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**THE DRAGON'S RISE: A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF
CHINA'S BILATERAL DIPLOMACY**

by

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DIPLOMACY**

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ABSTRACT

Throughout much of its history, Communist China has shown a distinct preference for bilateral diplomacy in a world largely defined by multilateral diplomacy. Why? Since its founding in 1949, the People's Republic of China (PRC) has been politically dominated by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). This thesis argues that the CCP, with Mao Zedong at the reigns, has been the driving force behind China's rejection of multilateralism. It further argues that Mao Zedong ruled the party through his influential personality and dominated Chinese foreign policy because of it. China's turbulent and painful history with the West and the acceptance of communist ideology were critical determinants in Mao's rejection of Western diplomacy standards. This thesis concludes that, though multilateralism is indeed on the rise in China, it has been conditional and by no means Western. Furthermore, U.S. policy makers should hold the history of Chinese foreign policy in high regard when considering the formation of U.S. policy on China.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	INTRODUCTION.....	1
	A. RESEARCH QUESTION	1
	B. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION.....	1
	C. METHODOLOGY	2
II.	PRE-1949: FOUNDATIONS OF CCP FOREIGN POLICY	5
	A. THE WANING YEARS OF THE QING DYNASTY	5
	B. POST-IMPERIAL REPUBLICANISM AND THE RISE OF COMMUNISM.....	6
	C. WORLD WAR TWO AND THE CHINESE CIVIL WAR.....	8
III.	1949–1952: COMMUNIST NATIONALISM	11
	A. FINDING THEIR WAY	12
	B. KOREAN WAR	14
	C. TIBET AND TAIWAN.....	17
	D. SINO-SOVIET RELATIONS.....	18
IV.	1953–1957: PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE.....	21
	A. THE SPIRIT OF BANDUNG	22
	B. NON-ALIGNMENT AND CHINA’S REVOLUTIONARY GOALS.....	24
V.	1958–1965: MILITANT ANTI-IMPERIALISM AND THE EMERGENCE OF ANTI-REVISIONISM	27
	A. MILITANT ANTI-IMPERIALISM: THE 1958 TAIWAN STRAIGHTS CRISIS AND THE 1962 WAR WITH INDIA.....	28
	B. THE GREAT LEAP FORWARD AND THE SINO-SOVIET SPLIT.....	32
VI.	1966–1976: THE GREAT PROLETARIAT CULTURAL REVOLUTION	35
	A. THE THIRD WORLD: NORTH KOREA AND NORTH VIETNAM	35
	B. CLASS STRUGGLE AND THE END OF THE GREAT PROLETARIAT REVOLUTION.....	36
VII.	1977–1989: CHINESE FOREIGN POLICY AFTER MAO AND EFFORTS TO MODERNIZE	41

VIII. CONCLUSION	45
A. MAIN FINDINGS.....	45
B. OPTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH	50
C. IMPLICATIONS	51
 LIST OF REFERENCES.....	 53
 INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST	 55

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
FTA	Free Trade Agreement
GLF	Great Leap Forward
GMD	Guomindang
GPCR	Great Proletariat Cultural Revolution
IMF	International Monetary Fund
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PRC	People's Republic of China
ROK	Republic of Korea
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
SEATO	Southeast Asia Treaty Organization
UN	United Nations
U.S.	United States
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WTO	World Trade Organization

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I. INTRODUCTION

What exactly is this “China” that we are discussing here...Frankly, the more I have learned about China, the more elusive a clear definition becomes.

—Odd Arne Westad¹

A. RESEARCH QUESTION

This thesis studies Chinese alliance politics since the revolution of 1949. The major research question seeks to explain China’s pronounced preference for bilateral international agreements and relationships, during a period in which global politics has increasingly been shaped by multilateral institutions and alliances. It also considers, as a secondary question, whether China has been well served by its alliance policies, given the available alternatives.

B. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION

As Michael Hunt aptly states, “History is essential and central, not optional and incidental, to an understanding of Chinese foreign policy”; understanding the history of Chinese foreign relations can inform the modern-day policy maker or analyst on Chinese alliance politics.² With the ascent of China as a global super power it is imperative that American policy makers and strategists have a thorough understanding of Chinese foreign policy formation. Understanding the roots of Chinese foreign policy is essential to forming an accurate knowledge base, which may then aid in future Sino-American relations. This thesis analyzes historical cases of China’s proclivity for bilateral alliances and seeks to understand why those alliances came to be. The answer will help improve general knowledge and understanding of Chinese diplomacy today.

¹ Odd Arne Westad, *Restless Empire: China and the World since 1750* (New York: Basic Books, 2012), 3.

² Michael H. Hunt, *The Genesis of Chinese Communist Foreign Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 3.

Examining this subject is a challenging task because the history of the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) foreign policy is a colorful assortment of traditions.³ And since the heritage of China's past is important to the CCP, it therefore plays a part in China's modern foreign policy; understanding this legacy can help to explain why China has tended to lean toward bilateral alliances and agreements when much of the world has not.⁴ This research has intrinsic value for today's international system because of the rise of China as a truly Great Power. Within China, the purposeful utilization of historical memory has been an important tool for CCP education campaigns over the past thirty years.⁵ Because China's own history is such an integral part of CCP politics, anyone who studies any aspect of CCP politics must also be well versed in China's political history. This thesis shows that despite a recent willingness to engage in multilateral activity, Chinese political authorities are still influenced by their history and prefer to engage other nation-states bilaterally and use multilateral alliances only if they view them as advantageous to their interests.

C. METHODOLOGY

The research methodology for this thesis is historical analysis. The goal of this thesis is to develop a narrative on Chinese bilateralism since the PRC's inception in 1949 to determine why China conducted the majority of its diplomacy and alliance structure in a bilateral fashion.⁶ By dividing Chinese foreign relations into distinctive elements by time period and seeking to find and explain causation for bilateralism in each period, a productive analysis is possible. Organizing aspects of CCP foreign policy and alliance politics is helpful in identifying the main causes of the PRC's tendency toward bilateral relations.

³ Hunt, *The Genesis of Chinese Communist Foreign Policy*, 8.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁵ Zheng Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation: Historical Memory in Chinese Politics and Foreign Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 111.

⁶ "Historical Analysis," Wesleyan University, accessed March 3, 2015, <http://govthesis.site.wesleyan.edu/research/methods-and-analysis/analyzing-qualitative-data/historical-analysis/>.

Because it is helpful to look at Chinese foreign relations through a historical window, this thesis adopts Peter Van Ness's historical framing method with some minor revisions. In his work *Revolution and Chinese Foreign Policy*, Van Ness helpfully arranges Chinese foreign policy into four general time periods: "1949–1952: communist internationalism; 1953–1957, peaceful coexistence; 1958–1965, militant anti-imperialism and the emergence of antirevisionism (sic); and 1966–[76], the Great Proletariat Cultural Revolution [GPCR]."⁷ Two additional time periods have been added to help organize the history of PRC foreign policy to aid analysis: pre-1949, the foundations of CCP foreign policy and 1977–1989, the end of the GPCR and the PRC's efforts at modernization up through the end of the Cold War. This thesis ends its analysis at 1989, a significant year to consider. While the Cold War did not officially come to a conclusion until 1991, in 1989 communist governments throughout Eastern Europe and Central Asia were successfully toppled in what is commonly referred to as the *autumn of nations*.⁸ The *autumn of nations* event served as the beginning of the end for the USSR and decisively reconfigured the global political structure. The bipolar days dominated by two superpowers was quickly approaching its end. Pro-democracy rallies began in Beijing during the spring of 1989 with demonstrators in Tiananmen Square reaching 1 million in number.⁹ The brutal crackdown employed by the CCP caused a significant shift in domestic and international politics that created the strange blend between communist ideology and capitalist economic principles that has served to placate the people of China with economic success and help the CCP grow Chinese nationalism.¹⁰

⁷ Peter Van Ness, *Revolution and Chinese Foreign Policy: Peking's Support for Wars of National Liberation* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1970), 10.

⁸ Richard D. Anderson Jr., "Why Did the Soviet Empire Collapse So Fast-and Why Was the Collapse a Surprise?" in *Political Science as Puzzle Solving*, ed. Bernard Grofman (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2001), 85.

⁹ Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China* (New York: Norton, 1990), 741.

¹⁰ Westad, *Restless Empire*, 394.

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II. PRE-1949: FOUNDATIONS OF CCP FOREIGN POLICY

A. THE WANING YEARS OF THE QING DYNASTY

To borrow and adapt from Sir Winston Churchill, China is “a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma.”¹¹ China is more than a nation-state, and understanding the history behind the formation of the CCP is essential to understanding the CCP today. The PRC’s past is rooted in a civilization that extends back over four millennia. Coming to fully understand such a country and people is perhaps an impossible task. Keeping this in mind, we now come to consider the formative years of modern China and all of its tumult. The history of China in the late 19th and early 20th centuries is one defined by struggle and change, oftentimes violent. The years between the 1840s and 1949 have been referred to as the *one hundred years of national humiliation* because China’s foreign relations were characterized by Western domination and exploitation.¹² A central characteristic of Chinese foreign policy during the mid-19th century was a cultural superiority complex that was adopted by a vast majority of Chinese people, particularly officials and gentry—for thousands of years the Chinese people held the notion that they were superior to all other peoples.¹³ Supporting this idea was a long tradition of neighboring people groups paying tribute to Imperial China as the superior nation. This abruptly changed in the 1840s when China’s relationship with Western powers, Russia included, became one defined by China’s weakness relative to the those powers besieging it. To a civilization that had long thought of itself as the most ascendant society on earth, this came as a shock and had lasting impacts.¹⁴ China, thereby, started a path to modernization that was neither straight, nor easy. China’s history is deep and complex, and like other nations, the PRC recognizes that its past can help it understand the

¹¹ “Winston Churchill Quotes at BrainyQuote.com,” BrainyQuote, accessed June 15, 2015, <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/w/winstonchu156896.html>.

¹² Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation*, 3, 7–8, 65–9.

¹³ Li Chien-nung, *The Political History of China, 1840-1928*, ed. Teng Ssu-Yu and Jeremy Ingalls (Princeton, NJ: D. Van Nostrand, 1956), 164.

¹⁴ Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation*, 71.

present.¹⁵ In determining why 20th century Chinese foreign policy preferred bilateral relations, one must begin with history.

Before delving into the last years of the Qing dynasty, understanding two fundamental truths is essential in order to begin comprehending Chinese foreign policy during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.¹⁶ As Westad illustrates, during this very tumultuous and painful period—both internally and externally—China retained enough unity as a state to maintain a central government that carried with it the directive to conduct international diplomacy. This was important because even though China was relatively quite weak in relation to other international powers, as long as there was something of a government that represented all of China it was able to keep peripheral parts of China from being annexed. The fact that China’s borders today are roughly the same as the Qing’s is testament to this fact. The other important fact to note is China’s growth in capabilities across all levels of society. Despite being a largely agrarian society, China was able to begin a modernization of sorts using foreign technologies in its industrial, communications, transportation, banking, and financial sectors. While all of this was a small part of China’s overall economy, it nonetheless enabled it to provide an economy that was accessible to the more modern international community.¹⁷ By the eve of World War Two, Chinese modernity started to come to life, and that is an important point to consider in any analysis of subsequent Chinese foreign policy.

B. POST-IMPERIAL REPUBLICANISM AND THE RISE OF COMMUNISM

Out of this period of humiliation, Chinese foreign policy developed a dominant theme that provides a helpful starting point in considering PRC preference for bilateral diplomacy. This theme or pattern is “the conflicting impulses toward autonomy and dependency that have governed China’s external relations.”¹⁸ It is also worth noting that this strain between the lure of dependency and the desire for autonomy was consistently

¹⁵ Hunt, *Chinese Communist Foreign Policy*, 9.

¹⁶ Westad, *Restless Empire*, 124.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 124–5.

¹⁸ Hunt, *Chinese Communist Foreign Policy*, 9.

scattered throughout Chinese foreign policy.¹⁹ Ishwer Ojha notes that this period sparked a deep desire inside Chinese leaders to recapture the greatness that they thought was due to a country of its size, geographical position, population, and long and robust history.²⁰ Regardless, the waning years of the Qing dynasty created an unstable situation in China characterized by urban protest movements and anti-imperialist action; by the 1920s these movements saw Nationalists and Communists allied together in the hope of a populist patriotic uprising.²¹ For the CCP, the struggles of the 1920s, 30s, and 40s were particularly formative with regard to shaping foreign policy.²² Central to CCP foreign policy during this era was Mao Zedong. During the 1930s the CCP did not have a foreign policy stance, and it was Mao who laid down the basic fundamentals for the CCP foreign policy model.²³ The strain between dependency and autonomy was evident in Mao's denunciation of aid from the United Nations (UN) as a tool of imperialism and his development of the united front model of foreign policy designed to harness both the Soviets and the United States to aid the CCP in ridding China of foreign occupation.²⁴ The massive Soviet aid program that developed in the 1950s also points to this inherent discord within the CCP as it struggled to *stand up* and be truly independent, yet was still reliant of foreign aid to do so. At his core, however, Mao distrusted the Western system of alliances because he viewed them as a major tool of imperialism. Laced in his distrust of the Western system are the roots of Mao's and the CCP's preference for bilateralism.

The years in Yan'an were formative for Mao and the CCP. After the Japanese invasion in 1937 the CCP used its headquarters in Yan'an and its temporary truce with Chiang Kai-Shek's Guomindong government (GMD) to consolidate and further organize the party.²⁵ Spence outlines that under Mao the CCP defined communism in China along

¹⁹ Ibid., 24.

²⁰ Ishwer C. Ojha, *Chinese Foreign Policy in an Age of Transition: The Diplomacy of Cultural Despair* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), 22.

²¹ Hunt, *Chinese Communist Foreign Policy*, 23.

²² Ibid., 23–5.

²³ Ibid., 125, 204.

²⁴ Ibid., 131–4.

²⁵ Spence, *Modern China*, 461.

three areas: the party, the government, and the army. These three entities were the defining organizational structure that aided in the development and growth of the CCP and eventually a communist China. While challenged for overall leadership, Mao was able to establish himself as the preeminent leader and implemented a successful recruiting program. Between 1937 and 1940 the CCP grew from approximately 40,000 members to 800,000.²⁶ The CCP instituted land reform in its controlled territory, a historical grievance among peasants, and were thus able to establish a strong base of support with the peasant population, which was the majority of China's population.²⁷ Westad further discusses that Mao's domestic united front policy was very popular with the people and provided the framework for the united front policy later used for foreign policy and relations. The war against the Japanese proved a perfect contrast for the CCP to present itself as the liberator of China and the only political group strong enough to save China. The CCP's strength was in its revolutionary spirit and willpower, which proved itself in the years to come. As the CCP united, their only main competition, the GMD split apart internally and weakened. As World War Two came to a close the CCP was growing quickly and Mao had entrenched himself as the undisputed leader. Mao Zedong Thought, as it became known, and its way of thinking and philosophizing became central to CCP political life. With the advent of Mao Thought came a rampant bend toward abstruse and idealistic thinking inside the inner circle of the CCP which carried with it significant corollaries for the future PRC's foreign affairs.²⁸

C. WORLD WAR TWO AND THE CHINESE CIVIL WAR

Following the conclusion of World War Two, the political situation in China began to rapidly change. This change also had an influential effect on the development of Chinese bilateralism in foreign policy. Odd Arne Westad identifies that August 1945 was likely the most difficult moment in the political life of Mao Zedong.²⁹ After experiencing massive growth during the war with the Japanese, Mao and the CCP expected to continue

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Westad, *Restless Empire*, 272–7, 287–8.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., 288–9.

their upward trend and directly challenge the GMD for control of China. Much to Mao's chagrin, he found himself making concessions to the GMD and losing influence in China. Mao's historic distrust of foreign powers led him to believe that the cause of all of his problems was the United States. The international situation, in his view, was being dominated by the United States and moving according to its dictates. The GMD was the recipient of all of the American aid and the CCP received nothing but Stalin's cold shoulder. Instead of being treated as a legitimate contender for political rule in China, the CCP was relegated to non-contender. Additionally, Mao was distrustful of Stalin's motivations in Asia.³⁰ Michael Hunt sheds some light on why Stalin was proving to be difficult to predict and why his policies in China were prone to shifting.³¹ Unsure of what would happen in China Stalin made attempts to balance his position in China and did not lend the CCP outright support. Additionally, the CCP lacked any type of legitimate international recognition, and, consequently, the CCP was denied open aid by Stalin as he continued to support a general peace in China and strengthen his position vis a vis the Americans. From the CCP position it seemed that Stalin was doing little to nothing to aid their cause and by doing so was actually giving aid to the GMD. Eventually Stalin ordered a withdrawal of troops from northern China while concurrently supplying the CCP on the way out. This did much to restore the Soviets as a possible ally in the eyes of the Chinese Communists. By the middle of 1946, civil war resumed as the two major political factions struggled for control of China.³²

Westad states that the Chinese Civil War defined PRC foreign policy for the next ten years.³³ Shunted from the immediate post-war negotiations and denied aid from the two emerging superpowers, the United States and the USSR, the CCP became frustrated in its attempts at restructuring China.³⁴ Both Westad and Hunt note that with little initial support from its only communist allies and the GMD receiving support from the

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Hunt, *Chinese Communist Foreign Policy*, 168–9.

³² Ibid.

³³ Westad, *Restless Empire*, 290.

³⁴ Hunt, *Chinese Communist Foreign Policy*, 171.

Americans, the CCP was only able to secure control of China by militarily defeating the GMD in 1949.³⁵ What the war against the GMD did do was fortify the CCP's alliance with Soviet Russia to such an extent that it became the lone supplier of aid and support for the fledgling PRC and also provided the blueprint for how to build a successful communist nation-state.³⁶ As the Civil War progressed, the Chinese Communists became heavily reliant on Soviet aid, a precursor of the reconstruction efforts after the CCP's victory.³⁷ After the Civil War, the CCP relied heavily on Soviet experience and expertise to bring order to a China that was in almost total disorder.³⁸ It also cemented China in an adversarial relationship with the United States that lasted for the next twenty plus years. China embarked on a bold nation building program that ultimately succumbed to Mao Zedong's ideological zeal and resulted in China's near economic collapse.

³⁵ Westad, *Restless Empire*, 290; Hunt, *Chinese Communist Foreign Policy*, 161–2.

³⁶ Westad, *Restless Empire*, 290.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 304–5.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 290, 304–5.

III. 1949–1952: COMMUNIST NATIONALISM

Shortly after its inception, the PRC encountered immediate challenges in the form of U.S. involvement in the Korean War and the Taiwan Straits crisis; developmentally, these were critical years and set the path that China was to follow for many years thereafter. Additionally, the PRC made a bold unilateral statement in the international arena by invading Tibet in 1950. During these early years, Mao Zedong was the crucial figure who led the PRC and it was his vision that dominated and guided China.³⁹ Hunt keenly illustrates that as the guiding beacon for CCP diplomacy Mao, ironically, had little experience with the outside world and was inexperienced in diplomacy; Spence describes his first experience within the Soviet Union, for example, as “baffling and contradictory.”⁴⁰ Additionally, newly established as the ruling party in China, the CCP did not receive much international recognition.⁴¹ It was in these early stages of CCP rule that the *leaning to one side*, toward Soviet allegiance, developed; the CCP focused on securing its borders, unifying the country, and strengthening its relationship with the Soviets.⁴² However, icy relations with the United States proved a hindrance to developing the difficult relationship with the CCP’s fellow communists, the Soviets.⁴³

In 1949 Mao began his lifelong focus of renewing China and throwing off the chains of its imperialist past. Fundamental to accomplishing his goal was revolution and isolation.⁴⁴ Westad recounts how party leaders yearned to cut all ties with the Western world and develop China as the model Communist state. In order to do this, Mao and other party leaders felt that it must sever all ties with the West—after a century of unequal treaties the CCP wanted China to stand on its own, albeit with the party as the only power. Power was the key to party leaders and it needed to be legitimate. If the West

³⁹ Martin Jacques, *When China Rules the World: The End of the Western World and the Birth of a New Global Order*, Second edition (New York: Penguin Books, 2012), 110.

⁴⁰ Hunt, *Chinese Communist Foreign Policy*, 208; Spence, *Modern China*, 524.

⁴¹ Hunt, *Chinese Communist Foreign Policy*, 176.

⁴² Van Ness, *Revolution and Chinese Foreign Policy*, 11.

⁴³ Hunt, *Chinese Communist Foreign Policy*, 181.

⁴⁴ Westad, *Restless Empire*, 297–301.

was allowed to meddle in China's affairs, the CCP's legitimacy could, and likely would in their minds, be challenged thereby preventing the glorious rejuvenation of China. Mao and his fellow party leaders, therefore, set out to systematically destroy China's ties with the rest of the world. Only the Soviet Union and the communists in North Korea were treated as allies during these early years.⁴⁵

A. FINDING THEIR WAY

Two common trends in Chinese alliance politics during these years were its relative isolation from the majority of the international community and its willingness to use force to accomplish its objectives. The use of force was one of Mao's favorite tools used to direct the PRC. Consolidating power, legitimizing his and the party's rule, and rebuilding China were perhaps the most important items on Mao's agenda shortly after declaring the establishment of the PRC in 1949. The preceding years of colonial rule had a profound impact upon Mao and other senior communist officials and they were deeply insulted by Chinese subjugation at the hands of the Japanese and the Western powers; the colonial rule left a searing wound in the consciousness of CCP members and it directly influenced their policy formation.⁴⁶ The memories of foreign domination and meddling in Chinese affairs provided a reason for the PRC to move away from the international community and toward the Soviet Union. In fact, the party feared and hated Western influence on its policies so much that it purged the country of its external links believing the party's rule would never be safe if outside influences, except Soviet, were allowed in.⁴⁷ This concept of liberation from foreign rule became a central tenet of the CCP's foreign affairs and it continues into the present day.⁴⁸

To further understand CCP decision making during these formative years, Michael Hunt outlines four noteworthy aspects on CCP thinking prior to and shortly after

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 318; Jacques, *When China Rules the World*, 109.

⁴⁷ Westad, *Restless Empire*, 297–8.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 297.

1949.⁴⁹ Each is worthy of remembrance when considering ensuing years of CCP foreign policy. First, the CCP generally adhered to a policy of discussion and harmony in decision making at the top level. The methodology of group discussion and decision was evident up to the Korean War and was encouraged by Mao himself until his cult personality took over the party decision making process in later years; Fairbank also notes this group discussion process within the CCP.⁵⁰ Second, decisions made by the party were not easily changed or set aside. The cautious and careful planning by senior CCP leadership had an inherent sticking power and not until later years was Mao able to alter course upon a whim. During the pre-1949 years it was difficult for the CCP to meet together; therefore when a decision was settled upon it often took very evident weaknesses in the policy to force CCP leadership to change it. Hunt draws a good example of this with the rise and fall of a doctrine known as *new democracy*. Ideological in nature, new democracy was meant to provide the stepping stone upon which China could enter into socialism. Meant to last ten to fifteen years, it was laid threadbare by uncertain economic conditions and difficulties with Soviet and U.S. relations. Mao abandoned the new democracy in favor of a prompt shift to socialism. Third, the CCP institutional structure which girded decision making was unstable. This created a system that was highly consolidated and stressed individual personality as central to the process. Perhaps this is one of the reasons Mao's own cult personality eventually came to dominate CCP politics. This also meant that once a decision had been made, it could be implemented by an assortment of individuals in ad hoc groups which varied widely depending on what foreign affairs bureau was given the tasking. Fourth, underlying the modernization attempts of the CCP after 1949 was the complex intertwining of domestic and international policies—domestic policy did not end at the water's edge.⁵¹ The CCP's external relations were fundamentally shaped by its domestically derived ideological agenda for China's modernization. The long term concerns of the PRC's social, political,

⁴⁹ Hunt, *Chinese Communist Foreign Policy*, 225–30.

⁵⁰ John King Fairbank, *China: A New History* (Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992), 345.

⁵¹ Hunt, *Chinese Communist Foreign Policy*, 225–30.

and economic transformation were critical in defining how China related with the outside world. This trend persevered in the PRC and in CCP politics.

B. KOREAN WAR

The outbreak of the Korean War put the newly formed PRC to the test. The Korean War is an important case study with regard to Chinese foreign policy because it played an integral part in setting its course for the next thirty years and it also helped cement the PRC's adversarial relationship with the West. Additionally, new tensions soon arose in class relations as a result of the war, and CCP leadership feared that American-Nationalist forces would spill over into China and join dissident groups against the Party.⁵² The fear this caused within CCP leadership produced the counter-revolutionary campaign of 1950–51.⁵³ The counter-revolutionary campaign was one of the first major cases that displayed the interplay of domestic and international issues within CCP foreign policy creation. A self-conscious CCP saw its domestic and international goals as intertwined and under threat from international rivalries which in turn created internal political and military pressure.⁵⁴ These domestic and international tensions came to play an important role in forming Mao's vision of how to develop China and in how China was to interact with the international community. During the early 1950s supporting revolutions and wars of national liberation became an important implement of PRC foreign policy, and this support was designed to export the Chinese revolutionary experience to the world in order to display Chinese leadership and also to help nurture the budding revolutionary spirit throughout the world.⁵⁵ The PRC's intervention in the Korean War was one of its first actions in supporting this ethos.

During the months leading up to the Korean War there was very little support within the PRC for engaging the UN forces, and Mao himself was reluctant to get

⁵² Ibid., 229–30.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 230.

⁵⁵ Van Ness, *Revolution and Chinese Foreign Policy*, 2–4.

involved.⁵⁶ However, Mao gave his support for Kim Il-sung's invasion of South Korea in the spring of 1950.⁵⁷ While the PRC had cordial relations with the North Korean communists, they were not close and Mao felt little loyalty to Kim's regime; in actuality, the initial support for an invasion of the South by Northern communists actually came from Stalin, perhaps as way to test the newly formed CCP and also to control the communist movement in Asia.⁵⁸ Thomas Christensen points out that while it is still not known for certain, it is likely that the Soviet leader gave his ascent only on the condition that Mao give his, thereby putting the onus of support for Kim's plans on Mao.⁵⁹ Christensen also points out that unification with Taiwan was an important goal for Mao, perhaps this also placed Mao in a precarious situation because he was still trying to unify the PRC by seizing Taiwan and any support for an invasion of Korea would delay that plan.⁶⁰ Whatever the causes, the hands off posturing by the United States likely entered into the calculus of all of the communist leaders thinking; both President Harry Truman and Secretary of State Dean Acheson stated that the United States would not involve itself in any Chinese civil strife and that the United States would not defend the Korean peninsula.⁶¹ Considering relatively little American encroachment in East Asia in late 1949 and early 1950 it perhaps seemed an astute decision to support Kim's invasion of the South.

Whatever the calculus to support Kim, Mao did not expect the United States to send large amounts of troops to Korea nor position naval assets in the straits of Taiwan.⁶² Once the American-led UN forces gained control of Pyong-yang, the capital of Kim's Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), the decision made by the CCP to

⁵⁶ Westad, *Restless Empire*, 294; Thomas J. Christensen, "Windows and War: Trend Analysis and Beijing's Use of Force" in *New Directions in the Study of China's Foreign Policy*, ed. Alastair I. Johnston and Robert S. Ross (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006), 54.

⁵⁷ Christensen, *Windows and War*, 56; Westad, *Restless Empire*, 294.

⁵⁸ Westad, *Restless Empire*, 293–4.

⁵⁹ Christensen, *Windows and War*, 56–7.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 58.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 57.

⁶² *Ibid.*

intervene was not a foregone conclusion.⁶³ Cautious and recognizing that fighting against the United States was extremely perilous, Mao and his top general, Peng Dehuai, argued for PRC intervention based upon the premise that fighting the Americans early was preferably to waiting until the United States built up even more forces in Korea and Taiwan.⁶⁴ Furthermore, Christensen illustrates that Mao and Peng argued that the aggressive actions by the Americans in placing naval assets in the Taiwan Straits confirmed its imperialist intentions toward the PRC and its intent to encircle and contain China using Korea and Taiwan as staging areas. This was a legitimate concern. Mao and his general also believed that the United States could use Korea and Taiwan as staging areas to invade or influence mainland China. By aiding Taiwan the United States was lending support to Mao's domestic rivals, which could be emboldened at a time when a large majority of People's Liberation Army (PLA) troops were fighting in Korea. A United States-occupied Korea, however, was a greater immediate danger to Mao and his colleagues; if the Americans held the Korean peninsula, their presence could create long term security problems for the PRC. Mao and the CCP calculatedly challenged a much stronger adversary because of the fear that the threat would only grow over time if action was not taken immediately.⁶⁵ Fighting early instead of later also showed international communist unanimity in the face of Western imperialism, a willingness to fight its foes, and perhaps most importantly it solidified their alliance with the Soviets and shattered the possibility of joining the larger world that many Chinese had hoped for after the revolution.⁶⁶

The CCP's emphasis on unity for legitimacy loomed large in its domestic and international agenda and was a driving factor for China's international isolation and preference for bilateral relations through much of its existence.

⁶³ Westad, *Restless Empire*, 294–5.

⁶⁴ Christensen, *Windows and War*, 54.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 54–5.

⁶⁶ Westad, *Restless Empire*, 296–7.

C. TIBET AND TAIWAN

Both Tibet and Taiwan were important pieces in the CCP's plan to achieve full unification after 1949.⁶⁷ Spence further points out that after Chiang Kai-Shek and his GMD government retreated to Taiwan, the military concentrated on territorial reunification. In October 1950, the same month PRC troops were committed to Korea, China invaded Tibet. Contrasted with Taiwan and Korea Tibet was, accurately, predicted not to provide the PLA with much of a challenge. With no intervention on behalf of Tibet from the United Nations, India, or Great Britain, China was able to fully consolidate Tibet one year after the invasion. Framed as *liberation* from the imperialist West, the conquering of Tibet marked the beginning of the CCP's quest to control what it thought was rightfully China's. Taiwan, however, proved to be more problematic.⁶⁸

As a main part of the CCP's efforts of achieving territorial consolidation through reunification, Taiwan played, and continues to play, an important role in CCP politics.⁶⁹ Mao and his fellow cadre saw Taiwan as part of China, and as long as their enemies were allowed to control Taiwan, CCP control of mainland China could be challenged.⁷⁰ As Zheng Wang has pointed out, modern day CCP politics continues to insist Taiwan is the rightful territory of the PRC.⁷¹ Taiwan's independence assaults the ancient Chinese concept of unity and the heart of the PRC's apparent legitimacy, and as a result Taiwan has been made an integral part of the CCP's more recent rejuvenation plans.⁷² The initial challenge posed by the GMD's escape to Taiwan lay in the sheer difficulty in taking the island. Chiang Kai-shek and his band of nationalists had fled to the island after their defeat in 1949, and once safely on Taiwan they began to fortify it and put perhaps the best natural defense between them and mainland China, the sea. Invading Taiwan could

⁶⁷ Spence, *Modern China*, 525–6.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Christopher A. Ford, *Mind of Empire: China's History and Modern Foreign Relations*, Asia in the New Millennium (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2010), 240.

⁷⁰ Christensen, *Windows and War*, 59–60.

⁷¹ Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation*, 131.

⁷² Ford, *Asia in the New Millennium*, 241; Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation*, 131.

not be done without adequate sea transportation, and the PLA possessed weak amphibious forces that would have difficulty conducting such an operation.⁷³

The United States' stance on Taiwan also presented difficulties. Making matters worse, President Truman sent the Seventh Fleet into the Taiwan Strait after the United States entered the Korean War.⁷⁴ From Mao's viewpoint the Americans were looking stronger and more aggressive as a result. Furthermore, the Americans reversed their position that they would not meddle in the Chinese Civil War, which was not yet complete in Mao's view. The actions of the United States also gave further credence to Mao's view that the Americans were trying to encircle the PRC by forming alliances from French-Indo China to Korea and that any hope the PRC had of continuing to stand on its own lay in fighting the United States and isolating itself from the imperialist West.⁷⁵ By placing its fleet in the Taiwan Strait and entering the Korean War the United States probably stopped any invasion of Taiwan from occurring.⁷⁶ However, in so doing the United States reinforced China's perception of the ills of Western imperialism, solidified the American's position as China's principal enemy, and gave the CCP fodder to support its claim that the United States hated China and the Chinese people.⁷⁷ This also contributed to Mao's design to isolate China from the international community, which was a critical piece in the development of his domestic programs. As China drifted further and further away from Western influence, it embraced the Soviet model and welcomed immense amounts of Soviet aid.

D. SINO-SOVIET RELATIONS

Sino-Soviet relations were at their strongest during the 1950s. With the signing and declaration of the Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance on February

⁷³ Christensen, *Windows and War*, 60.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 54.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ Spence, *Modern China*, 529.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 531.

14, 1950 the two communist powers started what appeared to be a close relationship.⁷⁸ Michael Hunt indicates that as hostilities increased with the United States, CCP reliance upon the Soviets grew.⁷⁹ Not only did the newly formed PRC require Soviet support, the Soviets also became the CCP's model of a communist state.⁸⁰ While there was some division among Mao and other senior CCP leaders there was agreement that they needed Soviet aid and instruction in state building—Mao's chief concern was how to incorporate Soviet assistance while ensuring he kept control of China.⁸¹ As Westad points out, notwithstanding the discordant views among key CCP leadership on the topic of Soviet aid, there was sincere approbation for the Soviet model of what a communist state should look like. The Chinese communists desired science, technology, military strength, and political organization. Central to what party leaders found attractive was a strong and modern Soviet Union that was also anti-imperialist, and therefore not hostile to China. One cannot underestimate the massive amount of Soviet influence on the PRC in the 1950s. Every sector of the new PRC was modeled after the Soviet bloc, including its foreign policy. While some western observers thought that China was at a crossroads in terms of its foreign policy, the reality was much different. The link with the Soviet Union was intended to be the largest transfer of foreign knowledge into China in history; in the minds of Mao and other party leaders, in order to break with its troubled past the CCP needed to push itself away from the imperialist West and form a strong alliance with its communist neighbors to the north. The American hostility in Korea and Taiwan further cemented the idea that the West was against China. Westad further outlines that together, the PRC and the Soviet Union were to create the greatest anti-western alliance since the Ottoman Empire.⁸²

Why did the leaders of the CCP so closely associate China with the Soviet Union despite deep misgivings (rightly so) about foreign meddling in Chinese affairs? Westad

⁷⁸ Alan Lawrance, *China's Foreign Relations since 1949* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), 29.

⁷⁹ Hunt, *Chinese Communist Foreign Policy*, 178.

⁸⁰ Westad, *Restless Empire*, 290.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 301–6.

⁸² *Ibid.*

explains that the Soviet system was the core of Chinese communism and Spence also describes the depth of the Soviet partnership within China during this period.⁸³ While Mao and other leaders maintained a cautious outlook toward their northern Soviet neighbors, they nonetheless knew that the CCP was in dire need of assistance in rebuilding China into a communist superpower and the Soviet system provided the basis upon which that could be accomplished.⁸⁴ While the process became more Sinicized as time progressed, the first decade of the PRC's existence was marked by a heavy reliance on Soviet aid and expertise. Westad again states that another reason why the Soviet experience was so deeply entrenched in China was the nature of the interaction. The Sino-Soviet encounter was extremely broad and deep. While the Soviet aid program to China grew to be history's largest foreign assistance program, it also became the model in which millions of Chinese with little exposure to the outside world came to understand modernity through Soviet education, policies, and specialists.⁸⁵

Though the relationship with Soviet Russia did not last long and became characterized by discord, the fledgling PRC needed Soviet assistance. During this period, the PRC came as close to a multilateral alliance as it ever did prior to the 1990s. Wary of both superpowers, the relationship with the USSR grew more conflicted. Key to understanding the Sino-Soviet relationship during this time period, which later became more important, is understanding that to the Soviets their support was only attractive if the PRC remained the subordinate ally and malleable to Soviet intentions.⁸⁶ This proved the key determinate in the decline of the Sino-Soviet relationship in the 1950s and also helped drive China into a deeper isolation.

⁸³ Spence, *Modern China*, 544; Westad, *Restless Empire*, 304.

⁸⁴ Westad, *Restless Empire*, 301, 304.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Lawrance, *China's Foreign Relations*, 6.

IV. 1953–1957: PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

Mao's full program of isolation was yet to occur, and during this period of Chinese international relations the PRC sought to establish itself in the international arena through promotion of peaceful relations between communist and non-communist countries without entangling itself in alliances.⁸⁷ The phrase *Spirit of Bandung* generally characterizes Chinese diplomacy during this period because of the peace conference in Bandung attended by Zhou Enlai in 1955.⁸⁸ The Bandung Conference helped legitimize the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, and they were adopted by the PRC; the Five Principles specifically called for opposition to hegemony and multilateralism.⁸⁹ While Yongjin Zhang argues that China did not seek isolation during this era, it was interested in challenging the international status quo dominated by the two superpowers.⁹⁰ In order to do this, China promoted a new conciliatory self-image and placed an emphasis on winning Asian neighbors away from Western alliances through offers of good will, vice direct confrontation and revolutionary support.⁹¹ However, this version of Chinese foreign policy did not last long after the Bandung conference as Chinese policy became more anti-imperialist and militant.⁹² As in other periods of China's foreign policy the PRC did not establish any multilateral alliances nor did it attempt to do so during this period. With the establishment of the Five Principles, China set itself up to avoid the entanglements of foreign alliances for the foreseeable future. Not fully isolationists at this point, China's opposition to hegemony and a desire to challenge the established order put it at odds with the Soviets and Americans in the coming years.

⁸⁷ Van Ness, *Revolution and Chinese Foreign Policy*, 12.

⁸⁸ J. D. Armstrong, *Revolutionary Diplomacy: Chinese Foreign Policy and the United Front Doctrine* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1980), 71.

⁸⁹ Yongjin Zhang, *China in International Society since 1949: Alienation and Beyond* (Oxford: St. Antony's College, 1998), 37; Ronald C. Keith, "The Origins and Strategic Implications of China's Independent Foreign Policy," *International Journal* 41, no. 1 (1985): 102–3.

⁹⁰ Zhang, *China in International Society since 1949*, 37–8.

⁹¹ Armstrong, *Revolutionary Diplomacy*, 71; Van Ness, *Revolution and Chinese Foreign Policy*, 12.

⁹² Van Ness, *Revolution and Chinese Foreign Policy*, 13.

China's relationship with the Soviet Union deepened during the mid-1950s, largely due to the efforts of Nikita Khrushchev.⁹³ When Joseph Stalin died in 1953, writes Westad, his ideological distrust of the CCP also died with him. As the new Soviet Premier, Khrushchev identified China as an important ally because it was a large and populous country with massive amounts of potential, it shared a common border with Russia, and it was home to a robust communist party that sought to imitate the Soviet model. To Khrushchev, China was a great opportunity that the Soviets must take hold of. The Chinese desire to model themselves after the Soviets was perceived as an honor to the Soviets, and it also brought with it the opportunity to shape the future of communist China. Khrushchev offered more civilian and military assistance than Stalin ever imagined giving, and by the mid-1950s every ministry, government organ, and major industrial initiative in China had a Soviet adviser embedded in it. Soviet advisers were truly involved in every aspect of Chinese society and life. Without the Soviet aid, the vision of a modern communist China that Mao and the CCP wanted would never have been realized. Most importantly for Mao, the Soviet aid also provided him the means to further isolate China and deepen the entrenchment between the West that the Korean War had created.⁹⁴

A. THE SPIRIT OF BANDUNG

In 1955, Zhou Enlai, China's premier, attended the Bandung Conference of Afro-Asian Nations in Indonesia.⁹⁵ The conference in Bandung provided CCP leadership with the opportunity to present a new peacemaking image of China that was eventually coined *the spirit of Bandung*.⁹⁶ Zhou went to great lengths to present this image of China and also applied the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence.⁹⁷ With China in possession of a firm alliance with the Soviets and the accomplished task of having driven back the imperialists in Korea, Armstrong states that Mao and his fellow CCP cadre were intent on

⁹³ Westad, *Restless Empire*, 304–6.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ Armstrong, *Revolutionary Diplomacy*, 71.

⁹⁶ Van Ness, *Revolution and Chinese Foreign Policy*, 12.

⁹⁷ Armstrong, *Revolutionary Diplomacy*, 71–2.

developing China into a recognized international force. The Bandung efforts were intended to achieve international diplomatic recognition so that China could go about the business of influencing international politics, particularly in the Third World.⁹⁸ Zhou Enlai's use of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence was arguably foundational to CCP foreign policy for the next thirty years, as Keith's article illustrates, and the specific rejection of hegemony and alliance politics in the Five Principles is of particular importance to understand.⁹⁹ Originally outlined in 1953, Zhou described the Five Principles as ensuring a shared respect for each state's territory and internal authority, a non-belligerent stance between states, non-intervention in other states internal affairs, and a recognized equality that underwrote peaceful relations between states.¹⁰⁰ Directly opposing Zhou's Five Principles was the imperialistic hegemony that China sought to avoid, and any efforts to form trilateral or multilateral alliances were viewed as aversive to the communist mission in China and greater Asia.¹⁰¹

Despite the PRC's general push toward peaceful coexistence in its foreign relations, real tensions continued to exist between China, the United States, and Taiwan. In September 1954, the PLA shelled the GMD held offshore islands, Quemoy and Matsu, between mainland China and Taiwan.¹⁰² Christensen notes that while largely diplomatic in nature, these attacks were in large part conducted to respond to perceived negative trends in the international system and partially to satisfy domestic needs for Mao. In 1954, Mao believed that two trends in the international system were moving to block the PRC's acquisition of Taiwan and full Chinese unification. According to Christensen, the first was the diplomatic trend of international treaties relating to Asian civil wars that were favorable for the West. In the case of Korea and Vietnam, areas of importance to the CCP, two separate governments were set up to accommodate a communist north and capitalist south. In Mao's view, if this were allowed to become a standard, it could stop

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Keith's article as a whole indicates the lasting effects of Zhou's Five Principles. Keith, "Origins and Strategic Implications of China's Independent Foreign Policy," 100, 102.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 100.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Christensen, *Windows and War*, 58–60.

the CCP from unifying the country under the banner of the PRC and achieving international recognition as the legitimate government of a united China. The second was the increasing American system of anti-communist alliances in the region, personified in the creation of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO).¹⁰³ Spence also indicates in his work that the goal of SEATO was to arrest further communist advancements in Southeast Asia.¹⁰⁴ This alliance was seen as purposefully blocking the PRC from achieving its goals, and if it was to include Taiwan it would only strengthen the Republic of China (ROC) politically and militarily and entrench the United States into the Chinese Civil War indefinitely.¹⁰⁵

The PRC's main message it was trying to convey by shelling Quemoy and Matsu was that it would not stand by while America and Taiwan formed closer ties against China.¹⁰⁶ The shelling also had domestic intentions. A committed revolutionary, Mao felt that the population needed reminding of the inimical international situation. The Korean War, the mollification of China's western territories, and the Taiwan issue were seen by Mao as tools to generate revolutionary struggle in the populous that he felt was needed in order to implement his domestic plans.¹⁰⁷ Always a wily opportunist, Mao continued to use international spats as fuel for his domestic revolutionary needs. This became a dominate theme throughout his leadership of China and intensified in the 1960s.

B. NON-ALIGNMENT AND CHINA'S REVOLUTIONARY GOALS

The CCP's view of the international world was formed by a negative mixture of a Soviet influence that decried the United States and capitalism, the memory of China's national humiliation at the hands of Europeans and Japanese, and the Korean and the Indochina wars.¹⁰⁸ In the midst of this negative cocktail the Chinese Communists saw themselves as leaders in the international battle against imperialism and capitalism and in

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Spence, *Modern China*, 553-4.

¹⁰⁵ Christensen, *Windows and War*, 59.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 60.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Westad, *Restless Empire*, 318; Van Ness, *Revolution and Chinese Foreign Policy*, 191.

aiding Third World countries to liberate themselves from the effects of colonialism.¹⁰⁹ Aiding fellow Third World countries through supporting wars of national liberation in order to gain supporters for China's strategy to promote radical change in the international system was a large part of China's foreign policy throughout the 1950s and 1960s.¹¹⁰ Despite seeking to support multiple Third World nations in efforts of liberation and revolution, the CCP limited its obligations for support because Mao believed that revolutions must be self-sustaining and he thought it best to stay relatively free from the entanglement of alliances, the Soviet Union being the only exception.¹¹¹

The CCP's negative view of the international political environment was also reinforced by Mao's dominance of the party. Mao's influence ran strong and it reigned over the party's foreign affairs; as the 1950s and 1960s rolled on he continued to dominate party thought and foreign policy, evidenced by the fact that he remained firmly in control despite his disastrous Great Leap Forward (GLF) which killed an estimated 20 to 30 million Chinese people.¹¹² Mao himself was very suspicious of the international community, multilateral alliances, and any international norm that was perceived to stand in the way of China's growth.¹¹³ From Mao's perspective, the international norms in existence had to be abandoned if China was to achieve its potential. Conveniently at hand were the Five Principles. The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence were a defining doctrine of foreign policy for China.¹¹⁴ They underwrote the PRC's opposition to hegemony and also its opposition to trilateral and multilateral alliances.¹¹⁵ Mao used this and a hostile American policy toward China to isolate China from ill of Western thought. Afraid of foreign influences, excepting Soviet, within China, Mao and others used the United States' economic embargoes, diplomatic isolation, and American support for the

¹⁰⁹ Westad, *Restless Empire*, 318–9.

¹¹⁰ Van Ness, *Revolution and Chinese Foreign Policy*, 189.

¹¹¹ Westad, *Restless Empire*, 297; Armstrong, *Revolutionary Diplomacy*, 78–9; Lawrance, *China's Foreign Relations*, 11.

¹¹² Hunt, *Chinese Communist Foreign Policy*, 125, 230; Fairbank, *China*, 368.

¹¹³ Robert G. Sutter, *Chinese Foreign Relations: Power and Policy since the Cold War*, 3rd edition (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2012), 101.

¹¹⁴ Keith, "Origins and Strategic Implications of China's Independent Foreign Policy," 102–6.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

GMD as reasons why the PRC should seek isolation and struggle against the Western powers.¹¹⁶ As an example, in 1955 Mao calculatingly denied British Prime Minister Anthony Eden's request to visit China to improve Sino-British relations.¹¹⁷ Mao needed the hostile international environment to set the stage for his upcoming social revolutions in which the people had to be convinced of the need for a self-sacrifice and revolutionary zeal similar to that of the 1930s; any alliance system could and likely would have jeopardized Mao's domestic social objectives.¹¹⁸ The late 1950s also saw an increase in Mao's pursuit to be more independent from the Soviets, which eventually exacerbated into a full split. Mao's program of isolation was designed to strengthen China independent of the West and the Soviet Union. It is this theses position that Mao firmly believed that if the people maintained a revolutionary zeal he could harness that zeal and his plans would bring prosperity and true independence to the PRC.

¹¹⁶ Westad, *Restless Empire*, 325.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Christensen, *Windows and War*, 62–3.

V. 1958–1965: MILITANT ANTI-IMPERIALISM AND THE EMERGENCE OF ANTI-REVISIONISM

The Sino-Soviet rift became more pronounced between 1958 and 1965, and Chinese foreign policy became increasingly more independent of the superpowers, particularly the USSR.¹¹⁹ While Soviet Russia viewed itself as the leader of international communism, China was determined not to continue as the junior partner.¹²⁰ One of the main disagreements between the Soviets and the Chinese was how to deal with the imperialist West—put simply the Chinese were not willing to submit to the Soviet view of how to relate with the Americans.¹²¹ Frustrated and losing confidence with the *Bandung* style of foreign policy, China sought to venture further out on its own, establish a more revolutionary stance in the international order and develop new domestic policies.¹²² After 1958, China's crumbling alliance with the Soviets accelerated; the two countries were increasingly at odds with each other, and China's public challenges of Soviet policies increased.¹²³ From the PRC's perspective its main communist ally that it had historically looked to for support seemed to be either actively working against them, or just unwilling to help.¹²⁴ Additionally, China continued to perceive the United States as a threat as China's dispute with the Soviets deepened.¹²⁵ Both of these factors were useful tools in Mao's drive for isolation. The scenario of China being at odds with both superpowers naturally isolated the country from the international community writ large. This is one of the main reasons, during this period, that China was never inclined toward forming multilateral alliances. Another aspect to consider in this period was Mao's plan to implement revolutionary domestic policy. In 1957 Mao launched the Anti-Rightist

¹¹⁹ Van Ness, *Revolution and Chinese Foreign Policy*, 13.

¹²⁰ Lawrance, *China's Foreign Relations*, 64.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 67.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 66–7; Van Ness, *Revolution and Chinese Foreign Policy*, 14.

¹²³ Lawrance, *China's Foreign Relations*, 67–8.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 68–9.

¹²⁵ Michael B. Yahuda, *Towards the End of Isolationism: China's Foreign Policy After Mao* (London: Macmillan, 1983), 95.

campaign; lasting from 1957 to 1958 it was an assault against the skilled and intellectual upper classes in China.¹²⁶ Designed to root out possible threats to the CCP it was just the beginning of a long period of internal struggle that hamstrung China's propensity to be a global power through 1976 and the GPCR.¹²⁷ It seems that the Sinicized version of communist ideology which called for distancing itself from international norms was a primary factor in restricting China from any form of multilateralism.

A. MILITANT ANTI-IMPERIALISM: THE 1958 TAIWAN STRAIGHTS CRISIS AND THE 1962 WAR WITH INDIA

For the PRC, 1958 was not a good year. The second Taiwan Straits Crisis ushered in more militant provocation from China, began the PRC's further international isolation, and saw the beginning of one of history's great social and economic catastrophes, the GLF. Why did Mao again launch a limited military campaign against Taiwan and its superpower ally, the United States? The answer appears to lie primarily with Mao's domestic desires to transform China. During the late 1950s, CCP leaders perceived a shift in the balance of power structure between Beijing and Moscow; the Soviets were seen by the CCP as becoming increasingly powerful and as a result acting more assertively toward China.¹²⁸ Mao saw the Soviets as gaining an upper hand politically and desired the PRC to become more independent of the alliance with the Soviets.¹²⁹ As Mao's ideology started growing more distant from the Soviet's, his relationship with Khrushchev also started to worsen.¹³⁰ In Mao's view, his ideological vision for China precluded maintaining the alliance with the Soviets in its original form.¹³¹ Mao desired a self-sufficient China, and he needed to start preparing the populace for his long term plans, so he used foreign affairs to provide the support needed to organize Chinese

¹²⁶ Fairbank, *China*, 366.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ Christensen, *Windows and War*, 62.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ Westad, *Restless Empire*, 337.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

society for his GLF.¹³² He principally accomplished this by engineering a crisis tied to a possible war with the United States and the liberation of Taiwan.¹³³ The attacks on Quemoy and Matsu were largely political and were never designed to actually conquer Taiwan or enter into war with the United States.¹³⁴ In addition to preparing the Chinese public for his radical GLF, Mao also sought to further isolate China away from foreign entanglements and show independence.¹³⁵ The attacks on the two islands were conducted without informing the Soviets in advance, thus displaying Mao's ability and willingness to conduct foreign policy without Soviet input.¹³⁶ The gap continued to widen between the two communist nations and China's isolation continued to deepen.

The Sino-Indian war in 1962 did much to damage China's peaceful reputation inside the Third World and also helped further isolate China. For the majority of the 1950s China was focused on developing good relations with its Asian neighbors, and it was largely successful in doing so. The 1955 conference in Bandung saw India and China declare perpetual peace with each other, and China appeared to have sanguine relations with the largest of their Asian neighbors.¹³⁷ However, as the 1960s began the Sino-Indian relationship was near the breaking point. Westad also indicates that as CCP ideology under Mao drifted further left, CCP leadership became more critical of their Indian neighbors. Instead of viewing the Indian government as Third World allies, the CCP saw Indian leaders as conformist replacements to the British imperial system.¹³⁸ Additionally, Mao and other leaders in the CCP were becoming more wary about their western borders.¹³⁹ When extreme CCP policies led to rebellion in 1959 and the fleeing of the Dalai Lama, Mao decided that New Delhi was behind the insurrection.¹⁴⁰ With Mao's

¹³² Christensen, *Windows and War*, 62–3; Westad, *Restless Empire*, 337.

¹³³ Christensen, *Windows and War*, 62.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 61.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 63.

¹³⁶ Westad, *Restless Empire*, 337; Christensen, *Windows and War*, 63.

¹³⁷ Westad, *Restless Empire*, 341–2.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ Christensen, *Windows and War*, 64.

¹⁴⁰ Westad, *Restless Empire*, 342.

belief that the Indians had designs to undermine party authority in Tibet and Soviet relations also soured there emerged a perceived threat that loomed outside China's western borders that had to be confronted.

The decision for war with India changed the political landscape of Asia and created a Sino-Indian tension that exists today. Garver correctly illustrated that the Sino-Indian war of 1962 was largely a war of misperceptions and false projections.¹⁴¹ Garver further outlines how China incorrectly assessed India's intentions in the Tibetan plateau region, projected blame onto India, and made errors in diplomacy that ultimately led to conflict. While official Indian knowledge of CIA-led subterfuge in the region was in fact real, China projected the blame for the 1959 rebellion and the general unrest in the area squarely on the shoulders of India. Among Chinese scholars there is unanimous agreement that the causes for the 1962 war with India lay directly with India and its attempts to undermine Chinese authority and seize Tibet. This is interesting. Additionally, the thinking of contemporary Chinese scholars reflects the thinking of the 1962 leaders who chose war. Regardless, the 1962 CCP leaders deeply misunderstood India's motives with respect to Tibet. Nehru's India sought not to seize control of Tibet but rather sought to set up an arrangement between India and China that allowed for Tibet's right for self-government while still under overall Chinese authority. Instead of mimicking the West's absurdity and usage of nuclear bi-polarity, Nehru believed India and China could compromise and use Tibetan autonomy under Chinese sovereignty to bolster their relationship and create a new paradigm in international politics. Nehru's actual actions and public records contradict the Chinese claim he was leading India to seize control of Tibet. While it seems Nehru and others were aware of covert CIA operations in Tibet designed to foment unrest, their intentions were rather clear that they had no designs on Tibet.¹⁴² So why did Mao and the CCP choose war and what did it do to their reputation in Asia?

¹⁴¹ John W. Garver, "China's Decision for War with India in 1962" in *New Directions in the Study of China's Foreign Policy*, ed. Alastair I. Johnston and Robert S. Ross (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006), 87–9, 91, 96–7, 100–1.

¹⁴² Ibid.

While the policy development on both sides leading up to the 1962 war is complex and circuitous, it is clear both sides made diplomatic errors and misjudged each other and war was the course that resulted. China was able to soundly route the Indian forces and reinstate the status quo border between the two countries and strengthen its control over Tibet.¹⁴³ However, the Sino-Indian relationship was seriously damaged as a result of China's sweeping victory and it had a destabilizing effect in the region.¹⁴⁴ As Garver states, China was now one of India's chief antagonists second only to Pakistan, and the tense relationship has continued into the 21st century. Instead of seeing China as a possible ally, China was now viewed with fear and suspicion. India was much less willing to accept any Chinese diplomatic olive branches and become much more steadfast in keeping China out of Nepal and Bangladesh. India also began a military modernization campaign which continues to this day. The 1962 war also had the secondary effect of further isolating China in Asia. India's strategic relationship with the Soviets deepened, which further isolated and encircled China.¹⁴⁵ Moreover, China's efforts at influencing other Third World countries against the Soviets were upset as a result of the conflict.¹⁴⁶ Perhaps if China had chosen a less aggressive tack the Sino-Indian relationship and China's negative image in Asia would be much different today.¹⁴⁷ What the 1962 war with India did provide the CCP with was fresh fodder for their domestic endeavors. With their relationship with the Soviets in tatters, and the GLF proving a disaster, the CCP needed something to help keep their control over the country solid and make Mao's continued efforts for social campaigns possible. The war also served Mao's desire to isolate China, as previously discussed, on the periphery and continue his domestic programs without foreign intervention.

¹⁴³ Fairbank, *China*, 381.

¹⁴⁴ Garver, *War with India*, 124–5.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ Fairbank, *China*, 381–2.

¹⁴⁷ Garver, *War with India*, 125.

B. THE GREAT LEAP FORWARD AND THE SINO-SOVIET SPLIT

Lasting from 1958 to 1961, the GLF was Mao's plan to rapidly develop China. An utter failure, this social and economic experiment cost the lives of an estimated 45 million Chinese peasants due to starvation also proved a springboard for Mao to deconstruct the PRC's alliance with the Soviets.¹⁴⁸ One of history's greatest human disasters, the GLF was one of Mao's efforts at moving away from the Soviet model and setting China on a new course, and, though a domestic policy, it was nonetheless interwoven into the PRC's foreign affairs.¹⁴⁹ Observing the GLF from its beginning, Soviet advisors were very much concerned with Mao's grand plan for further modernization in China. One of China's main problems in 1958 was that urbanization was happening faster than industrialization; urban unemployment rose which created underemployment in the countryside where most of China's population resided.¹⁵⁰ From this stark fact emerged the beginning of the end for the GLF. Soviet advisors in China correctly reported to Moscow that Mao's program of modernization would bring with it an incredible toll in human life.¹⁵¹ Westad writes that warnings from the Soviet advisors to their Chinese counterparts about the dangers of this program made their way to Mao, and it enraged him. Mao's deep-seated sense of the Soviet's treatment of the Chinese as inferior was bubbling over. Westad also describes how Mao's relationship with Khrushchev also devolved. When Khrushchev visited Chairman Mao in attempts to conciliate him, Mao made a point to list all of the Soviet grievances against China since the 1920s. In another meeting, Mao infamously met Khrushchev in a pool knowing full well the Soviet leader could not swim.¹⁵² These were blatant efforts by Mao to destabilize the PRC's alliance with the Soviets and extricate China from any Soviet influence. Mao's tactics were working.

¹⁴⁸ Westad, *Restless Empire*, 336.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 336–7.

¹⁵⁰ Fairbank, *China*, 369.

¹⁵¹ Westad, *Restless Empire*, 336–7.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

After the 1958 Taiwan Straits crisis ended, Mao was certain that his domestic undertakings were not well-matched with the original form of the PRC's alliance with the Soviets.¹⁵³ On Khrushchev's final visit to Beijing in 1959 Mao and his Foreign Minister, Chen Yi, verbally attacked Khrushchev calling him a "time server" to his face and accusing him of submitting to the American's, supporting India over China, and refusing to share nuclear secrets.¹⁵⁴ This marked the official beginning of the Sino-Soviet split that eventually culminated in 1962. Mao subsequently began his preparations for a bold and public attack on Soviet foreign affairs and communist doctrine. Headed by Deng Xiaoping, a small group of CCP ideologues published a succession of articles on the ninetieth anniversary of Lenin's birth that criticized the Soviets as "modern revisionists" that had "temporarily hoodwinked" the masses and called Marxist-Leninists around the world to "further arouse the revolutionary will of the masses."¹⁵⁵ In June of 1960 the two Communist heavyweights publicly clashed at the Romanian Communist Party's congress and by July Khrushchev had ordered the withdrawal of the bulk of the 1,400 Soviet advisors in China.¹⁵⁶ In two years Mao had brought the disaster of the GLF upon China and brought the country to the breaking point with all of its international partners.

The GLF ended in 1961, and by that time certain key leaders within the CCP were taking stock of the situation in which the GLF had placed China.¹⁵⁷ Westad describes a program that was designed to benefit the Chinese people and the country as a whole did the exact opposite, and that was keenly noted by leaders such as Deng Xiaoping, Liu Shaoqi, and Zhou Enlai. Westad further illustrates that these three leaders were central in trying to clean up the disarray which Mao had caused through the GLF. Mao allowed his three top officials to use a brief respite in the spat with the Soviets in order to again use Soviet aid in China. Evidenced by Mao's continued dominance of the party after such a disaster as the GLF, his leadership was becoming unquestionable. This became apparent

¹⁵³ Ibid., 338.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 338–9; Fairbank, *China*, 379.

¹⁵⁷ Westad, *Restless Empire*, 339–40.

when in 1962 Liu Shaoqi and Wan Jiaxiang publicly criticized the GLF and called for a return to a Sino-Soviet alliance.¹⁵⁸ Mao's old ally and general, Peng Dehuai, also expressed concern over the GLF.¹⁵⁹ Mao's response to this challenge to his authority and vision helped define his command of the party for the rest of his reign and served as a critical moment in CCP history. Incensed, Mao fired back at his perceived opponents labeling them Chinese revisionists and declaring that class struggle continued under socialism.¹⁶⁰ Mao's response meant that anyone who challenged his ideas ran the risk of being labeled a revisionist and being purged from the party, or worse.¹⁶¹ CCP leaders were successfully browbeaten into submission, and Mao tightened his grip on the party. Given Mao's power within the CCP and his cult personality, the fear within the party must have been palpable. These events were a foreshadowing of what was to happen during the GPCR, itself only four short years away. With Mao's successful block of any thawing in the relationship with the Soviets and his dominance within the party unchallengeable, he was now free to rule a China that was the most internationally isolated, perhaps, it had ever been in its long past. The stage was now set for the onset of the GPCR.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Spence, *Modern China*, 582.

¹⁶⁰ Westad, *Restless Empire*, 340.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

VI. 1966–1976: THE GREAT PROLETARIAT CULTURAL REVOLUTION

Communist ideology continued to play a prominent role in Chinese politics during the late 1960s and 70s. Truly a lost decade this ten year period achieved incredible destruction inside China and is considered a colossal failure.¹⁶² The highpoints of the GPCR lasted three years, from 1966 to 1969, but scholars point out that it continued in some form until 1976.¹⁶³ Significant to this period is China's turn inward from the diplomatic world; in 1967, all but one of China's ambassadors overseas were recalled, resulting in the almost total cessation of regular foreign diplomacy.¹⁶⁴ Its effect on foreign affairs was devastating; China was at loggerheads with almost all communist and non-communist governments worldwide.¹⁶⁵ Relations with Soviet Russia also worsened when in March 1969 Chinese and Soviet armed forces clashed over disputed territory in the Ussuri River.¹⁶⁶ Not only was China not interested in basic diplomacy, but any type of alliance formation, either bilateral or multilateral, was also out of the question. While the reasons for the GPCR are complex and require several lines of analysis, it is evident that Mao was the driving force.¹⁶⁷ Any path to modernization was delayed until his passing.

A. THE THIRD WORLD: NORTH KOREA AND NORTH VIETNAM

Mao's manufactured isolation of China in preparation for his revolution and expulsions did not stop his courting of the Third World and Westad chronicles these efforts well.¹⁶⁸ During the intervening years between the GLF and the GPCR, the PRC sought to become the object upon which all other Third World countries gravitated to.

¹⁶² Fairbank, *China*, 383; Melvyn P. Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind: The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Cold War*, 1st edition (New York: Hill and Wang, 2008), 458.

¹⁶³ Fairbank, *China*, 385.

¹⁶⁴ Lawrance, *China's Foreign Relations*, 190.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 191.

¹⁶⁶ Lawrance, *China's Foreign Relations since 1949*, 202.

¹⁶⁷ Fairbank, *China*, 384–5.

¹⁶⁸ Westad, *Restless Empire*, 346–52.

The message being sent from Beijing portrayed China as the bastion of agrarian revolutionary theory and all things Marxist-Leninist. And Mao was, of course, the virtuoso responsible for it all. Under this backdrop Beijing's relationship with North Korea and North Vietnam became strained. As the conflict between the United States and North Vietnam heated up, North Korea wanted to seize the opportunity to advance its cause against the south but instead found itself in an ideological struggle with China. By 1966 China and North Korea were exchanging very public verbal onslaughts at each other. North Vietnam also moved away from a China it saw as trying to mold Vietnam into a Chinese puppet. Mao's split with the Soviets created an awkward triangular relationship between Vietnam, China, and the Soviet Union. In desperate need of Soviet assistance in the war with America, Vietnamese leaders were soured by China's constant attempts to impeded Soviet aid to Vietnam. As the GPCR deepened in China, the ideological fervor that was created also alienated Vietnam. A once close ally was now at odds with China. In every Third World country China projected its interests in it was met with closed doors and a general repugnance. China's one last foreign policy strategy of leading the Third World against Western imperialism was a failed enterprise.¹⁶⁹

B. CLASS STRUGGLE AND THE END OF THE GREAT PROLETARIAT REVOLUTION

The reasoning for Mao's push for the GPCR, and all of his revolutionary aims, was his ideological belief that only through class struggle and the maintenance of revolutionary zeal could any group of people attain a communist utopia.¹⁷⁰ The origins of the GPCR are a mixture of a large number of various desires among differing groups. Though complex, Mao's views were central to what took place during the GPCR, and he provided the impetus for its beginning.¹⁷¹ A central tenet of the GPCR was its xenophobia.¹⁷² As previously discussed, prominent in Mao's thinking was the evils of the international system and what its influences could do in China. Not only did China's

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Fairbank, *China*, 386.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 385–6.

¹⁷² Westad, *Restless Empire*, 359.

foreign policy become essentially nonexistent, but anything foreign, particularly Western, was targeted by the GPCR's henchmen.¹⁷³ People all over China who had any Western connections were publicly humiliated, and as the GPCR continued, often treated with extreme violence.¹⁷⁴ Estimates put the number of victims of the GPCR between 400,000 and 700,000.¹⁷⁵ Based upon Mao's doctrine of revolution and the assumption that conspiratorial intellectuals were weakening the party, the educated were usually the ones targeted.¹⁷⁶ Those carrying out the purging were primarily young and disgruntled Chinese whom Mao had empowered to carry out the social revolution he thought was needed.¹⁷⁷ Repressed and angry at what they thought was a corrupt bureaucracy they lashed out with a vengeance.¹⁷⁸ While most of the party members were never safe during the height of the GPCR, Mao himself retained his lofty position. Mao used his position and the general unrest well. He believed that the youth must be the ones to experience the revolution themselves in order to rid China and the CCP itself of any revisionists.¹⁷⁹ It also served China to have its young people filled with the revolutionary zeal needed to continue to drive to communism.¹⁸⁰ The international isolation Mao orchestrated had created, in his mind, the conditions needed to save China and continue the revolution.¹⁸¹

By late 1967, Mao's created disorder grew to a proportion that made even him nervous.¹⁸² Despite Mao's ideology that the masses needed to be involved in revolution and not ruled from on high by the cultured elite, a complete lack of control soon lead to a state of anarchy that even Mao decided was too radical.¹⁸³ The country needed to

¹⁷³ Spence, *Modern China*, 606; Westad, *Restless Empire*, 354.

¹⁷⁴ Westad, *Restless Empire*, 355.

¹⁷⁵ Fairbank, *China*, 387.

¹⁷⁶ Spence, *Modern China*, 606.

¹⁷⁷ Fairbank, *China*, 387; Spence, *Modern China*, 606.

¹⁷⁸ Spence, *Modern China*, 606.

¹⁷⁹ Fairbank, *China*, 387.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ Westad, *Restless Empire*, 359.

¹⁸² Spence, *Modern China*, 612; Westad, *Restless Empire*, 360.

¹⁸³ Spence, *Modern China*, 612.

function, and the party needed to exercise some type of control over the Red Guards before the chaos spun outside the party's control. However, social disorder at the levels reached during the GPCR is quite difficult to arrest.¹⁸⁴ It took until the summer of 1968 before something resembling order was reestablished.¹⁸⁵ Furthermore, the turmoil created by the GPCR also predisposed the leadership of the CCP to fear a war with the Soviets, another main determinate in seeking a slowdown to the GPCR.¹⁸⁶ Westad indicates that despite no real evidence, party cadre nonetheless felt they were a target. Buying into the frenzied ideology of the GPCR, party logic assumed that their position was one to be coveted by the Soviets and that they sought China's destruction. Ever seeking to stay ahead of the perceived Soviet threat, Mao agreed to an unprovoked attack against the Soviets along the Ussuri River in 1969. Despite some rather intense border fighting, real war was avoided. By the early 1970s Mao began to consider the idea that such international isolation as had been achieved in China was becoming dangerous.¹⁸⁷ The real threat of war in 1969 and the level of chaos achieved by his engineered social revolution combined to convince the charismatic leader that China needed a course correction.

Ironically, Mao began seeking advice from the very people he had allowed to be purged during the intense periods of the GPCR.¹⁸⁸ Westad writes that because of Mao's desire to rid China of the chaos from his own creation, he sought out former army chiefs and queried them on what they thought was a good way forward for China internationally. Not surprisingly, they utilized Mao's own teaching on the exploitation of contradictions to suggest playing the Americans off the Soviets to benefit China. While still publicly condemning these men, Mao nevertheless acted upon their suggestion that he seek a rapprochement of sorts with the United States.¹⁸⁹ Mao's decision to pursue relations with the Americans came at a very opportune time. China was left critically

¹⁸⁴ Westad, *Restless Empire*, 361.

¹⁸⁵ Spence, *Modern China*, 612.

¹⁸⁶ Westad, *Restless Empire*, 360–1.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 362.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

vulnerable due to Mao's programs, and the top leaders that were able to survive the purges knew it was important for China to break out of its political isolation. Enter President Richard Nixon, a tried and true American Cold Warrior who also believed America needed allies outside of Europe and Japan to succeed against the Soviets.¹⁹⁰ Westad records that this was not a popular nor was it a politically viable position in American politics in the early 1970s, yet Nixon was willing to attempt a major political gamble when he sought out China. While the vestiges of the GPCR lasted until Mao's death, a warming of the relationship with America occurred in 1972 when Nixon was finally to pay an official visit to China.¹⁹¹ The GPCR was coming to an end, and with Mao's death in 1976, China entered a new era from which China slowly emerged from isolation and sought greater engagement with the international community. Despite this, the PRC's foreign policy continued to be suspicious of the West's alliance structure and primarily bilateral in nature.

China's gradual move toward isolation started in the 1950s and culminated with near total isolation by 1966. Mao's control of the party and his intense distrust of the West and even the Soviets was combined with his revolutionary communist ideology and created a scenario in which China not only eschewed multilateralism, but any formal alliances whatsoever. The PRC's relationships with every foreign state it had were destroyed during the 1960s. China's ascent to modernity was not a foregone conclusion in 1976. The PRC could easily have continued its leftward descent or it could attempt some reform and opening of the country.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 368–9.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

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VII. 1977–1989: CHINESE FOREIGN POLICY AFTER MAO AND EFFORTS TO MODERNIZE

After Mao's death, there was a significant internal struggle for power which culminated in the arrest and trial of the Gang of Four, revolutionary Maoists, and the rise of Deng Xiaoping in 1978.¹⁹² This period marked a distinct difference in both China's internal and external policies. Chinese leadership turned to favor a foreign policy that was more apt to accept the international situation as it was and avoid Mao's disruptive revolutionary approach.¹⁹³ With Mao's death, the remnants of GPCR *leftism* were almost entirely eradicated.¹⁹⁴ In its wake, China's leaders embraced a more realistic approach to foreign policy, but they still retained their rejection of *imperialist hegemony* and their desire to pursue an "independent foreign policy."¹⁹⁵ Firmly independent, China's leaders viewed alliances with either of the superpowers as impediments to China's strategic options and its ability to accomplish stated goals.¹⁹⁶ Referencing Zhou Enlai's Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence and its requirement of only normal bilateral relations, Chinese foreign policy makers rejected trilateral, and by association multilateral, alliances because they limited China's options.¹⁹⁷ According to Ronald Keith, "the current strategic emphasis on bilateralism as opposed to trilateralism and on 'opposition to hegemony' must in part be explained by reference to the ideological connotations of 'independent foreign policy.'"¹⁹⁸ China's strong stance against hegemonism, or imperialism, has been rooted in both a historic cultural aversion and a more pragmatic realist calculation of self-interest.¹⁹⁹ Either way, during the late 1970s and mid-1980s,

¹⁹² Fairbank, *China*, 405.

¹⁹³ Sutter, *Chinese Foreign Relations*, 4.

¹⁹⁴ Keith, "Origins and Strategic Implications of China's Independent Foreign Policy," 96.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 95–6.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 101.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 102–3.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 105–6.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 114.

Chinese foreign policy continued to steer clear of multilateral alliances in its foreign affairs due to its historical roots on foreign policy and a desire for flexibility.

How could China become a successful modern country? That was a question asked by many Chinese leaders living in a post-Mao China. The isolation that Mao had thrust China into created a skeptical generation and a nation-state that was one of the poorest in the world. The CCP program was supposed to make China powerful and economically successful, but it had done the exact opposite. By 1978, Deng Xiaoping had gained significant influence within the CCP, and he used that influence to move China closer to the Americans.²⁰⁰ Deng's 1979 visit to America was a watershed moment for him.²⁰¹ Westad writes of Deng seeing the high levels of productivity, technologies, and standard of living, and he recognized America's preeminent position in the world and thought it insanity to avoid a rapprochement with them. Modernization was the primary goal for Deng, and in order to accomplish that he needed technology transfers for both the military and civilian spheres. A central element in the Sino-American warming during the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s was the focus on opposition toward all things Soviet. Once China's principal ally, the Soviet Union was now the instrument used by China to gain American aid.²⁰² Ironically, Mao's orchestrated Sino-Soviet split of 1963 was being used to create an alliance of sorts with America in order to generate the economic growth that seemed so elusive during the short 30 year history of the CCP.

The political relationship with the United States was not without its difficulties, however. Taiwan continued to be a burr in the boot of the PRC. During the 1977 Eleventh Party Congress, then Party Chairman Hua Guofeng outlined the conditions of China's bilateral relations with the United States: an annulment of the 1954 mutual defense treaty between the United States and Taiwan, removal of American troops from Taiwan, and a cessation of official diplomatic relations with Taipei.²⁰³ Noteworthy about

²⁰⁰ Westad, *Restless Empire*, 372; Fairbank, *China*, 406.

²⁰¹ Westad, *Restless Empire*, 372–5.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Robert G. Sutter, *Chinese Foreign Policy: Developments After Mao* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1986), 51, 63.

the PRC's foreign policy is the continued adherence to bilateral only relations. Sutter notes that the 1972 Shanghai communique with America did not include any other nations, and China's anti-hegemony strategy against the Soviets did not include any other Asian states. When Deng consolidated power in 1978, he did little to adjust China's elementary foreign affairs strategy, instead concentrating on practical ways to modernize China both economically and politically. Sutter notes this new found focus under Deng, however, reinforced the need to exercise effective diplomacy with the Americans in order to modernize and counterbalance the pressure China was receiving from the Soviets. The relatively weak state of China muted much of the CCP's nationalistic goals such as Taiwan. While Deng's leadership continued to hold onto claims to Taiwan and the strong desire to lead the Third World there was little that could be done about them. Deng recognized China's foreign policy needed to continue the development of the rift between the two superpowers so China could continue its own growth.²⁰⁴ And the main way China did that under Deng was through bilateral means.

The early 1980s saw tensions develop between America's new leadership under Reagan and the PRC over Reagan's *two China* policy. However, Chinese foreign policy in the last decade under the Cold War continued to be dominated by the need to maintain good relations with the United States in order to maintain a balance of power and an opposition to hegemony.²⁰⁵ While China continued to seek American aid, it neither entered into anything like a formal alliance with the United States nor declared that it was either for the Soviets or the United States, only against hegemony.²⁰⁶ An inherent tension, however, is observable between China's adherence to the ideology of the Five Principles and China's very pragmatic approach to foreign affairs.²⁰⁷ This divergence in Chinese foreign policy was ever present in the 1980s, and continues today, and required a delicate balancing act from CCP leadership. China's commitment to its foreign policy

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Keith, "Origins and Strategic Implications of China's Independent Foreign Policy," 100, 102.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Wu Xinbo, *Four Contradictions Constraining China's Foreign Policy Behavior in Chinese Foreign Policy: Pragmatism and Strategic Behavior*, ed. Suisheng Zhao (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2004), 63.

ideals was and is very real and helps account for their adherence to a bilateral foreign policy strategy. In 1984 Chinese premier, Wu Xueqian, made a public statement describing China's relations with the Soviets and the Americans as two separate entities that could not be made concomitant.²⁰⁸ Hu Yaobang, as General Secretary of the Communist Party, also publicly stated in 1985 that the PRC would not enter into any formal alliance with either superpower.²⁰⁹ To do so limited China's attempts to gain friendships with other countries (a violation of the Five Principles), and it prevented China from keeping the moral high ground.²¹⁰ In other words, China was less able to counter another states injustice and it provided opportunities for other countries to attack the friends of China. However, China was very committed to modernizing and knew that in order to do that it needed a certain level of strategic partnership with the United States.

China did not massively open up its market and adopt more capitalist principles until the 1990s, but the gradual modernization campaign under Deng in the 1980s set the stage for China's massive economic growth over the following twenty years.²¹¹ As more new ideas began filtering into China and the beginnings of economic prosperity began to take root, the CCP and China soon embarked on a period marked by turbulent protests that challenged the established order and forced the CCP to reestablish its legitimacy in the eyes of the populace.²¹² With the arrival of Kentucky Fried Chicken, Coca-Cola, Heinz, and other American companies in China all things American became en vogue.²¹³ This included Western style democracy and the desire for more personal representation among its citizens. That exploded onto the scene in the form of the Tiananmen Square massacre and an eventual bargain between the CCP and the Chinese people which allowed for central political control to remain with the CCP and also provide a good life for the people.

²⁰⁸ Keith, "Origins and Strategic Implications of China's Independent Foreign Policy," 102.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 101.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Westad, *Restless Empire*, 384.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Ibid., 379.

VIII. CONCLUSION

This final chapter of the thesis reflects on the main findings, explores options for future research, and finally identifies the implications of the research. By doing so it identifies and acknowledges the inherent difficulties in analyzing such a complex and deep history such as Chinese foreign policy. The previous chapters indicate that CCP bilateralism has many varied reasons but that Mao Zedong is a central focal point in understanding why Chinese communist foreign policy has been primarily bilateral. This thesis also concludes that the PRC has not been well served by its adherence to bilateral alliance policies and as a result experienced broad economic stagnation which produced extensive amounts of death and suffering for the Chinese people. Despite the hail of criticism after the Tiananmen Square incident, China emerged as the most dominant East Asian power in the 1990s, perhaps even legitimately being capable of challenging American influence in the region. Claude A. Buss describes the more modern China as such: “History and geography have combined to make China the dominant state in East Asia... [and] an important factor in shaping the future of that part of the world.”²¹⁴ As the global political structure continues to change and U.S. preeminence is continually challenged, the PRC will almost certainly be an important player in some form or fashion.

A. MAIN FINDINGS

The history of Chinese foreign relations is complicated and full of various influences. This thesis has sought to provide some of the reasons for China’s preference for bilateral vice multilateral alliances by looking at the CCP’s foreign policy history and attempting to analyze their behavior and policies. This thesis has examined multiple factors that have contributed to CCP bilateralism over the majority of its existence. The one hundred years of national humiliation had a formative impact on the worldviews of Mao and other prominent CCP leaders. Given the humiliation narrative’s critical role in

²¹⁴ Claude Albert Buss, “Conflicts of Interest in East Asia and the Pacific: The United States and China,” Working Paper, (July 1994), 10, <https://calhoun.nps.edu/handle/10945/30742>.

shaping the CCP in its early years and the newly formed PRC after 1949, it is essential to begin with late Qing period in Chinese history to begin understanding why the CCP chose bilateralism in an increasingly multilateral world. Central to understanding the formative years of the CCP is the ineffaceable presence of the humiliation of China at the hands of Western powers and Japan. The demise of imperial China in 1911 scarred many Chinese and sent them searching for ways to regain China's lost status. As a result, the early 20th century was filled with struggle and competing ideologies vying for preeminence within China. Out of this fray an unlikely contender, the CCP, ended up with political control in China. Laced throughout the party was a natural distrust for the West and its alliance systems. Determined to establish Chinese sovereignty Mao, and others, sought to redefine the nature of international politics and establish China as a major player. The lessons learned from the previous century of Western domination taught Mao and the CCP to be cautious, but it also taught them of the need for China to establish and maintain its own independence. Described as *standing up* by Mao, China's ability to act independently and keep free from foreign domination loomed large in CCP foreign policy thought for over thirty years.

China's ruling party, the CCP, was largely dominated by Mao Zedong and his views. This dominance gave Mao the distinct ability to direct China's course along his chosen path. Distrust of multilateralism as a tool of Western hegemony and the acceptance of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence lent themselves as tools from which to keep China out of a Western style system of alliances. Additionally, it also helped China distinguish itself from its closest ally, the Soviet Union. Any understanding of CCP foreign policy in the '50s and '60s must consider the depth and breadth of Soviet aid to the PRC. While deeply distrustful of foreign aid and meddling within China, Mao and other key leaders within China had to accept foreign aid as a means to return China to greatness. While deep and vital, relying on Soviet aid was never seen as something that benefited China long term. Additionally, with European colonialism quickly fading China's revolutionary success was thought, by the CCP, to be the model for emerging revolutionary movements. While the CCP sought to aid and influence these movements it was often from a distance and unquestionably without entangling itself through alliances

and commitments. China under Mao had its own revolutionary path to follow and could not be encumbered by the needs and desires of others. Mao's engineered isolation program inhibited China from ever contending in the global community of nations and accepting multilateralism. As China entered the 1960s it's turning away from the international community deepened and China eventually became, perhaps, the most isolated and impoverished of all countries.

Deeply indebted to the Soviets for the amount of aid provided to China, Mao nonetheless increasingly saw the Soviets as a hindrance to China's progress. By the close of the 1950s the Sino-Soviet relationship was in tatters, and Mao continued to direct China along his own unique path. After China's split with the Soviets, intense isolation characterized CCP foreign policy during the 1960s and early 1970s. Mao's ideological commitment to continuous social revolution as the answer to China's problems was steadfast as Beijing split from Moscow. From Beijing's perspective, Moscow was at odds with the goals laid out by Chairman Mao. As Mao pursued his social goals designed to modernize and invigorate China, the country slipped further into isolation. Instead of surpassing the West and providing the model of success for the Third World, China's economy stagnated and untold millions of Chinese perished during Mao's Great Leap Forward. This continued with the Great Proletariat Cultural Revolution, which produced fewer deaths but decimated China's most valuable human assets through arrests and imprisonment. By the mid-1970s China was an impoverished and near destitute country on the international stage.

Only recently has the PRC participated in multilateral institutions. This process could be seen to begin in the 1980s, as Deng Xiaoping began economic modernization along Western methodology. However, China continued to prefer bilateral relationships and reject alliances with the superpowers on the basis that they inhibited China's growth. While communist ideological fervor was greatly lessened, CCP leaders were still greatly influenced by their past. Top CCP leaders continued to reject hegemony as an imperialistic tool while at the same time embracing new economic liberalization. Zhou Enlai's Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence maintained a prominent role in CCP politics with regard to alliance politics. CCP leaders continued to reject participation in

multilateral alliances as the means to play the Americans and the Soviets off one another to benefit China. Nowhere in China's calculus during the 1980s was there a desire to embrace multilateralism.

As China opened up its markets and sought more economic modernization, other Western ideas crept in as well. China's age old fascination with the West manifested itself with the arrival of American fast food chains and the desire for a more democratic style of government. The CCP's brutal suppression of the democratic upsurge within China was most prominently displayed in the Tiananmen Square massacre of 1989. Far from embracing the West's representative style of government, the CCP fought to keep an iron grip on absolute leadership of China. Some of the main grievances voiced by the protestors were dreams not unlike their forbearers from years past, dreams of a better life with improved living conditions and the sense that the government would not or could not provide that.²¹⁵ The key component then, for the CCP, was to make a tradeoff; in order to maintain political control a certain level of economic success was needed to provide the promise of a good life that allowed for continued party dominance of China's politics.²¹⁶ A tenuous balance was struck.

The recent emergence of multilateralism in Chinese politics is worth a cursory overview in conclusion of this thesis. Elements of an adherence to bilateralism in the more modern era is evident in a 2006 study from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences that identifies Chinese leadership as exercising restraint in global politics to avoid excess international obligations that could restrict China's growth.²¹⁷ That type of restraint indicates a country that is not willing to laden itself down with the obligations that multilateral alliances bring with it. However, there is a growing body of evidence that indicates China has embraced multilateralism in order to promote and guard its own national interests.

²¹⁵ Spence, *Modern China*, 747.

²¹⁶ Westad, *Restless Empire*, 384.

²¹⁷ Sutter, *Chinese Foreign Relations*, 4–5.

Wu Xinbo argues that while China has shown a willingness to entertain multilateral negotiations, bilateral relations still primarily define its foreign policy. As a recent ascendant to the heights of international power, China continues to prefer bilateral relations for two primary reasons: China lacks experience in multilateralism, and it historically harbors strong suspicions toward global apparatuses that tend to favor the interests of the Great Powers. While China is exploring multilateralism on the economic front and is aware of its expectations to play a greater role in international affairs as a dominant power, China continues to find certain multilateral scenarios threatening. Because of this, China has consistently been pursuing bilateral agreements. In the South China Sea, China fears a united Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) with U.S. support creating a wall of resistance against China's territorial claims in any type of multilateral negotiations, hence China has consistently insisted upon approaching the issue in a bilateral fashion. Another example of this was the effort to develop a trilateral dialogue between China, the United States, and Japan. China showed little interest in such a scenario because of suspicion of the United States-Japanese relationship and the threat it posed in forcing China's hand in negotiations. As China's power and relevance in the international arena increase, its preference for bilateral negotiations will likely undergo some type of adjustment to accommodate increased responsibility. In his work, *Chinese Foreign Relations: Power and Policy since the Cold War*, Robert Sutter also agrees with Wu's framework of why China has traditionally eschewed multilateralism. However, he goes on to provide strong examples of multilateral activity from China since the end of the Cold War.²¹⁸

Since the 1990s, China has shown an increase in multilateralism, primarily in economic areas and somewhat in security areas.²¹⁹ China has backed the U.N. and its Security Council as legitimate in providing an international forum for security concerns, deepened its ties with the ASEAN to include a China-ASEAN free trade agreement (FTA), joined the World Trade Organization (WTO), and furthered multilateral

²¹⁸ Xinbo, *Chinese Foreign Policy*, 63–5; Sutter, *Chinese Foreign Relations*, 100–2.

²¹⁹ Sutter, *Chinese Foreign Relations*, 102.

collaboration with the six-member Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).²²⁰ This, however, has not shown a complete adoption of multilateralism. China continues to guard narrow self-interests on Chinese sovereignty issues and is predominantly suspicious of U.S.-led ventures that China suspects as designed to limit its interests or power.²²¹ Additionally, China has shown a great reluctance to join the global community on other issues such as “human rights, environmental, energy, and international security questions, including arms control.”²²² Examples of this type of resistance to multilateralism include the following: Chinese opposition to U.N. led efforts to increase human rights and democracy throughout the world, a reticence to partner with developed states to manage the world’s energy market, a repudiation of any international environmental standards that are seen to inhibit Chinese growth, an unwillingness to join in the United States led discussions on Asian security issues at the Shangri-La Forum, persistent efforts at weapons advancement in the face of international reproach, and finally continued efforts to leverage Asian organizations against U.S. presence along China’s borders in Asia.²²³

A continued distrust of the global system, as it exists today, still seems at work inside the PRC. What this means for U.S. international interests are of the utmost importance. While China has appeared to embrace multilateralism and join the international community of nation-states, it has done so cautiously and calculatedly. Always keeping an eye on its own interests, the PRC has so far managed to join and/or participate in multilateral institutions such as the UN, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, and ASEAN while at the same time maintaining its own narrow nationalistic goals that are often criticized by the same multilateral institutions.

B. OPTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Given the limited scope of a master’s thesis there is ample room to further explore the history of bilateralism in CCP foreign policy. Additionally, given the secretive and

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Ibid., 103.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Ibid.

closed nature of CCP politics, scholars do not currently have access to all of the CCP documents and official party records often available in more open societies. If the PRC continues to effect liberalizations in its governing of China, new opportunities for scholarly research on CCP foreign policy will likely, and hopefully, become available. When these opportunities present themselves, China watchers from around the globe will have the opportunity to further advance the study of the ancient and dynamic culture we know as China.

C. IMPLICATIONS

This thesis has studied the nature and history of the CCP's bilateral foreign policy development and has several implications for U.S. policy. As Sino-U.S. dialogue continues to progress, the CCP will likely continue as the dominant political force within China in some form or fashion; as such, their historic preference for avoiding foreign alliances and shying away from burdensome commitments will likely continue to shape CCP foreign policy. While the future is unknowable, it is certain that China will be a pivotal player in the future of global politics, but how that will manifest itself is unknown. Westad directs our attention to the fact "that those who expect China to remain for a long time as it is today will be proven wrong. Its turbulent past points toward a changeable future, during which both locals and foreigners will be surprised at the continuous resourcefulness and adaptability of the Chinese people."²²⁴ Though the PRC has recently embraced multilateral institutions it has done so with its own interests in mind and has skillfully avoided adopting many of the West's democratic ideals. Those ideals: human rights, representative government, individual liberty, and government transparency, to name a few, will likely continue to act as sources of friction between China's interests and the West's. American policy makers should not lose sight of China's tumultuous past and its historic tendencies with respect to foreign affairs. The future well-being of Sino-U.S. relations will depend on that.

²²⁴ Westad, *Restless Empire*, 468–9.

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