarded against the PRC's political influence. Pyongyang's main interlocutor to Beijing, Jang Sung Taek, fell victim to purging and execution in 2014.⁴¹² His fall may be indicative of Kim Jong-un's consolidation of power; however, it is also reminiscent of Kim Il-sung's purging of pro-Chinese factions in the 1950s. These events would suggest that China may not be in a position to undermine DPRK national sovereignty through economic or political influence.

4. PRC Motivations to Retain the Alliance

As mentioned, North Korea excludes other great powers from its share of the peninsula for a variety of reasons. It lacks the incentive to do so and opening to China's main rivals would almost certainly initiate social changes threatening to the regime. Yet Pyongyang still asserts its independence from Beijing through its missile and nuclear programs. With such actions, it becomes essential to examine why China itself finds value in retaining this alliance.

A desire for social stability helps motivate China into maintaining the Sino-North Korean alliance. Abandoning Pyongyang would leave North Korea without the economic and security lifeline it has become so dependent upon. This would likely lead to regime collapse and could result in mass refugee flows, smuggling, and WMD proliferation

⁴¹¹ Yoon Hwytak, "China's Northeast Project: Defensive or Offensive Strategy," *East Asian Review* 16, no. 4 (2004), 119.

⁴¹² Andrew Scobell, "A Death in the Family," *U.S. News*, January 21, 2014, <http://www.usnews.com/opinion/blogs/world-report/2014/01/21/china-north-korea-and-the-fallout-from-kim-jong-un-executing-his-uncle>.

across the region.⁴¹³ An influx of refugees could undermine domestic growth and cause unrest among China's two million ethnic Koreans.⁴¹⁴ Even under the current stable conditions, an estimated 200,000 North Koreans reside illegally in China.⁴¹⁵ China sees this flow of people as a major issue and has answered by increasing border patrols, repatriation, and vigilance around embassies and consulates.⁴¹⁶

Besides from preventing social instability, the PRC has strategic reasons for sustaining the Sino-North Korean alliance. Beijing wants to keep the status quo as it sees Western access to North Korea as a geostrategic risk.⁴¹⁷ North Korea provides a buffer between China and the West and its realignment would have implications similar to the Seoul-led unification scenario. Given that Beijing has fought costly wars in the past to secure the peninsula, North Korean nuclear testing likely falls short in importance compared to maintaining the status quo.⁴¹⁸ Although Beijing promotes denuclearization in the Six Party Talks, this policy has secondary importance compared to keeping a North Korean buffer.⁴¹⁹ For example, after U.S. shows of force against Pyongyang's 2013 provocations, Beijing eased away from criticizing North Korea.⁴²⁰

Along with social and strategic incentives, Beijing also has economic gains to make in North Korea. As seen with the investments mentioned above, China wants to secure mineral rights, utilize North Korean ports for the landlocked northeastern provinces, and exploit cheap labor.⁴²¹ Doing so expands resource availability, decreases transportation costs, and helps economies in the depressed Jilin and Liaoning

⁴¹³ Lankov, *Real North Korea*, 180.

⁴¹⁴ Nanto and Manyin, *China-North Korea Relations*, 10.

⁴¹⁵ Min Noh Jung, "Doors Slam on North Korean Refugees," *Asia Times*, August 7, 2013, <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Korea/KOR-02-070813.html>.

⁴¹⁶ Cha, *Impossible State*, 181.

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 418, 419.

⁴¹⁸ Lankov, *Real North Korea*, 181.

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁰ Snyder and Byun, "China-Korea Relations."

⁴²¹ Lankov, *Real North Korea*, 182–183.

provinces.⁴²² Additionally, these sectors can stabilize the North Korean regime as economic development might spillover to North Korea.⁴²³

Beijing's motivations to maintain the alliance outweigh North Korean detractions. Pyongyang meets PRC expectations for preventing social crises, forestalling the West, and providing economic incentives. Pyongyang may provide the PRC with several problems including the potential for a regional arms race and the continuation of financially draining assistance.⁴²⁴ Yet the DPRK pursuit of nuclear weapons and provocations against Seoul do not motivate the PRC to discontinue its alliance with Pyongyang. To do so would risk upending the status quo. Even if North Korean actions may sometimes contradict PRC interests, they do not outweigh China's desire to maintain stability on the peninsula and the Sino-North Korean alliance.⁴²⁵

D. CONCLUSION

The North Korean case does not share the same factors that deteriorated and split China from its Soviet, Mongolian, and North Vietnamese allies. China has a long history of valuing the Korean Peninsula and the PRC has supported the regime in Pyongyang despite highs and lows in their relationship. The notions of national sovereignty and political ideology, which factored into the demise of previous alliances, do not apply with North Korea. Unification is no longer a pressing concern and Chinese influence has failed to stifle North Korean national sovereignty. As such, Pyongyang lacks motivation to invite a competing power into its portion of the peninsula. Additionally, to do so would risk the stability of the Kim regime itself. China too has stakes in North Korea. To abandon the regime would forsake its goals of maintaining social, strategic, and economic security.⁴²⁶ North Korea likely understands its value to China and acts

⁴²² Cha, *Impossible State*, 239.

⁴²³ Park and Lee, *North Korea*, 284–285.

⁴²⁴ Nanto and Manyin, *China-North Korea Relations*, 6.

⁴²⁵ Lankov, *Real North Korea*, 184.

⁴²⁶ *Ibid.*, 180–181.

provocatively without facing lasting or severe punishment from Beijing.⁴²⁷ As long as it continues to fulfill its role as a buffer from China's competitors, however, the Sino-North Korean alliance will remain intact.

⁴²⁷ Cha, *Impossible State*, 317.

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VI. CONCLUSION

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter reviews the main findings of the thesis, identifies challenges with research, considers options for follow-on research, and draws additional implications of the findings. In doing so, it notes the complexities in identifying common factors to compare alliance splits. It also finds that an expansion of research to pre-PRC alliances could deepen the value of the thesis findings. Yet as the preceding chapters argue, the national sovereignty concerns and great power competition that lead to PRC alliance-splitting are not evident in the Sino-North Korean relationship. Thus, the implication of findings concludes that the alliance between Beijing and Pyongyang will last for the foreseeable future.

B. MAIN FINDINGS

This thesis investigated the factors that led to the deterioration and splitting of PRC alliances with the Soviet Union, Mongolia, and North Vietnam. In the Sino-Soviet case, differing ideological interpretations led Beijing to see Moscow as a threat to balance against. This led to a seven-year period of deteriorated relations where the PRC actively criticized Soviet policies and ideology before Moscow split their alliance. For the Mongolian and North Vietnamese cases, concerns for some aspect of national sovereignty acted as a motivation for them to lean towards the Soviet Union in an increasingly competitive environment between Moscow and Beijing. In doing so, they allowed a willing Soviet Union to access China's near-periphery. This caused deterioration in their relations with Beijing despite futile Chinese attempts to bribe them back. Once the PRC considered these countries irretrievably lost to the Soviets, China ceased providing aid and clearly split with them.

These lessons from the Mongolian and North Vietnamese cases have applications to North Korea. This country has retained its alignment with the PRC since 1950 despite oscillations in their relationship. Like with other communist states, Beijing and Moscow competed for Pyongyang's allegiance. Yet North Korea did not have a motivating factor

to determine its leanings. Ideological differences mattered little and its war for national sovereignty had stalemated. In this environment, Pyongyang remained uncommitted, did not allow overwhelming access to a competitive power, and retained its alliance with China.

Likewise in the modern environment, North Korea's ability to stave-off third power competition from China's periphery will continue to support its alliance with the PRC. With the fall of the Soviet Union, Western countries represent the remaining competitive powers. Given that accessibility to the international environment threatens the stability of the current regime, there is little reason to suspect Pyongyang would allow them access. Additionally, China has historically valued the strategic importance of the Korean peninsula. As long as North Korea continues its denial of Western involvement and blocks unification it will retain its alliance with the PRC.

C. PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES

While investigating Chinese alliance splits and analyzing their applicability to North Korea, this thesis faced several challenges. Various interpretations of events, combinations of split-causing factors, the identification of common themes, and limits in case studies all created problems in formulating a definitive answer to the major research question. Various historic accounts have different aspects and dimensions left open to interpretation by several authors. Thus various academics examine the events in China's international relations and have come to differing theories concerning alliance splits. Another problem surfaced when a single definitive factor remained unclear. Some cases involved a mix of factors that when combined, proved critical to deterioration and split. When examining these examples, this thesis faced the challenge of distinguishing between peripheral factors and those critical to an alliance-splitting formula. This process offered an additional challenge: having unique answers for each case. Yet this thesis identified commonality in the Mongolian and North Vietnamese cases, which incidentally are the most applicable to the North Korean alliance. Discovering a common theme in the junior alliance splits made lessons easier to apply to the North Korean case.

Yet this thesis faced a limitation on case studies that could have strengthened its arguments. Broadening the scope of research could help provide credibility to its assertions.

D. OPTIONS FOR FOLLOW-ON RESEARCH

This thesis examined the range of formal and informal PRC bilateral alliances. Yet broader research could expand this examination by including friendly relationships with states that did not necessarily contain significant security cooperation. For example, China sought peaceful coexistence with non-communist states in the mid-1950s at the Bandung Conference. In doing so, it fostered close relationships with Third World countries such as Burma and Indonesia. When the Sino-Soviet split took hold, China looked to the Third World to form a sphere bent against both the Soviets and the Americans. The Chinese attempt to pull these countries away from both the United States and Soviet Union was unrealistic, however, as these states contributed most to foreign aid in the Third World.⁴²⁸

Friendly ties from the Bandung Conference unraveled when the Cultural Revolution and its ensuing chaos found China criticizing various communist and non-communist states over their insufficient adherence to revolutionary zeal.⁴²⁹ China unpredictably targeted its former Third World partners with denunciations.⁴³⁰ During this time, Maoists eagerly sought to export their revolutionary model to these countries.⁴³¹ They prioritized this over their previously established relationships with Third World associates.⁴³² Given this threat, Bandung partners quickly distanced themselves from Beijing.⁴³³ Although the relationship with Bandung members represents a widely

⁴²⁸ Peter Van Ness, *Revolution and Chinese Foreign Policy; Peking's Support for Wars of National Liberation* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1970), 17.

⁴²⁹ *Ibid.*, 227.

⁴³⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴³¹ *Ibid.*

⁴³² *Ibid.*

⁴³³ *Ibid.*

different relationship than an alliance, it could deepen the understanding of PRC alliance splits if comparing the role of great power politics, political ideology, and national sovereignty.

Additionally, broader research could expand to the forbearers of the PRC. The preceding Qing and ROC governments experienced their share of alliance formation and degradation. Delving into these eras could broaden the understanding of Chinese alliance splits beyond PRC politics. It would also deepen the understanding of Chinese splits with greater powers. Since the Sino-Soviet alliance represented the only great power alliance the PRC engaged in, this broadened study could help deepen the understanding of Chinese behavior towards powerful states. This broadened research could also offer insight into Chinese behavior beyond the scope of the current regime. Doing so would help assess the future of Chinese alliances should the CCP and or PRC falter.

Chinese history over the past 150 years alone has many cases to expand upon. For example, the Qing dynasty had a vassal relationship with Korea that eventually unraveled. During the nineteenth century, Korea depended on Chinese security although it had independent domestic and diplomatic policies.⁴³⁴ This form of alliance eventually fell apart due to Japanese expansion in the region and China's inability to counter Tokyo's domination of the Korean peninsula.⁴³⁵ Also, the follow-on ROC entered World War I by joining the Allies and declaring war on Germany in August 1917.⁴³⁶ China's hopes for better world standing influenced its decision to do so. Yet the conclusion of the war removed the reason for the alliance and resulted in a Treaty of Versailles that favored Japanese holdings in China. Subsequent Chinese resentment led to the 4 May protests and formation of the CCP.⁴³⁷ Decades later, the ROC allied itself with the United States as part of its effort to prosecute the Second Sino-Japanese War. This extended to the other

⁴³⁴ Li Chien-Nung, *The Political History of China: 1840–1928* (Princeton, NJ: D. Van Nostrand Company, 1956), 130.

⁴³⁵ *Ibid.*, 135.

⁴³⁶ Madeline Chi, *China Diplomacy: 1914–1918* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970), 129.

⁴³⁷ *Ibid.*, 145.

members of the Allies as well. Also, as the war neared its end, the ROC signed the August 1945 Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Alliance.⁴³⁸ Additionally, the United States continued its support to the Nationalists after Tokyo's defeat. China became engulfed in civil war; however, and these alliances fell to the wayside as the KMT became evermore endangered and finally retreated to Taiwan in 1949.⁴³⁹ With follow-on research, and a comparison of the three split-causing factors, all these examples could be used to further examine the conclusions to this thesis.

E. IMPLICATION OF FINDINGS

The thesis findings have several implications for Washington's relationships in the region and broader U.S. foreign policy. For example, the durability of the Sino-North Korean alliance affects the U.S.-Japan and U.S.-ROK relationships. China's commitment to North Korea will ensure an economic lifeline to Pyongyang and will likely remove the possibility of short-term regime change. Thus U.S. analysts and policy makers can continue to expect nuclear tests, missile launches, and other provocations. With this immediate concern, the United States will continue its strong security ties with Tokyo and Seoul. Military cooperation in the form of missile defense programs, weapons deals, and joint exercises will remain the norm. Additionally, U.S. forces in Japan and Korea still have an immediate reason-for-being despite their original Cold War mission abating. The North Korean threat justifies the continued military presence in the region and may soften domestic pressure within Japan and South Korea for U.S. withdrawal from forward bases.

On a broader scale, the vitality of the Sino-North Korean alliance offers other challenges and opportunities for U.S. foreign policy. To one extent, Pyongyang provides a point of discontent between Washington and Beijing. Differences over how to deal with the DPRK could undermine security in Northeast Asia and add on to a list of potential flashpoints with the PRC to include the Taiwan Straits and East China Sea. Yet the

⁴³⁸ Oliver E. Clubb, *20th Century China* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1978), 258.

⁴³⁹ *Ibid.*, 297.

current situation also offers opportunities for dialogue with Beijing. President Obama has publicly taken a stance for seeking common interests with China in regards to North Korea.⁴⁴⁰ Along with this, the PRC's continued interest in facilitating diplomacy, through forums such as the Six Party Talks, also gives Washington the opportunity to further encourage Beijing's participation in world institutions. In these ways, the Sino-North Korean alliance may offer Beijing and Washington opportunities for collaboration instead of confrontation as China continues to rise as a major world power.

⁴⁴⁰ Nanto and Manyin, *China-North Korea Relations*, i.

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