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**Lorenz M. Lüthi.** *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008. 375 pp. ISBN: 978-0-691-12934-1

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Author's Response from Lorenz M. Lüthi

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The Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev once warned anyone who tried to sow discord between the Soviet Union and China: “Don’t try to find a crack in a place without a crack.” It would not be found, “as they will not see their own ears.”<sup>1</sup> But once the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU)’s articles on Lenin’s 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary were in print in April 1960, “it seem[ed] there [were] two centers and two opinions.”<sup>2</sup> According to Allen S. Whiting, the State Department China specialist, the publication of the articles was “the first clear manifestation of the depth and seriousness of long-accumulating antagonisms.”<sup>3</sup> Three months later, when Khrushchev decided to recall all of the Soviet experts posted throughout China, the Sino-Soviet disagreement over ideology shifted to the political relationship between the two states. Both party-to-party and state-to-state relationships were on the verge of collapse. A split in the Sino-Soviet bloc appeared imminent.

Since the 1960s, the study of the history and evolution of Sino-Soviet relations during the Cold War has been among the most popular yet under-researched topics in international academic circles. Many works were published on this topic (mainly in the English-speaking world). Due to the paucity of original documents, the conclusions of these publications were mainly based on educated guesses and inferences, and a Cold War mentality provided a heavy ideological coloring. Publications by the Chinese and the Soviets were mainly political propaganda materials because of the status of the Sino-Soviet confrontation. These publications can hardly be regarded as genuine academic productions.

The academic study of the history of the Sino-Soviet alliance and split started in the early 1990s, following the publication of large quantities of Chinese historical documents and the declassification of Russian historical archives. In the first several years, a significant number of research articles were published in both English and Chinese. These articles, which conducted textual research on some major historical events and clarified many facts, were of certain academic value. Those published in Russian, which were either memoirs of people involved in the bilateral relationship or introductions to collections of historical documents, were not research articles *per se*, notwithstanding their high value as historical materials.

Since the late 1990s, several important collections of research articles and monographs have been published in English, Chinese, and Russian. These studies, either focusing on specific issues (such as the border issue, the role of Soviet experts in China, or Sino-Soviet rivalry in the Eastern European bloc) or on discussing historical development in specific

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\* I want to thank Lana Povitz, who proofread all pieces in this roundtable.

<sup>1</sup> Chen Yi, “Zhong Su tongmeng shi shijie heping de qiangda baolei,” *Renmin ribao* [People’s Daily], 31 January 1960.

<sup>2</sup> Yang Shangkun, *Yang Shangkun riji* [Yang Shangkun Diary] (Beijing: Zhongyang Wenxian Chubanshe, 2001), vol.1, pp. 607-609.

<sup>3</sup> Allen S. Whiting, “A Brief History,” in Clement J. Zablocki ed, *Sino-Soviet Rivalry: Implication for US Policy* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966), pp. 10-11.

periods, have explored in depth specific events and issues in the evolution of Sino-Soviet relations.

*The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World* is by far the most comprehensive and authoritative account of the Sino-Soviet split. Making use of a wide range of newly available Chinese, Russian, American, and European sources, Lorenz Lüthi identifies the primary role of Sino-Soviet disputes over Marxist-Leninist ideology. He traces their devastating impact in sowing conflict between the two nations in the areas of socio-economic developmental model, de-Stalinization, and policy toward the west. He argues that the source of this estrangement was Mao Zedong's ideological radicalization at a time when Soviet leaders, mainly Khrushchev, were becoming committed to more pragmatic domestic and foreign policies.

Because of the significance of Lüthi's book, we invited six noted scholars from different cultural backgrounds (Chinese, Russian, and Western) to comment on his book. The reviewers agree that the book is one of the best samples of emerging New Cold War scholarship, and will be a must-read for any student of modern China and the history of the Cold War for years to come. Nonetheless, several reviewers express some reservations with respect to Lüthi's interpretation that ideology played the central role in the Sino-Soviet split.

In Lüthi's analysis, China looks much worse than the Soviet Union. Mao was a "radical megalomaniac" (p. 352) who *consciously* pursued a policy of "belligerent self-isolation from the world and the insistence on ideological correctness." (p. 5) How should we interpret Mao's behavior in the Sino-Soviet split, and why did Mao do what he did? As a Chinese national, I attempt an alternative interpretation.<sup>4</sup>

First, because of their different international status, Chinese and Soviet leaders interpret world politics differently. The international community, and especially the West, accepted the socialist system in the Soviet Union as an established fact. After the calamity of World War II, Stalin joined the great powers in the West in establishing a new international political system and world order. In doing so, the Soviet Union became a full-fledged member of international society and was obliged to follow the rules of the game that it had helped formulate. The Soviet Union was empowered to carry out dialogues with the western nations, especially the United States, and possessed the political and military strength to pursue détente with the Western bloc. In the postwar years, overshadowed as they were by nuclear weapons, Soviet and Western leaders reached a consensus that any uncompromising confrontation would just lead to a mutual destruction, and that an extreme measure by either side would inflict irreversible catastrophe upon humanity. Therefore, the fundamental aim of Soviet foreign policy was to conduct confrontation and détente simultaneously while pursuing a peaceful coexistence between the two blocs.

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<sup>4</sup> The following observation is based on my e-mail exchange with Professor Shen Zhihua, the eminent Chinese Cold War scholar.

In contrast, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) seized power only recently. Because of the Korean War, China was excluded from the international community. Not only was New China excluded from the United Nations, but it also suffered from Western embargos and hostilities. Mao Zedong was neither familiar with nor receptive to the norms of the international community, and he even wanted to initiate his own rules. The new state under the CCP was in a state of extreme poverty and blankness. Yet such a condition left New China relatively burden-free: it had nothing to lose by seeking survival through confrontation. The CCP leadership was convinced that the only way for China to achieve an independent position among the world's powers was to struggle continuously. Moreover, contradictions and struggle always occupied a predominant position in Mao's philosophy. At the time, the fundamental perception of the CCP, which served as the departing point of Chinese foreign policy, was to overcome capitalism and imperialism through continuous revolution and struggle.

Second, the Chinese and Soviet parties were in different historical stages of their development and therefore understood differently the path for a nation-state to develop and grow. The Soviet Union was the first state that embarked on a revolutionary path. It was the first socialist country in history to adopt and be characterized by a proletarian dictatorship. Its experiences created a model of socialist development. Yet, these experiences and lessons also led to constant reflection and self-examination. The October Revolution and communization of rural areas during the Civil War proved disastrous. Lenin was consequently forced to initiate the New Economic Policy. Stalin's industrialization policies resulted in imbalanced development of the Soviet economy and a prolonged backslide of the Soviet standard of living. This in turn forced Khrushchev to adopt a new plan for economic growth. A new generation of Soviet leaders began to realize that there might be different paths to success in socialist development, and certain experiences and methods of capitalism might be worth learning. This idea underlay the orientations for social and economic development during the Khrushchev era.

Again, in this respect the CCP was faced with a rather different situation. In the 1950s, the party leaders had just managed to complete a socialist transformation of China's system of ownership. Despite having a Stalinist formula, they did not have any experience in building a socialist economy. Their political ideology necessarily prescribed communist dogma for public ownership and planned economy. Although Mao sensed that the Soviet model contained certain shortcomings, his understanding was superficial and could not lead to a diagnosis of the real problems. Furthermore, Mao was eager to lead China's march into Communism and to economically catch up with, or even surpass, the Soviet Union and the United States. The result was his adoption of an economic strategy based on mass mobilization and the single-minded pursuit of socialization and collectivization.

It is the temporal gap of 30 or 40 years in the histories of Chinese and Soviet Communism that rendered Sino-Soviet disagreements over ideas, perceptions and policies inevitable.

## **Participants**

**Lorenz M. Lüthi** is assistant professor of the history of international relations at McGill University in Canada. He has been a post-doctoral fellow at the Olin Institute at Harvard and a member of the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton. As a Cold War historian, his research focuses on relations between socialist states, with a particular emphasis on China. His articles have been published in *Cold War History*, the *Journal of Cold War Studies*, and the *Cold War International History Bulletin*. He is currently working on a book project about developments in East Asia, the Middle East, and Europe during the second half of the Cold War.

**Vojtech Mastny** coordinates the Parallel History Project on Cooperative Security ([www.php.isn.ethz.ch](http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch)), an international research network based at the Center for Security Studies in Zurich. He has been professor of history and international relations at Columbia University, University of Illinois, Boston University, and the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. He was also Professor of Strategy at US Naval War College and the first Manfred Wörner Fellow of NATO. His recent books include *The Cold War and Soviet Insecurity* (1996), *A Cardboard Castle? An Inside History of the Warsaw Pact, 1955-1991* (2005) and *War Plans and Alliances in the Cold War: Threat Perceptions in the East and West* (2006), the last two of which he edited.

**Douglas Selva** works as a full-time researcher on the project "The GDR, the Ministry for State Security, and the CSCE Process, 1977-1986," at the Office of the Federal Commissioner for Stasi Records in Berlin. He is also directing an NEH-funded project to translate over 1400 pages of Warsaw Pact documents into English for the Parallel History Project (PHP). As a historian at the Department of State, he edited the *FRUS* volume on *European Security, 1969-76*, and co-edited other volumes, including the joint U.S.-Russian volume, *Soviet-American Relations: The Détente Years, 1969-1972*. Selva has been a frequent contributor to the publications of the Cold War International History Project and the PHP.

**Michael Sheng** has recently moved from Missouri State University to the University of Akron to become the chair of the history department. He is the author of *Battling Western Imperialism: Mao, Stalin, and the United States* (1997). His article, "Mao and China's Relations with the Superpowers in the 1950s: A New Look at the Taiwan Strait Crises and the Sino-Soviet Split," appeared in the September 2008 edition of *Modern China*.

**Sergey Radchenko** is a fellow in international history at the London School of Economics and Political Science. He is the author of *Two Suns in the Heavens: The Sino-Soviet Struggle for Supremacy, 1962-1967* (2009) and a co-author, with Campbell Craig, of *The Atomic Bomb and the Origins of the Cold War* (2008).

**Dong Wang** is assistant professor at the School of International Studies at Peking University. He taught at York College of Pennsylvania before joining the faculty of Peking University. Using a wide array of recently declassified archives from China and the United States, Wang's dissertation, "From Enmity to Rapprochement: Grand Strategy, Power Politics, and U.S.-China Relations, 1961-1974," examines why and how China and the United States, longtime Cold War rivals, transitioned from enmity to rapprochement.

Wang's scholarly articles and reviews appear in the *Encyclopedia of the Cold War*, *Cold War International History Project Working Paper Series*, *Journal of American Studies*, *China Information*, and *Journal of East Asian Studies*, among other academic as well as news outlets.

**Yafeng Xia** is associate professor of East Asian and diplomatic history at Long Island University, Brooklyn. He is the author of *Negotiating with the Enemy: U.S.-China Talks during the Cold War, 1949-72* (2006). He has also published articles in *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, the *Journal of Cold War Studies*, *Chinese Historical Review*, and *International History Review*, among others. He is currently working on a monograph on the early history of the PRC's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, tentatively titled *Burying the "Diplomacy of Humiliation": New China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1949-1956*.

**Qiang Zhai** is professor of history at Auburn University at Montgomery. He specializes in the history of Chinese foreign relations during the Cold War. He received his doctoral degree from Ohio University, where he studied with John Lewis Gaddis. He is the author of *The Dragon, the Lion, and the Eagle: Chinese-British-American Relations, 1949-1958* (1994), *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975* (2000), as well as numerous articles and essays on Sino-American relations. He is also co-editor of *The Encyclopedia of the Cold War* (2008). He was president of the Chinese Historians in the United States.

Review by Vojtech Mastny, Parallel History Project on Cooperative Security, Washington, D.C.

The rise and fall of the Sino-Soviet alliance is a topic of abiding fascination. How could nations so different ever come so close? How could regimes so similar fall out so badly? Lorenz Lüthi goes farther than previous authors in explaining the reasons. He makes full use of the available evidence, including recently declassified sources from Chinese archives. There is still a vast amount that remains hidden, particularly from the sensitive period of the Cultural Revolution, but more is coming out all the time: most recently, records on relations with China from Albanian archives.<sup>1</sup>

Although the book is about both China and the Soviet Union, it is the Chinese part of the story that is more important—and not only because today China matters more than Russia. At the outset, the alliance was “the defining moment” for China but only “another asset” for the Soviet Union” (p. 12). Later on, it was Mao Zedong, rather than his Soviet counterparts, who determined the course of the alliance. Its termination was his choice and a puzzle for them.<sup>2</sup> Lüthi makes abundantly clear that Mao’s ideological beliefs and domestic needs, rather than security or nationalism, were the driving forces of his management of the relationship with Moscow.

Mao’s policy nevertheless had profound security implications, particularly for China. “Since mid-1950,” it needs to be emphasized, “China’s security problems were to some extent of its own making” (p. 35). They stemmed from its leaders’ revolutionary and “anti-imperialist” commitment, which made them turn to the Soviet Union as a model and embark on assertive military policies, particularly in Korea. Subsequent security problems—from the Taiwan issue to the Vietnam Wars that eventually broke the Sino-Soviet alliance—followed from those commitments. So did Mao’s manipulation of domestic politics to serve his ideological preconceptions and power ambitions. His ability to pursue them at the expense of everybody else’s security would almost run the country into the ground and bring it to the brink of war as well.

Lüthi is familiar enough with Chinese sources to dispose of some American myths. He shows that while the communists were fighting for power in the country there was never a chance of their rapprochement with the United States, simply because they did not want it. Nor does he see Mao pretending to Stalin that there was such a chance, playing the “American card” to get better terms from him. From Chinese sources, Mao might seem to be playing a “cat-and-mouse game” with the Soviet leader;<sup>3</sup> from Russian ones, however, he looks more like “a timid student quizzed by a daunting teacher” (p. 31). Understanding the

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<sup>1</sup> “‘Albania Is Not Cuba’: Sino-Albanian Summits and the Sino-Soviet Split,” *Cold War International History Project Bulletin* 16 (2007-2008): pp. 183-340.

<sup>2</sup> On Soviet misperceptions of the relationship, Sergey Radchenko, “Fehlwahrnehmungen in den chinesischesowjetischen Krisen 1966 bis 1969,” in *Krisen im Kalten Krieg*, ed. Bernd Greiner, Christian Th. Müller, and Dierk Walter (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2008), pp. 343-68.

<sup>3</sup> Sergey Radchenko and David Wolff, “To the Summit via Proxy Summits: New Evidence from Soviet and Chinese Archives on Mao’s Long March to Moscow, 1949,” *Cold War International History Project Bulletin* 16 (2007-2008): pp. 105-12, on 105.

extent of his willing subordination to Moscow is essential for understanding the force of his later rejection of Soviet tutelage.

The origins of the alliance during the marathon Moscow negotiations in December 1949-January 1950 receive a rather short shrift in the book. On the question of why Stalin first opposed and then conceded Mao's demand for a military treaty, Lüthi is satisfied to note that the answer is "unclear" (p. 32). Among the alternative hypotheses, there is an air of authority as well as plausibility in Zhou Enlai's explanation that Stalin changed his mind in response to the news of the British recognition of Mao's regime as well as the expected French and forthcoming Indian recognition.<sup>4</sup> As a result, it was possible to conclude that the United States, too, would be ready to acquiesce, however reluctantly, in the spread of communism in East Asia—the conclusion Soviet intelligence agents in Washington would have been in a position to confirm.

How was Stalin's turnabout on the China treaty related to his other turnabout while the treaty was being negotiated—his giving a green light to Kim Il Sung's attack on South Korea after he had been withholding permission for almost a year? Other historians have explored this subject, no one more extensively than Shen Zihua, who found "the shift in Stalin's Korea policy . . . intimately connected with evolving Sino-Soviet relations," particularly the conclusion of the alliance. The point is that Stalin was "seeking to force China to bear responsibility for the defense of North Korea if the United States intervened in the conflict."<sup>5</sup>

The alliance treaty provided for mutual support in case of an enemy attack but did not specify the kind of support. It nevertheless encouraged Mao to proceed with preparations for the invasion of Taiwan, despite Stalin's refusal to provide air cover. The Chinese communists also extended substantial military assistance to the Vietnamese struggle against the French in Indochina. Although Mao would not be told about Kim's forthcoming venture until after the treaty had been signed, Stalin could thus proceed on the assumption that the Chinese leader would be ready to lend a helping hand, if necessary, in Korea as well. In terms of what each side expected from and was willing to do for the other politically and militarily, the Sino-Soviet treaty was another of China's "unequal treaties."

"The alliance with the USSR was designed to establish China as a world power, but it also made the PRC [People's Republic of China] a part of the socialist camp," writes Lüthi. "As a result, New China faced a series of security problems with which its predecessor had not been confronted" (p. 45). Its subsequent involvement in the Korean War put China into military conflict with the United States, delaying the normalization of relations between the two countries for another quarter of a century. Participation in the war as a Soviet proxy strengthened Beijing's relationship with Moscow but also bore the seeds of their alliance's later demise.

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<sup>4</sup> Record of Zhou's conversation with Albanian leaders, 27 June 1966, *Cold War International History Project Bulletin* 16 (2007-2008): pp. 311-28, on 326.

<sup>5</sup> Shen Shihua, "Stalin's Strategic Goals in the Far East," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 2, no. 2 (Spring 2000): pp. 44-68, on 68, 63.

Was the alliance foredoomed, as authors seeing congenital flaws in conflicting strategic interests or nationalist aspirations have asserted with the benefit of hindsight? Not according to Lüthi. What mattered disproportionately was Stalin's and Mao's thinking and actions. As long as Stalin lived, the alliance flourished on the mutual perception, however flawed, of common interests under his leadership. Mao followed the leader more readily than he would later care to admit in retrospect. The "road traversed by the Soviet Union is our model" was the way he put it (p. 43).

Nor did conflict over foreign policy begin to tear the alliance apart after Stalin's death. Khrushchev's policy of "peaceful coexistence never grew into a point of disagreement the way de-Stalinization did" (p. 79). To borrow Lüthi's elegant phrase: "Khrushchev's criticism of Stalin's crimes was an unintended assessment of Mao's recent mistakes" in domestic policy (p. 49). Mao's response to the criticism, rooted in his radical predisposition, grew into the "sharp ideological antagonism" between the two leaders that "would undermine and eventually ruin the alliance by 1966" (p. 45).

China's keen interest in Eastern Europe's revolutionary upheaval in 1956 has been one of the intriguing discoveries of post-Cold War historiography.<sup>6</sup> We read about Mao, dressed in pajamas, dressing down the Soviet ambassador, telling him that "if the Soviet Union dispatches troops, we will support Poland" (p. 55). Conversely, in Hungary, Beijing came to favor an armed intervention against "counterrevolutionaries" while the Kremlin was still hesitating. Could it be said, though, that China stayed the Soviets' hand in Poland and forced it in Hungary?

Lüthi finds the record ambivalent. The Soviets had taken their different decisions in Poland and in Hungary before Beijing made its preferences clear. They listened attentively, however, to what the Chinese had to say about what should or should not be done in Moscow's prime security zone—a testimony to the Kremlin's acute distress. Only later did Khrushchev take exception to Zhou Enlai's criticism of the characteristic Soviet mix of arrogance and incompetence. Gradually, the dispute over what constituted a properly Marxist system domestically grew into one about the tactics to be used in dealing with the "imperialists."

The discussion of the 1958 second Taiwan (or Quemoy-Matsu) crisis, which preceded Khrushchev's initiation of the second Berlin crisis, is one of the highlights of the book. Lüthi shares the prevailing opinion that the shelling of the offshore islands primarily served Mao's domestic need to mobilize the masses in advance of the "Great Leap Forward" he was about to mastermind to further consolidate his power. The timing and manipulation of the crisis, however, were determined by international developments.

Mao did not perceive the installation in 1957 of US tactical nuclear missiles on Taiwan as a security threat. His main worry was the prospect of the island's permanent separation

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<sup>6</sup> Most recently, Péter Vámos, *Evolution and Revolution: Sino-Hungarian Relations and the 1956 Hungarian Revolution*, Working Paper no. 54 (Washington: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2006).

from the mainland after the collapse that year of US-Chinese ambassadorial talks in Geneva. His way of prodding Washington to resume negotiations was to create a limited crisis, for which the time appeared opportune after the July 1958 military coup in Iraq had diverted US attention to the Middle East. Zhou Enlai later described the tactics as the Chinese version of Dulles's famed brinkmanship.<sup>7</sup>

Incredible as it may seem, by Beijing's lights, the withdrawal of the embattled Nationalist forces from the exposed offshore islands—an action favored by the Americans—was something to be prevented. "Guomintang troops on the small island in Xiamen Bay symbolically linked the two parts of China" (p. 103), and shelling them before they could leave was to preserve the linkage. Presumably, the Nationalists understood, and the troops stayed. They are still there, even though no longer under fire, while Chinese from both sides of the Strait are increasingly visiting and living on the other side. Indeed, the Taiwan issue is not for outsiders to resolve.

Turning off the shelling at a time of his choice, Mao got from Washington what he wanted—the eventual resumption of the ambassadorial talks and stabilization of the Taiwan situation, which has lasted ever since (p. 113). Did he start considering normalization of relations with the United States because of the damage his handling of the 1958 crisis caused China's relations with Moscow? Such course would have made eminently good sense, but there seems to be no evidence that he thought so. Mao "continued to oppose peaceful coexistence for ideological rather than security reasons" (p. 113). It is far-fetched, however, to suggest that the "PRC tried to involve the Soviet Union in a nuclear war with the United States" (p. 348). Prodding Khrushchev to take that risk was irresponsible enough, but otherwise in line with Mao's correct belief that the Americans would shy away from war. This is what brinkmanship was about.

For Mao, nuclear weapons were secondary to revolution, which in turn he saw as the way to maximize his personal power. Lüthi dwells on the importance of the August 1959 Lushan party plenum, where the Chairman outmaneuvered potential competitors and established himself as the supreme arbiter of true Marxism-Leninism. The acceptance of his personality cult as indispensable as well as the reintroduction of class struggle into Chinese politics had dire consequences for the nation's both internal and external security. Mao imposed his view that the American threat was increasing, although it was his policy, rather than America's, that had changed. The same applied to the Soviet threat once he accused Khrushchev of being a renegade.

Lüthi attributes Moscow's unilateral termination in 1959 of the nuclear agreement with China to Soviet concern about establishing a precedent for the possible nuclear armament of West Germany—a common but questionable assumption. In fact, Khrushchev was not as obsessed with the German threat as Stalin had been and would later shock the Chinese as well as the Warsaw Pact allies by his apparent readiness to make a deal with Bonn. The explanation Moscow gave Beijing to justify discarding the agreement made perfect sense.

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<sup>7</sup> Record of Zhou's conversation with Hoxha and Shehu, 28 March 1965, *Cold War International History Project Bulletin* 16 (2007-2008): pp. 273-93, on 275.

It stated that in case of a disclosure of the secret program, “the efforts by socialist countries to strive for peace and the relaxation of international tensions would be jeopardized.”<sup>8</sup> Khrushchev had been seeking a summit with Eisenhower while China was about to go to war with India over their disputed border.

In tracing the widening Sino-Soviet rift, Lüthi sees the Moscow meeting in June 1963 as marking the point of no return. He rightly links it with the conclusion of the Limited Test Ban Treaty in the following month—a setback to China’s advocacy of proliferation as a safeguard against the abuse of nuclear weapons by the superpowers. The setback seems to have had salutary effect. Despite Mao’s earlier wisecracks about a nuclear war helping the world to become socialist even though half of its people might die, Beijing’s nuclear policy turned out to be quite sensible compared with that of the superpowers. It aimed at the acquisition of the bomb as such rather than in huge quantities, and at its possession for political rather than operational reasons. When the Chinese finally tested their first bomb, shortly followed by the second, Zhou Enlai explained to the party’s Central Military Commission that the blasts were timed to underline the importance of the contemporaneous Afro-Asian solidarity meetings.<sup>9</sup>

The priority China assigned to supporting national liberation movements in Asia, Africa, and Latin America followed Mao’s redefinition in 1962 of the “intermediate zone” between those dominated by the two superpowers. The struggle of the oppressed peoples in the zone was no longer to be promoted jointly with the Soviet Union, discredited by its turn toward “revisionism,” but only by China as the new leader of world revolution. Never before had China assumed such wide-ranging global interests, risking collision with either or both of the superpowers.

Beijing’s competition with Moscow in supporting North Vietnam in its war against the United States drove the final nail into the coffin of the Sino-Soviet alliance. “China’s active defense of Vietnam since 1950, as well as its constant emphasis on national liberation since 1962, helped to undermine its security,” especially after the war’s expansion that followed the August 1964 Gulf of Tonkin incident. The possibility of a direct clash with the United States increased as well. As early as 1958, NSC 5810/1 had identified China as a “basic threat” of the same order as the Soviet Union, and the subsequent rise of superpower détente had the effect of making Beijing appear to Washington as the greater of the two.<sup>10</sup>

Ironically, in view of Mao’s global ambitions, the main threat to China’s security was self-imposed isolation. “We are only left with Albania,” Zhou Enlai told its leaders in 1966.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Chen Jian, *Mao’s China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), pp. 78-79.

<sup>9</sup> Zhou Enlai’s speech at the meeting of the Central Military Commission, 21 May 1965, Cold War I History Project virtual archive, [http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic\\_id=1409&fuseaction=va2.document&identifier=5034C254-96B6-175C-932F0F5A8BE07781&sort=Collection&item=The%20Cold%20War%20in%20Asia](http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=va2.document&identifier=5034C254-96B6-175C-932F0F5A8BE07781&sort=Collection&item=The%20Cold%20War%20in%20Asia).

<sup>10</sup> *Foreign Relations of the United States 1958-60*, vol. 3, pp. 100-101.

<sup>11</sup> Record of Zhou’s conversation with Albanian leaders, 27 June 1966, *Cold War International History Project Bulletin* 16 (2007-2008): pp. 311-28, on 316.

Apart from a few splinter groups on the extreme Left, the tiny Balkan country was China's only remaining friend in the world, Mao admitted ruefully. He kept exalting the glories of the Cultural Revolution. Since "the danger of the failure of the revolution exists," he reasoned, it was a good thing that "the entire country is in the midst of fighting a true civil war . . . the organs of security, the police, and justice, will be destroyed too. I am very happy because of this," he concluded, before asking his Albanian guests: "Do you feel tired?"<sup>12</sup>

The first conclusion to be drawn from Lüthi's account of the Sino-Soviet rift is that alliances between dictatorships are inherently fragile, but even more fragile if beholden to ideological preconceptions. Moreover, they tend to fall apart sooner rather than later if guided by eccentric and egocentric men. And they are more vulnerable to domestic follies than to foreign enemies. All of this is fortunate.

More sobering is the second conclusion—that it is difficult, if not impossible, to come to terms with the leaders of such alliances. US-Chinese rapprochement was out of question as long as Mao thought it was not in China's interest; it only happened once he decided he wanted it, but for extraneous reasons. When he started changing his mind—from 1969 onward—he did so not because of anything the American enemy had done, but because of what China's former Soviet friend, turned into an enemy largely by him, appeared to be doing.

The third is the conclusion that China's security was largely its own to gain as well as to lose. Its new regime was safest when it seemed most precarious—in 1949. That was the time when with Washington was reconciling itself to the communist victory, Moscow rejoiced in it, and the Chinese people, relieved of Chiang Kai-shek's misrule, were most inclined to give the new regime the benefit of the doubt. Things started going wrong once the Sino-Soviet treaty hitched the nation's security to the Soviet wagon, and deteriorated once China started fighting the wrong enemy—the United States—in the wrong place—Korea. They could have hardly gotten worse than they did during the Cultural Revolution's self-inflicted chaos and isolation.

The Mao period was an anomaly in China's quest for security. His rapprochement with the United States initiated a correction, but an incomplete one. The promotion of revolution abroad did not cease, nor had the Cultural Revolution been stopped. Only after Mao's death did China begin, in 1978, to reassess radically its security policy—the first major power to do so while the Cold War was still on—with consequences lasting till the present day.

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<sup>12</sup> Record of Mao-Shehu conversation, 30 September 1967, *Cold War International History Project Bulletin* 16 (2007-2008): pp. 328-337 on 329; 333-34; 336-37.

Some years ago, on a cold winter day, I met Lorenz Lüthi at Moscow subway station “Dinamo,” on the green line. We made a bit of an odd contrast. I wore a peasant-style coat and a grey felt beanie, with ice-skates slung over my shoulder. I was just making my way to the Dinamo skating-rink, which ate up a good chunk of my research time in Moscow. Lorenz was smartly garbed in what seemed like an unusually light overcoat, radiating an aura of academic excellence. He was decidedly disinclined to join me on the skating rink so we went on a little stroll to a café down the road. It turned out that we both were writing our dissertations on the Sino-Soviet split. I was too early in my research to say anything intelligent but I mentioned to Lorenz that I had been working in the Foreign Ministry archive in Moscow. He was in Russia for that same reason, and I warily cautioned Lorenz that the archive was notoriously difficult and that it wasn’t very likely that he would get much out of it. Then, several months later, when I was again in Moscow, once again warming chairs at the Foreign Ministry archive, one of the archivists gossiped about their experience with Lorenz: We have never seen anyone so persistent. We didn’t want to give him anything but he wouldn’t go away. We just gave up in the end. “Oh uzh eti amerikantsy!” (These Americans!)

In fact, Lorenz Lüthi is a Canada-based scholar from the German-speaking part of Switzerland. He commands an amazing array of languages – not only English and German but also Chinese and Russian. These are just the ones I know of, and I am sure he mastered a dozen more, and he used them, too, with remarkable effectiveness in his research and writing, which took Lorenz from country to country, from archive to archive, in the search of evidence that backs his encyclopedia of Sino-Soviet relations. I am honestly dazzled by his archival feat. It is one of the best samples of emerging New Cold War scholarship, an excellent example of what a historian can do these days, if only he or she has the intelligence, tenacity, resourcefulness, and scope of Lorenz Lüthi. I am delighted by the publication of *The Sino-Soviet Split*. I read it from cover to cover, soaking up every word like a sponge. It is prodigiously researched. It is strikingly precise. It is a great read. I disagree with the main idea.

Lüthi argues that the Sino-Soviet alliance failed because of ideology. “The story of the Sino-Soviet breakup cannot be told without a focus on ideology” (p. 8). “[T]he principal socialist pact system ultimately collapsed as a result of the failure of ideology to provide clarity of purpose and unity of means” (p. 12). This is not to say that he ignores other possible causes of the split – far from it! The book offers a complex, multilayered analysis. But, to cite Lüthi, “[w]hile many factors were significant, ... among all the causes, ideology was the most important” (p. 345). To begin with, however, Lüthi qualifies his argument: ideology, in his interpretation, can refer to either a genuine “belief system” or to a “political tool,” which “may be manipulated for short-term political, or even personal, objectives” (pp. 8-9). I will say more about this distinction before long, but it is worthwhile to keep in mind that Lüthi’s argument that ideology was a defining element of the Sino-Soviet split may suggest a great deal more than what first meets the eye.

Ideological disagreements, which, in Lüthi's opinion, caused the Sino-Soviet split, came down to three broad questions: economic development, de-Stalinization, and international relations, by which he means divergent Chinese and Soviet policies towards peaceful co-existence and world revolution. In particular, Lüthi gives considerable weight to Mao's radical visions, following in this respect the trail blazed by the likes of Jian Chen and Roderick MacFarquhar. China's domestic politics feature at the center of Lüthi's narrative; he makes an excellent case in showing how requirements of internal politics defined Mao's foreign policy agenda. Lüthi goes a step further to point out that events outside China in turn affected developments inside China. In other words, the "domestic-foreign" relationship worked both ways. Here I cannot agree with Lüthi more, although our agreement, at closer inspection, reveals considerable differences over the nature and the meaning of this two-way relationship.

I will now discuss Lüthi's book on a chapter-by-chapter basis. Chapter 1 – "Historical Background, 1921-1955" – offers a novel, curious, unexpected perspective on Sino-Soviet relations. Lüthi begins by discussing Soviet economic development models. He makes a distinction between early Revolutionary Stalinism and later Bureaucratic Stalinism, the difference between the two being essentially that of leap-like development, harnessing as it were the enthusiasm of the masses and characterized by various radical schemes, and more stable, planned-out, carefully measured economic development, which presumably characterized Stalin's economic doctrines after the revolutionary fever wore off in the late 1930s. What does it all have to do with Sino-Soviet relations? Well, in Lüthi's opinion, the economic model the Soviet Union exported to China in the early 1950s was essentially that of Bureaucratic Stalinism. Mao was clearly dissatisfied with this model and he tried instead to draw on the elements of an earlier Soviet model, revolutionary Stalinism. That became one of the causes of the Sino-Soviet split.

Lüthi gives convincing evidence of Mao's awareness of the Soviet Union's economic experience, and that alone is a weighty contribution to historiography. After all, it is much easier to think that the Chairman's visions of communist utopia were rooted much more in his own experiences throughout the torturous years of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)'s struggle in the Chinese countryside than in a careful reading of Stalin's works. Of even greater significance is Lüthi's argument that by the fall of 1957, the Soviet Union and China "were setting out on two different – ultimately irreconcilable – paths of ... economic development" (p. 74) and the fallout for Sino-Soviet relations from this economic realities.

The argument is well-made, except that it raises the problem of ultimate causation. Why was it that Mao embraced economic radicalism in the first place? There is no doubt that it was his answer to the challenge of modernity faced by China, and that, of course, is an ideological imperative, whether or not Mao's "modernity" fit as close within the strict confines of ill-defined Marxist theory as Lüthi suggests. But modernity itself is a comparative phenomenon. Mao's search for modernity implied rejection of Soviet modernity, and, with it, the right by which the Soviet Union led and China followed. The fundamental issue was China's competition with the Soviet Union and Mao's claims to ultimate authority in matters of the theory and practice of communism. Lüthi addresses this exact problem in chapter 3. His conclusion? "The Great Leap Forward in its entire

radicalism did not originally derive from Mao's wish to supercede Khrushchev but from his ideological left turn in the summer of 1957" (p. 112).

But Lüthi seemingly fails to consider the possibility that Mao's "ideological left turn in the summer of 1957" derived precisely from his desire to supercede Khrushchev. It was this desire that prompted action, and action suggested a choice of methods, which was in turn circumscribed by Mao's "ideology." In my view, ideology was merely a means to an end, not an end in itself. For this reason, I do not think that ideology can count as a cause of the split: context, yes; a cause, no.

In chapter 2, "The Collapse of Socialist Unity, 1956-1957," Lüthi discusses the impact of Khrushchev's de-Stalinization on Sino-Soviet relations. The impact was by no means slight. There is no doubt that it eroded the Soviet position in the international communist movement. Lüthi gives a superb overview of Sino-Soviet discussions on Stalin from Khrushchev's speech at the Twentieth Party Congress, in which the Soviet leader denounced Stalin's crimes, to the Polish and Hungarian crises of 1956. This chapter clarifies some important points in the historiography – for example, the extent to which the Chinese leaders had influence over Soviet decision-making with regard to the situation in Poland and Hungary (Lüthi argues, in my view correctly, that they had not very much).

Lüthi argues that de-Stalinization undermined Sino-Soviet relations at two levels. At one level, Mao genuinely believed that it was bad for the socialist camp and that it led to misguided Soviet actions in Poland and Hungary. At another level, Mao used his criticism of de-Stalinization "to protect his exposed flank" (p. 79). The borderline between Mao's "genuine" and "instrumental" concerns about de-Stalinization is not very clear, and, I would argue, impossible to pin down. It is impossible to know where Mao was a genuine revolutionary and where he was a cynical politician exploiting his own supposedly genuinely-held beliefs to maintain his hold on power. It was impossible even for his close associates to know that, much less for scholars to infer such differences on the basis of incomplete access to the archival record, tainted, moreover, by the ritualistic political phraseology of the time. I am inclined to suspect, cynically, that Mao was more of a cynic than Lüthi is willing to admit. But this is beside the point.

The point is the distinction between genuine ideology and instrumental ideology, and the significance of this distinction for the discussion of the causes of the Sino-Soviet split. For to say that Mao used ideology "instrumentally" to advance his political interests is the same as saying that ideology was merely a cloak, a means to an end, a method. The end was the Chairman's determination to maintain his hold on power in the wake of the political upheaval, which followed the Twentieth Party Congress. Lüthi actually admits that much in the chapter. "The twentieth congress established the ideological foundation for the disagreements that would rock the Sino-Soviet partnership in the years to come. *Most importantly* [my emphasis], de-Stalinization threatened to undercut Mao's domestic position" (p. 46). I think it is not improbable to argue that it was precisely *because* de-Stalinization threatened Mao's hold on power that he came up with ideology-clad arguments in Stalin's defense. Ideology followed, rather than preceded, the struggle for

power. The “ideological foundation” of the Sino-Soviet split in fact rested on a foundation made of entirely different material.

In chapter 3, “Mao’s Challenges, 1958,” apart from a very detailed, insightful, and basically uncontroversial treatment of the Great Leap Forward – which, if nothing else, demonstrates the author’s command of the subject – Lüthi looks into the causes of the Second Taiwan Crisis, and its significance for Sino-Soviet relations. Here he makes, in my opinion, a very interesting and sophisticated argument that Mao’s decision to shell the Guomindang-held islands was a result of his dissatisfaction with the development of the Sino-US dialogue on Taiwan. But the exact timing of the crisis was determined by China’s domestic developments – the Chairman’s need to shore up the enthusiasm of the Chinese people at the time of the Great Leap Forward. But I disagree with Lüthi in the interpretation of the broader implication of the 1958 crisis – that in the deeper sense, it manifested Mao’s rejection of “peaceful coexistence” as championed by Khrushchev and therefore amounted to the third “ideological” pillar of the Sino-Soviet split.

Lüthi gets caught up in the terminology and, in my view, fails to see the deeper meaning of “peaceful coexistence.” Supposed differences between China and the Soviet Union on the question of war and peace reveal, upon closer look, remarkable similarities. Neither Soviet nor Chinese policy makers were inclined, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, to abandon the Cold War and develop a close friendship with the United States. It goes without saying that neither Mao nor Khrushchev wanted war with the US. In fact, propaganda and shameless bravado aside, Mao, like Khrushchev, was very careful in avoiding a head-on confrontation with the US – the bizarre end of the Taiwan crisis is of course one example of this, but there are many more as we get into the 1960s. Between friendship and war lies only one kind of a policy: that of peaceful coexistence, which both China and the Soviet Union pursued in their different ways throughout the entire period.

In this sense, I see Mao as having been no more of a radical war-monger than was Khrushchev, who cornered himself in Berlin and brought the world to the brink of a nuclear war in Cuba. To say, therefore, that Khrushchev was for peaceful coexistence and Mao was against peaceful coexistence is to oversimplify matters to a great degree. Khrushchev was certainly closer to the mark when he insisted that he did know where China and the Soviet Union disagreed. They may have disagreed in their respective assessments of just where and how one could safely pressure the United States without fear of retaliation, but that was a difference of degree, not of essence. Mao raised hell about “peaceful coexistence” simply, to borrow Jian Chen’s term, to demonstrate his “moral superiority” over Khrushchev.

Nothing better demonstrates the importance of distinguishing rhetoric from real motives than Mao’s single-minded pursuit of atomic weapons. Lüthi repeatedly returns to the Chairman’s famous paper tiger talk, to the effect that China was not afraid of atomic bombs and that it would even welcome a war with much of China being wiped out by atomic blasts, as long as this scenario resulted in a world revolutionary upheaval. All of that is very well known and has been for many years. Certainly, in his time, Mao managed to stir up excitement with his radical pronouncements, which even Khrushchev found difficult to

stomach, much less the Americans who were visibly nervous in the early 1960s about the prospect of a nuclear-armed China. But what was the deeper meaning of Mao's nuclear saber-rattling? It was certainly to prove to the entire world that he was a better revolutionary than Khrushchev, that he was the number one revolutionary, standing far up in the clouds, above the Soviets and above his own party comrades.

Beyond this expression of megalomania, Mao was desperate to have a paper tiger of his own. He first sought Soviet help in this endeavor as early as 1954, obtained Khrushchev's commitment in 1957, and was, needless to say, very unhappy with his Soviet ally in 1959 when Khrushchev cancelled the delivery of a prototype nuclear weapon to China. Even during the Cultural Revolution, as we well know, the Chinese nuclear program remained very much a top state priority. There is an interesting parallel here with Stalin's policies in the late 1940s. Stalin was also known for his nuclear bravado and his downplaying of the power of nuclear weapons just as he devoted all possible resources to obtaining his own bomb. Why were Stalin and Mao so desperate to have nuclear weapons? Obviously, it was because of the security these weapons afforded and the power they symbolized. The fact that China did not have an A-bomb was a constant reminder of her second-rate status in world affairs. In other words, for Mao, pursuit of atomic weapons became an important part of staking a claim to China's great power status, just as his public mockery of the bomb became an important part of challenging Khrushchev's leadership in the communist movement.

Chapter 4, "Visible Cracks, 1959," offers a detailed overview of the consequences of the Great Leap Forward, in particular, Mao's confrontation with Peng Dehuai at the Lushan Plenum, which resulted in the Defense Minister's disgrace. Lüthi spends a lot of time – maybe a little too much time – on China's domestic politics, concluding, with good reason, that "Mao's attempt to construct both a conspiracy against him and a Soviet connection in Peng's criticism must have tarnished Moscow's image in the CCP" (p. 135). Incidentally, he argues that Mao's use of ideology in his domestic political games was primarily "instrumental." In other words, the Chairman's struggle with China's "revisionism" was really a struggle against his real and potential opponents within the party. The argument is extremely well made. On the other hand, Lüthi concludes that Mao's "continued radicalism" in foreign relations in 1959 was not instrumental at all, but "a sincere expression of an ideologically influenced but nevertheless rudimentary understanding of the outside world," in which Mao "as a firm communist believer... could not understand why Khrushchev sought rapprochement with the United States..." (p. 155). I don't agree. I think Lüthi justly denies Mao the same ability to carefully strategize and outmaneuver his foreign opponents that he allows Mao in domestic politics. I am not sure that such a separation is justified.

Indeed, Lüthi himself, time and again, hints at the real reasons for Mao's dissatisfaction with the Soviets when he writes about Khrushchev's efforts to mend fences with the US and the "spirit of Camp David." "Khrushchev must have left Washington [in 1959] convinced that he had passed the rite of passage that elevated him to equality with Eisenhower, while Mao headed a country that was diplomatically isolated and economically broken by its actions. Past Chinese claims for equality had turned into plain smoke" (p. 147). Lüthi sees

it. Khrushchev saw it at the time. Certainly, Mao saw things much in the same way, too. The Chairman could not help but realize the persistent inequality of Sino-Soviet relations, so he resorted to ideological hyperbole to reclaim leadership from the Soviet Union in one area where he could do it with some degree of success – ideology. Whether he believed in world revolution and genuinely thought Khrushchev to be a revisionist is immaterial, just as it is immaterial whether Mao genuinely believed in Chinese revolution and thought Peng Dehuai to be a revisionist. It is possible to be a believer and abuse the faith; why, we see that every day in all walks of life.

Chapter 5, “World Revolution and the Collapse of Economic Relations, 1960,” is a focused, straight-forward, and generally convincing treatment of Sino-Soviet relations from the “Lenin polemics,” to the public Sino-Soviet clashes in Beijing and Bucharest, Khrushchev’s withdrawal of Soviet experts from China and the two parties’ agreement to disagree at the 1960 meeting of communist parties in Moscow. It is a necessary overview, by far the best we have on this period of Sino-Soviet tensions. I do disagree with Lüthi on one point regarding economic relations, which again links back to our different assessments of Mao’s motivations – the question of Soviet loans. Lüthi correctly points out that Mao was eager to repay Soviet debts ahead of schedule and suggests that it was because he wanted to show his “proletarian internationalism” by repaying “the money that allegedly belonged to the Soviet people” (p. 193). It should be said that Khrushchev, in his time, also marveled at Mao’s decision. He offered a different explanation – that Mao was out of his mind. I think Khrushchev and Lüthi both got it wrong. A more probable explanation is that Mao realized that unpaid Soviet loans made China dependent on the USSR, and, at least in theory, increased Soviet leverage over China, and clearly did not help the cause of vilifying the Soviet “revisionists.” For the same reason, perhaps, Mao turned down Khrushchev’s 1963 offer of returning Soviet experts to China, and certainly not because he was concerned, bless his heart, for the welfare of the toiling Soviet masses.

As for the key question – did Mao act out of ideological rationale or was he faking it? – Lüthi errs on the side of ambiguity. He concludes in chapter 5 that “[w]hile Mao’s radicalism in 1959 had been mostly instrumental, it was to a much greater degree genuine, though still misguided in 1960.” The intractable problem lies, once again, in assigning a ratio of genuine beliefs to cynical manipulation. I am not sure, for example, how Lüthi draws the line between 1959 and 1960, and my doubts are confirmed by chapter 6, “Ambiguous Truce, 1961-1962,” where the author flatly admits that “just as he refused to define the precise nature of Soviet revisionism, Mao never specified where it [the “restoration of capitalism” in China] was a political problem or class struggle. It was simply a rhetorical weapon to discredit those who promoted ideas contrary to his own” (p. 211).

In fact, in chapters that follow, Lüthi justifiably claims that Mao’s domestic radicalism was primarily instrumental. In other words, it was a ploy to discredit his opponents. In that case, why could not Mao’s foreign policy radicalism also be instrumental, a ploy to challenge the Soviet leadership? Even if we take for granted, as the author does, that Mao “was a true communist believer” (whatever that means), we should not forget that Mao was a statesman and that, irrespective of his genuine or fake beliefs, he was superbly flexible in matters of foreign policy, siding with the communists here, the capitalists there, praising

peaceful co-existence and acting a war-monger, mending fences and tearing up alliances. Mao, Stalin, Khrushchev – they were all, on occasion, communist believers, and, no doubt, these beliefs colored their perceptions of friends and enemies, but surely neither substituted nor tainted the reason of state, and their ruthless pursuit of power.

Chapter 6 covers important ground and raises interesting questions. As before, Lüthi's analysis of China's domestic developments is nothing short of excellent. I also found his treatment of Albania's split with the USSR very convincing and suggestive of the real forces that lurked behind the façade of ideological recriminations. He argues that [Enver] "Hoxha's pro-Chinese policy was not the result of ideological concord but of intra-party struggles and Khrushchev's strong-arm tactics" (p. 202). This is not surprising, of course. There is no doubt, for instance, that a good number of the pro-Chinese parties in the communist movement were directly subsidized by Beijing. There is no doubt that, like the Albanians, the North Koreans and the North Vietnamese sold their allegiance for weapons and aid from China, at least for a time. This sad reality of intra-bloc relations simply points to the low value of political rhetoric as a motivation for state actions. You cannot eat revisionism or dogmatism, of either the Chinese or the Soviet variety. The same logic, I would argue, applies to Sino-Soviet relations overall.

Chapter 6 touches on a very interesting issue: why was it that the Chinese "moderates" – people like Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping – turned away from Mao's radical recipes during the post-Great Leap "adjustment" in China and yet "decided to follow Mao's hard line" (p. 212) in Sino-Soviet relations? Lüthi does not offer an answer but an answer suggests itself: it was because they resented Mao's domestic policies but basically agreed with his foreign policy. How could this be? Certainly not because Liu and Deng bought Mao's rhetoric about Soviet "revisionism"! It was because the unequal nature of Sino-Soviet relations was evident to all Chinese leaders, not just Mao. With or without Mao, China was the underdog of the alliance. And while the Soviets recognized this fact of life and were more than happy to let it be, the Chinese policy makers (with a few exceptions) resented this relationship of perpetual inequality. It was precisely for this reason that Mao's death in 1976 did not bring improvement in Sino-Soviet relations, and when the rapprochement actually did happen (in the mid-1980s), it was on China's terms, with China, for once, being an equal partner in the improved relationship.

Chapter 7, "Mao Resurgent, 1962-1963, makes a good case for close links between China's domestic politics (increasing radicalization following the Beidaihe Work Conference and the Tenth CCP Plenum) and the Sino-Soviet split. Lüthi writes that "Mao instigated the deterioration of Sino-Soviet relations precisely with domestic aims in mind" (p. 244). This line of argument follows closely Roderick MacFarquhar and other scholars who attribute primacy to China's domestic politics over foreign policy. There are good reasons for doing this. China's actions at the time of the war with India in 1962 and the Cuban Missile Crisis suggest Mao's intent to make use of foreign problems to make a point domestically, in particular, to undermine the notion of *sanhe yishao* (in a nut-shell, moderate policy, or the mending of fences with opponents), previously championed by Wang Jiaxiang as a foreign policy equivalent of the domestic "adjustment."

This is basically Lüthi's take on the Sino-Indian conflict: "In light of his rejection of Wang Jiaoxiang's *sanhe yishao*, Mao set out to implement an assertive policy designed to forestall Nehru's renewed forward policy in the Himalayas" (p. 224). One potentially problematic aspect of this analysis is that it fails to account for China's security concerns, and especially Beijing's apprehension of India's possible subversive influence on Tibet, which certainly provided enough grounds to rebuff Nehru's forward policy, quite irrespective of *sanhe yishao*. John Garver makes a persuasive argument to this effect in his recent article<sup>1</sup>, based on careful reading of the evidence on the Chinese side. I confess that I find Garver's approach as appealing, if not more appealing, than the other explanation. The bottom line is that we still don't really know.

In chapter 8, "The American Factor, 1962-1963," Lüthi looks at Sino-Soviet relations through the prism of nuclear test ban treaty negotiations, which resulted, by August 1963, in a breakthrough for Soviet-US détente. Lüthi contends that "Khrushchev eventually decided on nuclear rapprochement with the United States at the expense of ideological reconciliation with the Chinese comrades" (p. 271). He concludes, however, that by the time Khrushchev gave the green light to the test ban treaty, Mao had long decided on the rift and that "the ... treaty simply helped it burst into the open" (p. 272). Lüthi is right on target with this observation, and he is also absolutely correct to stress the interconnection between Sino-Soviet and Soviet-US relations. There is no doubt that at some point in 1963, Khrushchev decided that the split with China was inevitable and chose to boost his credentials by reaching a deal with the West. I would add that, just like in China, where the Sino-Soviet split became an important issue in domestic politics, Sino-Soviet relations had immediate relevance for Soviet domestic politics. Khrushchev's decision to break with China and embrace détente with the West was a setback for the party conservatives who had encouraged creeping re-Stalinization, and until then, had Khrushchev creep along with them. This is an important indicator of the complexity of the Sino-Soviet split; Lüthi sees this complexity very well on the Chinese side but he occasionally neglects to see the same on the Soviet side.

For this reason, in my view, he misinterprets Soviet policy following Khrushchev's fall in 1964. In chapter 9, "Collapse of Party Relations, 1963-1966," Lüthi argues that despite Khrushchev's disgrace, the Soviet Union and China maintained basically irreconcilable ideological positions, and that made rapprochement impossible: "Khrushchevism was not finished in Moscow, as Mao would soon realize" (p. 300). The problem is that of definitions. What kind of "Khrushchevism" was not finished in Moscow? One can of course go on and argue about the decisions of the Twentieth Congress and to what extent Khrushchev's successors reversed some of those decisions (I would argue there were important reversals).

But the problem was not real or invented ideological differences (I would say the top Soviet leaders, with the exception of Anastas Mikoyan, had a rather rudimentary understanding of these supposed differences) but the dilemma the Soviet leaders found themselves in after

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<sup>1</sup> John W. Garver, "China's Decision for War with India in 1962," Harvard University, n.d., <http://www.people.fas.harvard.edu/~johnston/garver.pdf>

Khrushchev's fall. The dilemma was whether or not to kowtow to Mao. I mean this in the figurative sense, of course, but that did not make it any less painful. Mao wanted for the new Soviet leaders to recognize his seniority, and he well knew they would not. That is why he sent his mission to the Soviet Union in November 1964 with a sense of gloom. The Soviet leaders, for all their enthusiasm for improved relations with China, could not bow to the Chairman's demands for obvious political reasons. From their perspective, the alliance, as before, remained that between a superpower and a junior partner. In the sense that Brezhnev and Kosygin accepted the suitability of the established (but unequal) structure the Sino-Soviet alliance, they did practice Khrushchevism without Khrushchev or, for that matter, Stalinism without Stalin.

This brings me to the last chapter of the book, "Collapse of the Military Alliance, 1964-1966," for which I have nothing but praise. It is a very detailed, meticulously researched account of Chinese and Soviet strategies in the Vietnam War, and a must-read for any historian of that conflict. Lüthi's account, among other things, points to Mao's remarkable flexibility in the conflict. Lüthi shows that Beijing favored peace talks in early 1965 but soon adopted an uncompromising attitude, insisting on winning the war on the battlefield. Lüthi offers several reasons for this about-face, some more convincing than others, but his main point is extremely well-made: China's strategy in the Vietnam War was intimately linked to Mao's intentions in the Sino-Soviet split and these, in turn, connected to the Chairman's domestic aims on the eve of the Cultural Revolution.

So where does this leave us with regard to the broader concept of the book? I would contend that the notion that "the story of the Sino-Soviet breakup cannot be told without a focus on ideology" is almost certainly an exaggeration. Ideology was very important, there is no doubt about that. It colored perceptions. It prescribed a range of methods and even the language of struggle against Soviet "revisionism" and Chinese "dogmatism." Incidentally, by the late 1960s, this language was more or less discarded; from the surreal discourse on revisionism and dogmatism, the Chinese and the Soviets turned to the language of a brutal struggle for power. "Revisionists" became "social imperialists" and "dogmatists" became "Han chauvinists."

I think that there is no better description of what was really at stake in the Sino-Soviet split than Lüthi's statement at the end of the book: "No great power would have ceded leadership of its domain to an ally that was militarily less powerful, economically weaker, and run by a radical megalomaniac" (p. 352). Here, the author seems to refer to the domain of formal ideology but that to me only seems to be the tip of the iceberg. After all, Mao and his Soviet counterparts were not only high priests of communism but first and foremost great power statesmen and calculating politicians. The story of the Sino-Soviet breakup cannot be told without keeping that in mind.

Lorenz Lüthi has written an excellent book. It will be read by a wide audience, not just scholars of Sino-Soviet relations. It will be an important contribution to the historiography. I presented some points of disagreement with Lüthi. My own book on the same topic is in the press now and will appear soon. I expect Lüthi will disagree strongly with my book. This kind of intellectual division over the Sino-Soviet split will undoubtedly pave the way to

greater scholarly understanding of the intricate nature of the Sino-Soviet alliance, and the relative importance of factors that led to its ultimate demise. It is a real honor, indeed, a pleasure, to take on someone as good as Lüthi.

Review by Douglas Selvage, Office of the Federal Commissioner for the Records of the State Security Service of the Former German Democratic Republic (BStU), Berlin<sup>1</sup>

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Lorenz Lüthi's *The Sino-Soviet Split* traces the rift between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Soviet Union from its origins through the final collapse of the Sino-Soviet military alliance in 1964-66. Making use of a wealth of archival sources from three continents, Lüthi argues convincingly that ideology – not other factors such as geopolitics, U.S. foreign policy, or personality conflicts – played the key role in the divergence between Moscow and Beijing. Although one might disagree with certain aspects of Lüthi's ideological interpretation or question some of the many details upon which he builds his argument, *The Sino-Soviet Split* will serve as the standard work on the topic for years to come.

Ideology, Lüthi argues, played the central role in the split, and it was the PRC – namely, communist leader Mao Zedong – who was responsible for the break between Moscow and Beijing. “The seminal issue that triggered the deterioration of Sino-Soviet relations in the mid-1950s,” he writes, “was the basic idea behind the First Chinese FYP [Five Year Plan]” (p. 41). The PRC had basically inherited a “bureaucratic Stalinist” model of economic development from the Soviet Union in 1949, in which “all spheres of economic and non-economic life were exclusively run by a vast administrative system” (p. 22). According to Lüthi, China's adoption of the “bureaucratic Stalinist” model led to a “structural crisis between agriculture and industry,” in which agricultural production was not keeping up with industrial production (p. 41). To resolve this crisis, Mao pushed through a “revolutionary Stalinist” solution in the form of the “Socialist High Tide” (“Little Leap Forward”) in 1955 and then the even more ambitious “Great Leap Forward” (1958-60). Mao's solutions followed the example of Stalin's forced collectivization of agriculture in the Soviet Union in the 1930s and, not surprisingly, had similar results: famines, mass starvation, and the deaths of around 20 million people.

Mao's adoption of a “revolutionary Stalinist” model of development while the Soviets maintained a “bureaucratic Stalinist” model marked the first major point of ideological divergence between Beijing and Moscow. According to Lüthi, the second major point of ideological departure, and arguably the more important, came in 1956 with Nikita S. Khrushchev's “Secret Speech” to the 20<sup>th</sup> Plenum of the CPSU Central Committee. In the speech the new Soviet leader criticized Stalin's excesses – the very excesses that Mao sought to repeat. Mao dubbed Khrushchev's speech a “surprise attack”; Khrushchev's destalinization campaign threatened to undermine Mao's own cult of personality in China. In personal and ideological self-defense, Mao subsequently proclaimed to the Chinese Politburo that Stalin was right 70% of the time and wrong only 30% of the time. Lüthi suggests that for Mao, the 30% that Stalin got wrong had to do with Mao personally: “What exactly did the 30% include? Primarily, they included Stalin's failures during the Chinese Revolution and his condescending treatment of the Chairman in 1949-50. Since Stalin had committed all these mistakes against Mao personally, the Chairman tried to use them to

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<sup>1</sup> The views expressed by the author do not necessarily reflect the views of his employer, the BStU.

bolster his own credentials. Criticism of Stalin's personality cult thus turned into support for his own cult" (p. 50). Nevertheless, Mao's comrades sought to limit his personality cult at the Eighth Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in November 1956. The longstanding reference to "Mao Zedong thought" was removed from the party constitution; the party returned to collective leadership; and the "Socialist High Tide" was scrapped in favor of a more "balanced and steady" bureaucratic Stalinist approach to the economy. However, the fallout from Khrushchev's "Secret Speech" in the form of the Polish October and the Hungarian Revolution in 1956, along with the unexpectedly open criticism of the CCP awakened by its own limited effort at cultural and political liberalization in the Hundred Flowers Campaign (1956-57), allowed Mao to revive his "Socialist High Tide" in the summer of 1957. An Anti-Rightist Campaign in the PRC, launched around the same time, helped ensure that China would not go down the path of destalinization, even as Khrushchev reconfirmed the policy with his purge of the "Anti-Party Group" in 1957.

The third and final major ideological disagreement between Beijing and Moscow arose over Khrushchev's policy of "peaceful coexistence" with "imperialism." The CCP's opposition to Khrushchev's policy, Lüthi argues, had its roots in the worsening situation in the Taiwan Strait since the summer of 1956 – "the stalled Sino-American ambassadorial talks, U.S. military support for the Guomindang in Taiwan, and the introduction of American tactical nuclear missiles on the island" – and Mao's "opinion that nuclear weapons were nothing more than paper tigers" (pp. 76-77). Although Mao and the Chinese delegation signed off on the declaration of the Moscow Meeting of the World Communist Parties in November 1957, which voiced support for Khrushchev's policy of peaceful coexistence, the Chinese sent a secret memorandum to the Soviets around the same time that clearly voiced their opposition to the policy. At the meeting itself, Mao startled the other delegations by proclaiming that in the event of nuclear war, the world would lose one-third to one-half its population, but that socialism would ultimately prevail. The population of the socialist camp, he noted, was larger than the capitalist camp; and the survivors of nuclear war – most likely in China – would repopulate the earth in favor of socialism. "The East Wind is prevailing over the West Wind," he proclaimed (p. 77).

With the ideological foundations already in place by 1957, Mao's "explicit double challenge" (p. 81) to Moscow's leadership in the world communist movement in 1958 with the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis and the Great Leap Forward set into motion the long, downward spiral in relations that ultimately led to an open split. The Great Leap Forward, Mao's own take on "revolutionary Stalinism," was to serve as an explicit counter-model to the Soviet Union. In the same year, the PRC sparked the Second Taiwan Strait crisis by repeatedly shelling the Nationalist-controlled island of Jinmen. Mao did not inform Moscow about Beijing's plans in advance – a breach of the Sino-Soviet alliance (p. 99). Despite the differing origins of the Great Leap Forward and the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis, the two, Lüthi argues, were closely linked; the CCP manipulated the war threat arising from the crisis in the Strait to mobilize the Chinese people for the Great Leap Forward. At the same time, the radicalization of China's domestic policies, Lüthi argues, led Mao to reject "with hyperbole" Moscow's proposal for the establishment of a joint submarine fleet – an alleged Soviet attempt to "control China." The Second Taiwan Strait Crisis had a long ripple effect on Sino-Soviet relations. Khrushchev, fearful of Mao's loose talk about nuclear war, decided to

withdraw his 1957 offer to deliver an atomic bomb to China, and in 1959, when the First Sino-Indian Border War broke out, Khrushchev assumed – incorrectly – that Mao had “started the war out of some sick fantasy” that he could “dictate to the Soviet Union” its foreign policy (p. 144).

During the early 1960s, the growing rift between Moscow and Beijing came into the open. In 1960, the CCP published a series of Lenin polemics directed against the Soviet Union and provoked open debates at subsequent communist party congresses in Asia and Eastern Europe. China’s attempt to pressure Soviet military specialists to accept Beijing’s ideological line sparked Khrushchev’s decision to withdraw Soviet specialists from China in the same year. After a temporary truce from 1960-62, arising from Mao’s retreat after the ultimate collapse of the Great Leap Forward, relations worsened anew in 1962 with Mao’s political comeback, the Second Sino-Indian Border War, and Khrushchev’s retreat during the Cuban Missile Crisis – a new “Munich,” Beijing declared. For the first time, Moscow informed its own people about the dispute with China. By 1963, Beijing was demanding the renegotiation of all “unequal treaties” between China and the various “imperialist” powers in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, including all border agreements with the former Russian Empire. Mao now spoke openly to the CCP Politburo about a final split with Moscow; the main thing was to make “Khrushchev instigate the split, let him assume responsibility for it” (p. 240). After Beijing pressured Khrushchev to convene a world communist conference, it made demands about the meeting’s preparation that were clearly unacceptable to Moscow. Forcing Moscow to convene the conference without the CCP’s support would compel the Soviets to clarify the situation by making the split with Beijing official. Arguably, the Sino-Soviet split became final – I would argue this, although I am not sure that Lüthi would agree – in July 1963 when Sino-Soviet party talks broke down even as the U.S., the U.K., and the Soviet Union concluded the Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. The fall of Khrushchev in October 1964 did not compel the Soviet leadership – as Mao had naively hoped – to adopt his positions regarding Stalinism and peaceful coexistence; the rift had become a fact of international life.

Lüthi convincingly argues that the Sino-Soviet rift originated in ideological differences between Moscow and Beijing. Although other factors also played a role – geostrategic differences between the USSR and the PRC, personality conflicts (especially between Khrushchev and Mao), and U.S. policy (the “strategic triangle”) – they merely built upon or exacerbated the existing ideological division. Lüthi debunks various realist (or “national interest”) interpretations of the rift’s origins. For example, according to Stephen Walt’s realist theory of alliances, the Sino-Soviet split should not have occurred because both the USSR and the PRC were still weaker than the U.S. when their alliance fell apart. In terms of the “strategic triangle” explanation of the rift, U.S. policy, Lüthi argues, “only worked in the later stages of breakup.” Gordon Chang’s work,<sup>2</sup> he asserts, has “overestimated” the impact of U.S. policies on the rift (p. 7).

However, at some points Lüthi seems to overstate his otherwise solid case that ideology played the central role in the rift. For example, he contradicts his own assertion that U.S.

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<sup>2</sup> Gordon Chang, *Friends and Enemies* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990).

policy “only worked in the later stages of the breakup” when he notes that Khrushchev’s U.S. visit in 1959 was the “first time the United States became a major issue in the evolving Sino-Soviet disagreements” (p. 135). Eisenhower, he notes, had been pressing the Soviets about the Sino-Indian border conflict by declaring the Soviets co-responsible for it before Khrushchev’s arrival. Mao also rightly suspected a connection between Moscow’s withdrawal of its offer to supply China with an atomic bomb and Khrushchev’s efforts at arms control negotiations with the U.S. Perhaps Eisenhower’s request that Khrushchev inquire about the fate of imprisoned U.S. airmen in China also marked an attempt to sow Sino-Soviet differences? In terms of U.S. policy, Lüthi also asserts that in 1949-50, “Mao’s threat perceptions were, to a large degree, self-fulfilling prophecies” (p. 34). The U.S., he notes, began assisting the French in Indochina only after China initiated aid to the Vietnamese communists in 1950; more importantly, North Korea’s invasion of South Korea, backed by military assistance from the PRC, sparked U.S. intervention along China’s borders. Nevertheless, from the PRC’s perspective, U.S. military assistance to Taiwan and CIA covert operations in and around China in 1949-50 undoubtedly contributed to a real sense of threat in Beijing.

Similarly, Lüthi seems to overreach in differentiating his work from Jian Chen’s, which also places ideology at the center of the Sino-Soviet split. Lüthi implies that Chen neglects the impact of “events abroad, such as the Polish October or the Hungarian Revolution,” which “greatly influenced Mao’s thinking and his domestic policies” (p. 8). However, Chen clearly states in *Mao’s China and the Cold War* that “Beijing’s experience during these two events [the Polish crisis and the Hungarian revolution] enhanced Mao’s determination to bring China’s continuous revolution to a more radical phase. As a result, disastrous events such as the Anti-Rightist Movement and the Great Leap Forward in 1957-58 took place, which created conditions for deeper splits to develop between Beijing and Moscow.”<sup>3</sup>

This does not mean, however, that Chen and Lüthi agree on the ideological origins of the split. As noted above, Lüthi considers the “seminal issue” sparking the rift to be China’s adoption of a “revolutionary Stalinist” economic model in 1955 as opposed to the “bureaucratic Stalinist” model in the Soviet Union. In contrast, Chen finds the origins of the rift in “different understandings and interpretations of the same ideology.”<sup>4</sup> China’s interpretation of Marxism-Leninism, Chen argues, was rooted in “a strong and unique ‘victim mentality’ that characterized Chinese revolutionary nationalism during modern times. This mentality had been informed by the conviction that the political, economic, and military aggression of foreign imperialist countries had undermined China’s historical glory and humiliated the Chinese nation. Consequently, it was natural for the Chinese Communists, in their efforts to end China’s humiliating modern experiences, to suspect the behavior of *any* foreign country as being driven by ulterior, or even evil, intentions.”<sup>5</sup> The people of China, Chen argues, shared not only this “victim mentality” with the CCP but also a “long-lived Central Kingdom concept” – namely, that China had been the greatest power

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<sup>3</sup> Jian Chen, *Mao’s China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill & London: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), pp. 145-6.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 75.

and the center of the world in pre-modern times. Therefore, the Chinese people in general, not only CCP members, “willingly embraced Mao’s revolutionary programs,” which promised to place China back at the center of the world.<sup>6</sup> Arguably, Chen’s interpretation of the origins of China’s ideological differences with Moscow has greater explanatory power; it clarifies how Mao was able to mobilize the party and the masses behind him in supporting his divergence from Moscow. It also explains why the rift was not just a rift between Mao and Khrushchev or Mao and Moscow; instead, it was a rift between China’s communists in general and their former Soviet “comrades.”

Chen also places greater stress than Lüthi on Stalin’s role in the eventual rift. Stalin’s treatment of the PRC, he suggests, played into the Chinese sense of “national humiliation.” For example, Stalin insisted on maintaining the special privileges that Moscow had obtained from the Guomindang in China, privileges that harkened back to the unequal treaties between the European powers and China in the nineteenth century – for example, Soviet control of Lüshun (Port Arthur) and the Changdun Railroad.<sup>7</sup> Significantly, Lüthi does not even refer to these humiliating aspects of the Sino-Soviet alliance under Stalin.<sup>8</sup> Likewise, Chen argues that during the Korean War, given Stalin’s reluctance to intervene directly, “the seed for the future Sino-Soviet split was sown.”<sup>9</sup> In contrast, Lüthi merely notes China’s subsequent efforts “to break China’s international isolation by turning toward the intermediate zone,” especially the non-aligned movement (p. 36). Does the fact that the CCP did not mention any of these earlier disagreements or problems under Stalin in its 1960 polemics truly mean – as Lüthi suggests – that they did not play a role in the eventual split between Moscow and Beijing? (p. 40)

Although one might question aspects of Lüthi’s interpretation of the Sino-Soviet conflict, no one can question the depth of his research. He has combed archives and primary sources on three continents in putting together his book. Given the breadth and depth of his research, *The Sino-Soviet Split* makes important contributions to the international history of the Cold War beyond the book’s central geographic focus.

For example, the section in Chapter Two on the Polish and Hungarian crises debunks the myth, promoted by the Chinese Communists internally -- but also externally in their relations with Eastern Europe -- that the PRC played a decisive role in Moscow’s decision not to intervene militarily in Poland. According to Lüthi, Khrushchev did not learn that Mao had voiced his opposition to such intervention to Ambassador Yudin until the Soviet leader returned to Warsaw the same day, October 20; by that time, Khrushchev had decided on his own to halt – but not call off – the advance of Soviet troops on Warsaw (p. 55). A recent account by Chinese historians Shen Zhihua and Li Danhui, based on Chinese

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., pp. 52-3.

<sup>8</sup> The humiliation – or at least dissatisfaction – that Mao and the CCP felt regarding these terms of the Sino-Soviet alliance came through in Mao’s conversation with Soviet Ambassador Pavel Yudin on March 31, 1956; for a memorandum of the conversation, see Odd Arne Westad, “Mao on Sino-Soviet Relations: Conversations with the Russian Ambassador,” in *Cold War International History Project Bulletin* 6/7 (Winter 1995), pp. 164-66.

<sup>9</sup> Jian Chen, p. 59.

foreign ministry sources not available when Lüthi wrote his book, goes a step farther. According to Shen and Li, Mao's meeting with Yudin was on October 19, not October 20, and at that point, Mao did not yet have any information about Soviet troops advancing on Warsaw. Indeed, according to Shen and Li, the relevant telegram from Warsaw regarding potential Soviet military intervention was not translated until October 21, and Mao did not meet with Yudin until the night of October 22 to inform the Soviets about his opposition to military intervention in Poland.<sup>10</sup> Lüthi agrees with Shen and Li that when a Chinese delegation travelled to Moscow on October 23, there was no Polish delegation present; therefore, Wu Lengxi's account in his memoirs – that China mediated at this point between Polish and Soviet delegations in Moscow – has no basis in fact. Indeed, Shen and Li go so far as to state: "Although certain historians treat Wu Lengxi's memoirs as a historical source, this material's credibility leaves much to be desired."<sup>11</sup> If Shen and Li are correct that Mao told Yudin on the night of October 22 that the PRC opposed intervention in Poland, it directly contradicts Deng Xiaoping's alleged statement to Soviet Deputy Premier Frol Kozlov the same day that if conditions in Poland made it necessary, China would not oppose Soviet intervention (p. 56). That the account of Kozlov's conversation with Deng comes from the Polish archives, apparently in Polish translation, suggests that the Soviets supplied it to the Polish communists after the fact – most likely, in the early 1960s, when the Chinese raised the issue of their 1956 "assistance" to win Poland's support in their debates with Moscow. In other words, we cannot be 100 per cent certain of the document's authenticity until the corresponding document is found in the Soviet archives. Nevertheless, Lüthi's overall assessment stands: although it is "not clear from the available documentary record ... it is likely that the Chinese advice supported Soviet decisions envisioned or already taken" with regard to non-intervention in Poland (p. 56).<sup>12</sup>

Also of particular significance for international historians of the Cold War is Chapter 8. Here, Lüthi finds a link between the Limited Nuclear Test Ban (LNTB) Treaty of 1963 negotiated by the U.S., Soviet Union, and Great Britain; Khrushchev's renewal of his offer of a non-aggression pact between the Warsaw Pact and NATO; and the Soviet leader's "attempt to reorient the Warsaw Pact against China" by supporting Outer Mongolia's request for membership – a request apparently engineered by Khrushchev himself. At the same time, the Soviet leader had dropped his insistence that Washington scrap its plans for a multilateral nuclear force in NATO – for instance, granting West Germany "access" to nuclear weapons – as the price for the LNTB. Khrushchev, Lüthi concludes, was aiming at a "strategic redirection" of the Warsaw Pact against China. Khrushchev had to drop his

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<sup>10</sup> Shen Zhihua and Li Danhui, "The Polish Crisis of 1956 and Polish-Chinese Relations Viewed from Beijing," in Jan Rowiński, ed., *The Polish October 1956 in World Politics* (Warsaw: Polish Institute of International Affairs, 2007), pp. 92, 94.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 98-9.

<sup>12</sup> One other minor point of difference between Lüthi, on the one hand, and Shen and Li, on the other, has to do with the Soviet declaration of October 30, 1956, "on the principles of full equality, respect of territorial integrity, state independence and sovereignty and non-interference in the domestic affairs" in relations between socialist states. Lüthi asserts that the document was in the works since 1953; thus, China did not play the role in its adoption that various Chinese memoirs claim. In contrast, Shen accepts the claim of Vice-Chairman Liu Shaoqi before the CCP Central Committee on November 10, 1956, that the delegation he had led to Moscow the previous month had co-drafted the declaration with the Soviets. *Ibid.*, p. 99; Lüthi, p. 57.

plans, however, because “his East European allies,” Lüthi notes, “either opposed additional responsibilities outside of Europe or were sympathetic to China” (p. 271).<sup>13</sup>

In conclusion, although one might question Lüthi’s rejection of nationalism’s role in the rift between Moscow and Beijing and thus find Jian Chen’s interpretation of its ideological origins to be more convincing, Lüthi’s *The Sino-Soviet Split* will remain the standard work on the topic for years to come. It belongs as a reference work on the shelves of all Cold War historians, no matter on which continent or country they may focus. One can hope that in a few years, as more Chinese archival sources become available, Lüthi will publish a revised edition integrating the new materials. It is one of those key historical works that deserves to be updated and reprinted on a regular basis.

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<sup>13</sup> As Lüthi notes, Poland, along with Romania, clearly opposed Khrushchev’s proposal for Mongolia’s membership. However, the Polish memorandum Lüthi cites was not addressed to the Soviets, as he asserts; it had been prepared by the Polish foreign ministry for Polish Foreign Minister Adam Rapacki and the Polish Politburo. See memorandum by the Polish Foreign Ministry, 20 July 1963, transl. by Douglas Selvage, at <http://se2.isn.ch/serviceengine/FileContent?serviceID=PHP&fileid=47565934-EC71-4D42-6DE1-18E9AC12A6FA&lng=en>, Parallel History Project on NATO and the Warsaw Pact (PHP), Records of the Political Consultative Committee, 1955-1991, ed. by Vojtech Masnty, Christian Nuenlist, and Anna Locher, by permission of the Center for Security Studies at ETH Zurich and the National Security Archive at the George Washington University on behalf of the PHP network.

If there is a new Cold War international history emerging in the post-1989 era, Dr. Lüthi's book is one of the best in the field. Buttressed by newly available archival and documentary sources from China, the former Soviet Union, and many other former members of the Soviet bloc in Eastern Europe, the author has constructed a highly insightful and convincing narrative, detailing the story of how the two seemingly formidable communist states crashed head-on in the 1950s and 60s, thus changing the equation of the Cold War alignment. This is a must-read for any student of modern China and the history of the Cold War for years to come.

People in the United States and Western Europe can still recall the horrific shock wave sent by the news of Soviet acquisition of nuclear bomb and the CCP's victory in China in the mid-century. The nuclear-equipped USSR and communist China formed a military alliance early in 1950; the march of communism appeared unstoppable. Less than a decade later, however, this formidable communist camp was unraveling, thanks to the feud between China and the Soviet Union; the myth of a monolithic communist world was no more. "What happened" between Moscow and Beijing thus became an intriguing question driving enquiries by many scholars and policy analysts alike ever since. The predominant interpretation blames the cause of the split on a conflict of national interest: Russian imperialism vs. Chinese nationalism. Mao was often portrayed as the beholder of Chinese national interest against Soviet encroachment by Stalin and his successors. Lüthi effectively repudiates this line of argument, demonstrating the magnitude of Soviet military, economic, and diplomatic assistance and its importance to the wellbeing of the young People's Republic of China. He argues that Mao's China was the persistent force driving the alliance to the grave, and the main reason behind the conflict was ideology by nature.

The analytical focus on the role of ideology is not new. Jian Chen and I have argued in favor of the binding effect of a common ideology between Mao's Chinese Communist Party and Stalin's Soviet Union. Lüthi, in contrast, emphasizes the distractive role of ideology that ruined the Sino-Soviet alliance and the once mighty communist worldwide movement. He squarely lays the blame at the door of Mao's leadership in Beijing, as Mao actively pushed the Sino-Soviet polemic and the final split. How did two communist states fatally collide with each other as a result of different ideologies? In a nutshell, Lüthi's explanation is that while the post-Stalin Soviet leadership continued with Bureaucratic Stalinism, Mao's China chose to follow Revolutionary Stalinism, which had dominated Soviet politics in the 1930s.

This ideological conflict manifested itself in three areas, according to the author. The first point of contention was on economic developmental strategy; while the Soviets moved away from rigid Stalinist model of forced collectivization earlier in the Soviet history, Mao, in 1955, decided to embrace the radical ideas that the Kremlin had discarded, thus leading toward the "Socialist High Tide" in 1955 and 1956, and the "Great Leap Forward" two years later. Both failed miserably. The second point of contention came with Khrushchev's policy of de-Stalinization in 1956, which set off two crises within the communist camp: the

Polish October and the Hungarian Revolution. While the Soviets were losing their grip on the situation, the Chinese gained self-confidence in competing for leadership of the communist world. The third point of contention was regarding foreign policy toward the US-led western capitalist-imperialist world. While the Kremlin proceeded along the lines of peaceful co-existence, Mao, due to his “ideological preconception of the world,” “could not understand why Khrushchev sought Soviet-American rapprochement.” (p. 10) Instead, Mao kept pushing for worldwide communist revolution against the West. The difference on the Vietnam War finally broke the alliance in the 1960s, leading to the military crash at the borders of the two nations, which paved the way for the Sino-American rapprochement early in the 1970s.

Based on massive multi-national archival and documentary sources, this line of interpretation sheds new light on many old issues. If previous studies often portrayed Mao as a defensive nationalistic leader in the face of intruding Russians, Lüthi’s picture of Mao is different: he was radical and aggressive, “far more active in pursuing ideological conflict” (p. 2) and China’s leadership in the worldwide communist movement. In describing the origins of the 1957 Moscow Conference, Lüthi reveals a telling story. While paying lip service to socialist unity under the Soviet leadership, the Chinese were making efforts behind the Soviets’ backs to lull Tito’s Yugoslavia into a plan to sponsor an international conference of communist parties. When Tito refused the Beijing initiative, Khrushchev announced that the USSR would sponsor an international conference in Moscow. We all know that Beijing started an ideological campaign against “Yugoslavian Revisionism” long before its ideological assault on “Soviet Revisionism.” Mao might have been convinced of his own “always correctness” and high moral ground, but one has to question whether his behavior was indeed purely based on ideological principles.

Such multi-archival, research-based narrative leads to some insights that will profoundly change our understanding of the Sino-Soviet split. If many scholars have tended to see Mao’s policies as being sensible and rational but ultimately unsuccessful, Lüthi convincingly argues that “belligerent self-isolation from the world and the insistence on ideological correctness rather than the pursuit of friendly external relations and economic prosperity were conscious policy choices by Mao,” (p. 5) and that this was a “folly” (p. 5). In 1958, Mao created the second Taiwan Strait crisis for domestic mobilization to wage the “Great Leap Forward,” but Mao’s China “was progressively getting poorer and more isolated as a result of his own blunders” (p. 12). Indeed, if one is impressed by China’s speed of modernization in the past twenty years or so, one has to ask: what would have happened to China had Mao not disastrously misruled for more than twenty-five years?

Although I admire the richness of the narrative and am in agreement with the author’s essential viewpoint in many instances, I thought his interpretation of ideology could be more historical than literal. Historically speaking, Maoism as an ideology was not just a simple and stiff worldview that offered no compromise. Maoism was, in fact, the combination of two opposing and complimentary doctrines of class struggle and the united front, just like the *yin* and *yang* of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) ideology and

practice.<sup>1</sup> If Mao could get in bed with his domestic enemy twice before 1949, and shake hands with Richard Nixon early in the 1970s, why he could not simply understand the Soviets' policy of rapprochement with the US in the 1950s due to his "ideological preconception of the world?"

After 1949, the CCP inner-party debate was focused on the speed of development, including the speed of collectivization of agriculture and socialization of industries. The Maoist construction labeled the tendency toward unrealistically fast development that disregarded objective constraints as "leftist deviationism," and the more conservative tendency as "rightist deviationism." If there was an inner-party struggle between the *yin* and the *yang* of the CCP, this struggle occurred first and foremost in Mao's head.

The evidence of this is in the recently published book, *Deng Zihui zishu (The Recollections of Deng Zihui)*. Deng was the chief of the CCP's Agriculture Department in the 1950s. As a pragmatic communist, Deng could be described as a typical Bureaucratic Stalinist who advocated retreating from rapid and forced collectivization in 1955. The high speed of collectivization came with much alarming and negative impact. Some cadres even used torture to force peasants to join the collectives, and many peasants started killing farm animals as a means of resistance. Mao was concerned with this development, and he met Deng twice in March 1955. Mao said that "productive relations should suit productive force, or the productive force will stage insurrection. Currently, peasants' killing pigs and water buffalos is the insurrection of the productive force." He proposed the policy of "stopping, retreating, before moving forward." His long term goal at that time was to complete collectivization in fifteen years. In April, Mao continued this stance. Deng reported to Mao on April 20, one day before the CCP Conference on Agricultural Work, at which Deng's speech quoted Mao five times regarding retreat from rapid collectivization. However, ten days after the conference, Mao reversed course and started to criticize Deng for being too "rightist."<sup>2</sup> This was the beginning of the "Socialist High Tide," the disastrous result of which forced Mao to retreat in 1956. It is well known that Mao intended to retreat from the Great Leap Forward in 1959 at the Lushan Conference, but he reversed himself when facing the perceived opposition of Peng Dehuai.

This suggests that in 1955 Mao certainly did not seek to "cut the Gordian knot by embracing radical—Revolutionary Stalinist—ideas" once and for all (p. 42). He was not committed to a one-sided ideological policy; rather, he wavered between his radical instinct and the pragmatic concerns of the moment. Lüthi does not come out and name Deng Zihui, Deng Xiaoping, Liu Shaoqi and the others as "Bureaucratic Stalinists," but by identifying Mao as committed to Revolutionary Stalinism rather than its opposite, Bureaucratic Stalinism, in the Soviet Union and at home, the author's interpretation seems to imply the "two-line struggle," (p. 172) a Maoist reconstruction of history. Some of the author's treatment of alleged inner-party opposition to Mao further enhances this

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Sheng, *Battling Western Imperialism: Mao, Stalin, and the United States* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1997).

<sup>2</sup> Deng Zihui, *Deng Zihui zishu (The Recollections of Deng Zihui)*, (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2007), 292-301.

impression. For instance, the Eighth Congress of the CCP in 1956 is described as a collective effort of the Party to introduce “policy reversal and checks on Mao’s freedom of political action,” (p. 46) and Deng Xiaoping was adamant about collective leadership against the personality cult. Mao felt slighted, but held his feelings back for the moment. As evidence of this active opposition to Mao in 1956, Lüthi cites a quotation by Deng Xiaoping from, curiously, a Soviet source (pp. 46-53). If there were such “checks and balances” to Mao’s power, how could Mao have led the Party-state to utter disaster two years later? Where did the courage of Deng Xiaoping and others go when Mao condemned Peng Dehuai and continued the disastrous Great Leap Forward in 1959? Had there been such evidence of Deng Xiaoping standing up against Mao’s personality cult, would it have surfaced during the Deng era in China? I think the author is right when he remarks that “criticism of Stalin’s personality cult [in 1956] thus turned into support of [Mao’s] own personality cult” (p. 50).

This leads to a more fundamental question: was Mao’s policy behavior always rational and consistent along the lines of a given ideology? In a few places, the author suggests the irrationality of Mao’s policy behavior, but, ultimately, he, like many before him, believes that Mao’s policy had a fundamental rationality of its own; no matter how unsuccessful it turned out to be, Mao’s policy intention and action can be explained by examining the circumstances of the time. For instance, why did Mao provoke the second Taiwan Strait crisis in 1958? Lüthi believes that Mao reacted to the unsatisfactory development of Sino-American relations in the previous two years, while the timing of the crisis was determined by the domestic necessity of mass mobilization (pp. 80-104). There is evidence pointing in the other direction: during the 1958 crisis, the only consistency in Mao’s policy behavior was inconsistency, and his “strategic plan” was no plan; he was simply adrift throughout the entire process of creating and micromanaging the horrific international crisis.<sup>3</sup> Interestingly, it is precisely in this context that the author refers to Lowell Dittmer’s four characteristics of Mao’s behavior at the time, the first of which was charismatic leadership. By Max Weber’s definition, the charismatic moment in history is an exception to the increasing tendency towards rationalization, and it has its own dynamics. If so, Mao can be understood only by stepping outside the rational box, in order to examine the irrational dimension of the charismatic relationship between the leader and his followers, and the psychology of both sides.

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<sup>3</sup> See Michael Sheng, “Mao and China’s Relations with the Superpowers in the 1950s: A New Look at the Taiwan Strait Crises,” *Modern China* (September 2008). (Online First version: <http://mcx.sagepub.com/cgi/rapidpdf/0097700408315991v1>).

Lorenz Lüthi should be hailed for writing an admirable book on a subject that has, for decades, been marred by limited access to, if not the complete absence of, primary sources. Amassing an impressive array of documentary sources, Lüthi composes a narrative of the Sino-Soviet split that is breath-taking, fascinating, and by and large convincing. Lüthi's book is a major contribution to the field of Cold War studies and surely it has raised the bar for the New Cold War scholarship.

Admiration notwithstanding, I would like to venture a critique of some theoretical aspects of ideology, a key concept in Lüthi's argument and one which I believe is of crucial importance for our understanding of the Sino-Soviet split.

To be sure, Lüthi's central claim that Chinese leader Mao Zedong's ideological radicalism kept pushing Sino-Soviet relations to the brink is by no means a novel argument. Indeed, Lüthi's study adds a powerful voice to a conventional view of Mao being radical, dogmatic, and unreasonable.

In a sense, Lüthi's book symbolizes the revival of the study of ideology in the New Cold War History scholarship, echoing major works by scholars such as Jian Chen.<sup>1</sup> But Lüthi's argument is different from Jian Chen's thesis. Whereas Jian Chen's "continuous revolution" argument might help readers empathize more with the rationale behind Mao's ideological radicalization in China's domestic and foreign policies, Lüthi's portrait of Mao being obsessed with radical communist ideology seems to reject altogether the notion of Mao being rational and reasonable.

But blaming Mao's irrationality or foolishness will not answer historians' question of "Why?" And this "blame-Mao-as-radical" thesis tends to ignore evidence that Mao and other Chinese leaders were realistic and capable of thinking in terms of strategy and power politics. For instance, there is considerable recently available Chinese archival evidence that suggests Chinese leaders, Mao included, had, for genuine strategic reasons, been reluctant to break with the Soviets, and China's efforts to challenge the Soviet leadership in the international communist movement came later than previously thought.<sup>2</sup> After all, it was Mao and other top Chinese leaders who, in 1959, took pains to smother the growing sentiment at home in favor of defying the Soviet Union and took great effort to support and preserve the Soviet leadership in the Socialist camp.<sup>3</sup> It was Politburo member Peng Zhen who, after a tit-for-tat encounter with Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev at the June 1960 Bucharest conference, commented at an internal meeting that "*The Soviet Union can't do without us, neither can we do without the Soviet Union.* Some say that it is not easy to make

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<sup>1</sup> Jian Chen, *Mao's China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill & London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

<sup>2</sup> Dong Wang, "The Quarreling Brothers: New Chinese Archives and a Reappraisal of the Sino-Soviet Split, 1959-1963," *Cold War International History Project Working Paper, No. 49* (Washington D. C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, February 2006).

<sup>3</sup> Wang, "The Quarreling Brothers," pp. 12-16.

contacts with fraternal countries; rather, it is more comfortable to make contacts with nationalist countries and Asian-African countries. This is not correct. Are fraternal countries better or worse than enemies? No matter what, [they] are *better* than enemies.”<sup>4</sup> Vice Premier and Foreign Minister Chen Yi also stressed the strategic necessity of Sino-Soviet unity at the same meeting. “If you strike harder and hurt the Soviet Union, you’ll hurt yourself as well. The Soviet Union and we are *in the same pants* and cannot be separated from one another,” Chen Yi stated. “*Brothers are still brothers*. [We] should have the common feeling of proletarian internationalism. It is no good to our Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to make the name of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) stink.”<sup>5</sup> Lüthi tends to interpret Mao’s call for unity as tactical retreat due to his domestic political vulnerability (pp. 118-119). Yet, the consensus among top Chinese leadership concerning the need for Sino-Soviet unity clearly went beyond domestic political calculations and indeed was centered on genuine strategic necessities. The dynamics of the Sino-Soviet split might be more complicated than the view that the radical Mao pushed the relationship to a split would suggest.

## 1. Ideology and Rationality

Ideological states—states that subscribe to a certain ideology (communism or Western liberalism) and seek to promote their own ideologies and “duplicate” their domestic systems abroad—are usually believed to be radical and irrational. Yet, recently, scholars have made the case that irrationality is not an inherent element of ideology.<sup>6</sup> There are several reasons:

First, ideological states’ commitment to changing or even transforming the international system is “fully compatible with acknowledged uncertainty about the policies that might best serve this end in a complex and unpredictable environment.” In other words, ideological states are not inherently irrational when they seek to change and transform the international system through the promotion of preferred ideologies and the “duplication” of their domestic systems abroad.

Second, radical ends do not necessitate realization through radical means. Ideologues can be, and in fact oftentimes are, flexible in use of methods, adaptive to circumstances, and yet remain committed to their ideology.

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<sup>4</sup> “Peng Zhen tongzhi baogao” (Report of Comrade Peng Zhen), January 1961, Jiangsu Provincial Archives (JPA), *Quanzong hao*: 3124 long, *Quanzong mincheng*: Provincial Foreign Affairs Office, *Juanhao*: 122, Nanjing, Jiangsu Province, China.

<sup>5</sup> Item No. 15 “Chen Yi tongzhi guanyu guoji xingshi he waijiao zhengce de baogao” (Comrade Chen Yi’s Report Regarding International Situation and Foreign Policy), January 1961, JPA, *Quanzong hao*: 3124 long, *Quanzong mincheng*: Provincial Foreign Affairs Office, *Juanhao*: 122.

<sup>6</sup> Nigel Gould-Davies, “Rethinking the Role of Ideology in International Politics During the Cold War,” *Journal of Cold War Studies* 1, no. 1 (1999), pp. 90-109.

Third, ideological goals need not to be pursued recklessly. Ideologues do not inherently prefer war; instead, the decision between war and peace depends entirely on the instrumental value of each path.<sup>7</sup>

In fact, one author suggests that throughout the Cold War the United States “was hardly less ideological than the Soviet Union.”<sup>8</sup> One might even go on to suggest that the contemporary United States is among the most ideological states in history. With its declared Wilsonian goal of “seek[ing] and support[ing] the growth of democratic movements in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in the world,” it is safe to suggest that the Bush administration is probably no less “ideological” than Stalin’s Soviet Union or Mao’s China in setting its ultimate goal of changing and transforming the international system.<sup>9</sup>

Realists are likely to contend that ideology should be regarded as a source for generating power and security. By replicating their domestic system abroad, ideological states ultimately increase their power position in the international system. The promotion of an ideology, be it communism or Western liberalism, naturally increases the degree of direct intervention and control of the domestic processes of other states, raises “transnational ideological loyalties” among followers, and leads to the augment of the preacher’s power and sway in the international system.<sup>10</sup> In short, ideological states do not just promote their ideologies and replicate their domestic systems abroad to increase the power of others in the international system, and then sit back in satisfaction. Rather, they do so to increase their own power and sway in the international system.

The above discussion also sheds light on the problem in the “blame-Mao-as-radical” argument. As I indicated above, Mao’s vision of promoting world revolution is perhaps *no more radical than* the Wilsonian goal of promoting liberal democracy around the world. Furthermore, Mao’s commitment to promoting world revolution does not dictate that China’s foreign policy must be radical, belligerent, or aggressive. In fact, newly emerging Chinese evidence shows that 1) China promoted world revolution for the purpose of contending for great power status in the international system; and 2) China did not do it recklessly; it did so in a rational way. It made careful plans, weighed benefits against costs, and channeled its resources into areas where success was perceived to be most probable.<sup>11</sup> China’s support of communist rebels and the nationalist movement throughout the Third World follows this pattern. For instance, Zhou Enlai explained at a May 1965 Politburo meeting about the rationale of making worldwide commitments: “Foreign aid is not limited to Vietnam. Other regions such as Southeast Asia, West Africa, East Africa, and North Africa should all be included. For example, Kenya complained that the arms and ammunition the Soviet Union provided were all old, and that they were not fully consulted before the

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<sup>7</sup> Gould-Davies, pp. 95-96.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 109.

<sup>9</sup> George W. Bush, “Presidential Inauguration Address,” 20 January, 2005 (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/01/20050120-1.html>).

<sup>10</sup> Gould-Davies, p. 104 (quote).

<sup>11</sup> Dong Wang, *From Enmity to Rapprochement: Grand Strategy, Power Politics, and U.S.-China Relations, 1961-1974* (Dissertation. Department of Political Science, University of California, Los Angeles, 2007).

weapons were sent. They are very dissatisfied. They said what we gave them was new, real and durable. Also, Cambodia has broken off relations with the United States. They now ask aid from us. *How can we not give it to them?*<sup>12</sup> So China's aid policy is a function of its strategic goal of competing with Moscow and Washington for power and global influence, not merely a result of supposedly radical ideological commitment, much less determined by pure economic incentives. As Chen Yi argued, when it came to the issue of providing aid, the Chinese "cannot merely do the economic calculation; rather, we should do the political calculation (*bu neng zhisuan jingji zhang, yao suan zhengzhi zhang*)."<sup>13</sup> Such a goal might seem to be "irrational" in hindsight, but it is perfectly understandable given China's great power aspirations.

Why, then, would China prove to be overzealous in its "revolutionary commitment," and seem to have overextended its power in the Third World, which eventually came back to bite it?

This perhaps has more to do with the inherent ambiguity in international politics than with presumable irrationality in ideology. Classical realism posits that states maximize power in a rational, prudent way and pursue a large bundle of security and power goals or preferences "up to the point of diminishing utility."<sup>14</sup> However, the boundary between maximizing one's power and exceeding the limit prescribed by one's capabilities is murky. States could easily step over the line without knowing it. In other words, the cut-off point between increasing utility and diminishing utility is never clear for state leaders, and is to a great extent murky, even for outsider observers such as historians or political scientists who have the benefit of hindsight when trying to understand the logic of international politics.

Sadly, states normally cannot tell whether or not they have "crossed the boundary" until they have "run their head against the wall." What seems to be clear for outsiders viewing the situation *ex post facto* is nevertheless ambiguous and fluid to policy makers assessing the situation in real time. "Irrationality" can only be established by outside observers *post hoc*, but it cannot be ascertained *ex ante*. Thus, the Americans could be "rationally optimistic" about the prospect of defeating the Viet Cong by escalating the war but might not be able to tell precisely when they had "crossed the cut-off point." The Chinese could have been "rationally optimistic" about the prospect of turning the tide against American power, but might not have realized that their commitment to world revolution had exceeded what China's power prescribed until their efforts were thwarted by reality. In the same vein, the Soviets invaded Afghanistan with "rational optimism" and did not realize that they had overextended their power until defeat was imminent.

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<sup>12</sup> "Duan Yun tongzhi chuanda liangci zhengzhiju huiyi (wuyue shiwuri jilugao)" (Two Politburo Meetings as Transmitted by Comrade Duan Yun) (The 15 May Recorded Copy), 15 May 1965, JPA, *Quanzong hao*: 3011, *Quanzong mincheng*: Shengwei bangongting, *Juanhao*: 1162.

<sup>13</sup> Item No. 4, "Guoji xingshi wenti 20 tiao (jilu gao)" (Twenty Notes on Issues Concerning International Situation (Recorded Copy), JPA, *Quanzong hao*: 3124, *Quanzong mincheng*: Sheng waishi bangongshi, *Juanhao*: 145-2, p. 10.

<sup>14</sup> Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981), pp. 22-23.

## 2. An Anatomy of Ideology

Like other ideational variables such as ‘norm’ or ‘identity,’ ideology could easily fall victim to political manipulation which would add complexity to a concept that at times is already elusive.<sup>15</sup> It is the task of historians and political scientists to make an anatomy of ideology.

In my view, there are three characteristics of communist ideology that are important for our understanding of the dynamics of the Sino-Soviet split: 1) ambiguity; 2) duality; and 3) absoluteness and exclusiveness.

Ideology, as a set of ideas that define how a society should work and be organized, constitutes the most fundamental belief of human beings which is stable and rarely undergoes drastic changes. Communist ideology, premised on class conflict, posits the relationship between the socialist states and the capitalist states as one of general enmity. Yet, communist ideology is ambiguous in terms of specifying specific strategic choices or policy options, thus leaving ample room for possible disagreements or cleavages over strategy or policy.

Second, communist ideology has a dual nature: it is a genuine belief system, but it is also an instrumental device.<sup>16</sup> The inherent duality in ideology will be helpful for comprehending the rise and fall of the Sino-Soviet alliance: at the stage of alliance formation, communist ideology, as a genuine belief system, helped forge the alliance by nourishing a sense of “common fate,” reinforcing a sense of common purpose and belonging, and shaping a socialist bloc identity; when China and the Soviet Union split, the instrumentality of ideology would manifest itself, driving both sides to engage in fervent ideological polemics.

Lüthi has made the convincing case that Mao’s use of ideology had “both instrumental and genuine characteristics” (p. 79). Though not explicitly, Lüthi suggests that Mao used ideology instrumentally in two ways. On the international level, Mao endeavored to rally the perceived emergence of leftist forces in the international communist movement and establish himself as holding the key to correct interpretation of true Marxism-Leninism, with an aim at bolstering his legitimacy as the leader of the international communist movement. In the domestic realm, Mao masterfully used ideology to consolidate his power position and push his political agenda (see especially Chapter 7).

As Lüthi admits, Chinese leaders and, for that matter, Soviet leaders as well, were genuine believers in Marxism-Leninism, and “there is no evidence that they were pure cynics who used ideological claims in a deceitful manner to achieve goals contrary to larger Marxist-

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<sup>15</sup> For the argument that ‘norm’ or ‘identity’ might be used in an instrumental fashion by political actors, see Paul Kowert and Jeffrey Legro, “Norms, Identity, and Their Limits: A Theoretical Reprise,” in Peter J. Katzenstein, ed., *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), pp. 451-497.

<sup>16</sup> The instrumentality of ideology discussed in Lüthi’s book and here partly parallels one of the three functions of ideology Tsuyoshi Hasegawa outlines, as Hasegawa writes that ideology can be “used to justify actions.” See review by Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, *H-Diplo Roundtable Reviews*, Vol. IX, No. 10, 2008, pp. 11-12.

Leninist postulates,” even though Beijing and Moscow contended over the true meaning of Marxism-Leninism (p. 347). Then, the real puzzle of the Sino-Soviet split would be: how are their ideological disputes to be understood, given that both Soviet and Chinese leaders were genuine believers in Marxism-Leninism? Is there anything genuine in their contention over the true meaning of Marxism-Leninism, or were both sides just doing it instrumentally to promote their own political agendas?

Here the third characteristic of communist ideology comes in. For believers, Marxism-Leninism is a universally valid truth and the faith in communist ideology is absolute. Any compromise with or revisionism of the ideology is anathema to communist faith. And because Marxism-Leninism is built on a moralistic interpretation of history that finds a moral progression in human history, and that sees the proletariat as representing a moral advance over the bourgeois class and the associated capitalist form of production,<sup>17</sup> any revisionism of Marxism-Leninism would be morally condemned. Consequently, ideological differences could easily be entangled with moral judgment. This is partly why so many of the Sino-Soviet polemics were carried out in moral tone.

Apparently, these characteristics of communist ideology are closely linked and often jointly at work to yield particular political outcomes. For instance, it is the ambiguity in communist ideology that makes the instrumental use of ideology by political leaders *more* possible. And in addition to the instrumental use of ideology, the absoluteness and exclusiveness of communist ideology would help turn academic disagreement over the true meaning of Marxism-Leninism into a “zero-sum” game.

### 3. Ideology and Power

Besides the three characteristics of communist ideology, we also need to consider the factor of power to fully understand the dynamics of the Sino-Soviet split. As soon as we add power to the equation, it will interact with ideology in particular ways. For instance, the absoluteness of ideology is more pronounced when ideology is entangled with power and when ideology is instrumental to the game of power. On the other hand, the ambiguity and elusiveness in communist ideology provide the space needed for power to come in.

If their ideological disputes were *purely* ideological, then neither Beijing nor Moscow should have allowed their differences to spiral and eventually ruin their party and state relations. Rather, they should have resolved their academic disagreements over the interpretation of Marxism-Leninism through “comradely and equal consultation and discussion”—indeed, once a CCP guideline.<sup>18</sup> Contemporary American policy makers were puzzled at the Sino-Soviet split and even, at times, doubtful of its authenticity precisely

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<sup>17</sup> John Garver, *Foreign Relations of the People's Republic of China* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1993), p. 3.

<sup>18</sup> See The State Council Foreign Affairs Office, “Guanyu dui waibin jinxing xuanchuan de jidian yijian” (Several Opinions Concerning the Propaganda Work on Foreign Guests), 24 April, 1962, the Beijing Municipal Archives, *Quanzong hao*: 102, *Anjuan hao*: 208, Beijing, p. 4.

because a split seemed to be neither in Beijing's strategic and security interests, nor in Moscow's.<sup>19</sup>

Apparently, the problem is that the dominance over, if not the monopoly of, the ideological discourse is closely linked to the legitimatization, arrangement, and control of power. Using ideology instrumentally, both Beijing and Moscow insisted that its views represented the orthodox Marxism-Leninism.

Consider the Sino-Soviet polemics, for example. Although the polemics were, on the surface, disputes over questions such as Stalin, peaceful co-existence, peaceful transition, and war and imperialism, behind these ideological quarrels was a contention for leadership of the international communist movement. The monopoly of Marxist discourse would enhance the legitimacy in leading the socialist camp. This is partly why Mao decided to launch polemics with the CPSU over the basic theoretical questions of revolution and war.

Once the ideological polemics began, because of the absoluteness and exclusiveness of ideology, both China and the Soviet Union tried to prove that their respective views were the *only* correct Marxist and Leninist views, rendering the polemics characteristic of a "zero-sum" game. For Moscow, the policy of peaceful coexistence "is the *only* correct policy with vitality," and China's repeated cliché of imperialist aggressiveness was nothing but dogmatism.<sup>20</sup> For Beijing, however, it perceived a revisionist Moscow that had "lost its guts because of imperialism's 'nuclear blackmail'" and that was "afraid of war, afraid of revolution, and determined to implement the general line of 'peaceful coexistence,' dreaming of having equal shares of power with American imperialism."<sup>21</sup> Confronted with the aggressive offense on the ideological front by the CCP, the CPSU was in fact cognizant of the implications of Beijing's ideological challenges. Presidium member Frol Kozlov, when briefing the CPSU Central Committee about the Bucharest conference, stated that "it can be seen that the Chinese comrades intend to be the tutor and instructor of the international communist movement, and attempt to prove that the Chinese views are the *only* correct Marxist-Leninist views."<sup>22</sup>

When the instrumentality of ideology asserted itself in Sino-Soviet relations, then, the logic of power politics prevailed over and dominated the bilateral relationship. That is perhaps why one important contemporary observer of the Sino-Soviet split believed that the disputes were not about ideology, but power. During his conversation with visiting U.S.

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<sup>19</sup> NIE 100-3-60, "Sino-Soviet Relations," 9 August 1960, in John K. Allen et al. eds., *Tracking the Dragon: National Intelligence Estimates on China during the Era of Mao, 1948-1976* (Washington, D.C.: Central Intelligence Agency, 2004).

<sup>20</sup> Quoted in Shen Zhihua ed., *Zhongsu guanxi shigang, 1917-1991 (A Historical Survey of Sino-Soviet Relations, 1917-1991)* (Beijing: Xinhua chubanshe, 2007), p. 264.

<sup>21</sup> The State Council Foreign Affairs Office, "Diliuci quanguo waishi gongzuo huiyi chuanda yaodian" (The Transmitted Key Points of the Sixth National Foreign Affairs Working Meeting), 12 December, 1962, JPA, *Quanzong hao*: 3124 long, *Quanzong mincheng*: Provincial Foreign Affairs Office, *Juanhao*: 145.

<sup>22</sup> Kozlov's report to the CPSU Central Committee concerning the Bucharest Conference, 13 July 1960, in Shen Zhihua ed., *Zhongsu guanxi: Eguo dang'an fuyinjian huibian (Sino-Soviet Relations: Collections of Copies of Russian Archives)* (Shanghai: Center for Cold War International History Studies at East China Normal University, 2004), vol. 13, pp. 3346-3417.

President Richard Nixon in August 1969, Romanian leader Nicolae Ceausescu observed that “the problem of ideology is not crucial in the U.S.S.R.-China dispute.” One might very well lose sight of the bigger picture since the Sino-Soviet disputes were “clouded by violent polemics” and “differences in ideology.” Ceausescu was convinced that “the real issue is national—the Soviet reluctance to concede China its proper place in international affairs.” The problem was, Ceausescu added, that the Chinese would not “play a second-class role.” Sooner or later, the Soviets would have to “come to understand [the] reality.”<sup>23</sup> Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping, one of the central players in the Sino-Soviet split, would agree with Ceausescu, but only with the benefit of hindsight. Commenting on the Sino-Soviet split in his meeting with visiting Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev two decades later in May 1989, Deng said: “The problems do not lie in ideological differences”; rather, the problem was that “the Soviet Union did not accord China an appropriate position in the world (*Sulian meiyou baizheng zhongguo zai shijie shang de weizhi*).”<sup>24</sup>

#### 4. Self-righteousness and Power: China’s Contention for the Leadership in the International Communist Movement

Likening the Sino-Soviet split to a “nasty divorce,” Lüthi figuratively suggests in the opening pages of his book that the split “left bad memories and produced myths of innocence on both sides” (p. 1). Yet, as the narratives unfold, the picture of “myths of innocence on both sides” seems to fade away quickly and the story increasingly becomes a drama of China’s unreasonableness. After reading the last pages, a jury might take away from the author’s testimony the impression that Beijing was clearly the party to blame for the “nasty divorce.”

If one reads the Chinese primary documents concerning Sino-Soviet relations, however, one might be struck by a very strong sense of self-righteousness in the Chinese discourse. Where did China’s sense of self-righteousness come from? To risk oversimplification, we might trace it to two sources: the moralist thinking rooted in Chinese political culture and the so-called victim mentality.<sup>25</sup> Confucianism envisioned that a virtuous emperor, the Son of Heaven, presides over “all under the heaven” (*tianxia*), his virtues radiating across *tianxia* and substantiating the imperial rule. Thus Confucianism postulated a direct link between the virtue of a ruler and his claim to power. Similarly, China’s traditional moralist thinking was *reinforced* by Marxism. Very much like Confucianism, Marxism postulated a direct link between moral superiority and a legitimate claim to power.<sup>26</sup> China’s victim mentality originated from the historical memory of hundred-year of invasion and oppression by imperialist powers. Ingrained in the national psyche, China’s victim

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<sup>23</sup> Memorandum of Conversation (MemCon) by Ceausescu and Nixon, 2 August, 1969, National Archives, Nixon Project, National Security Council File, President/HAK MemCons, Box 1023, Folder 6: [MemCon-President Nixon and President Ceausescu, 2-3 August, 1969], College Park, Maryland, the United States.

<sup>24</sup> Quoted in Shen Zhihua ed., *Zhongsu guanxi shigang*, pp. 450-451.

<sup>25</sup> For a discussion of the moralist thinking in Chinese political culture, see Wang Jisi, “International Relations Theory and the Study of Chinese Foreign Policy: A Chinese Perspective,” in Thomas W. Robinson and David Shambaugh, eds., *Chinese Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), pp. 524-554.

<sup>26</sup> Garver, *Foreign Relations of the People’s Republic of China*, p. 3.

mentality rendered self-righteousness particularly prominent in China's interactions with foreign nations. In any event, such a sense of self-righteousness underscores the need to understand China's perspectives.<sup>27</sup>

If anything, Lüthi's narrative portrays Chinese leaders as being dogmatic, stubborn, and unreasonable. Chinese evidence, however, reveals China's self-image as being a besieged hero battling for justice, morality, and, above all, revolutionary ideals. China's political tradition of acclamation of morality, combined with the moralistic thinking inherent in communist ideology, would assign the Chinese a strong predilection for the fulfillment of self-righteousness. In a sense, self-righteousness becomes self-reinforcing and self-fulfilling. Therefore, in the eyes of the Chinese, the Sino-Soviet disputes stemmed from the CPSU's "degeneration into the bourgeois class" which began with the Twentieth Party Congress of the CPSU, with its touted revisionist theory of *sanhe liangquan* (three peaces and two alls: peaceful co-existence, peaceful competition, and peaceful transition; all-people country and all-people party) which rejected class struggle and opposed the dictatorship of proletariat. From Beijing's perspective, the two treatises on the historical experiences of the dictatorship of the proletariat it published in the wake of Moscow's de-Stalinization helped "clarify the confusion in thoughts" among the "Marxist forces around the world"; and their intention in doing so was nothing more than to help the Soviet revisionists to "walk the righteous road (*zoushang zhengdao*)."<sup>28</sup>

Moreover, psychological dynamics such as misperception were involved. For instance, there was the filtering and reprocessing of information and the reinvention of messages in a way desired by the Chinese, leading to a self-image that conformed to their psychological need for self-righteousness. Sporadic incidents of individual Soviet citizens expressing dissatisfaction at Moscow's policies, both domestic and foreign, would be spotted and quickly reported back to Beijing, where it was used to reinforce Chinese leadership's conviction that China's struggle against revisionism was winning over the hearts and minds of the Soviet people. An appreciation of such psychological dynamics might help us better to understand aspects of China's otherwise seemingly bizarre behavior. For instance, the CCP Central Committee stated proudly in a report concerning the July 1963 Sino-Soviet party talks in Moscow that after China's open letter was published in *Pravda* alongside the Soviet one, copies of the Soviet newspaper "sold out immediately" and "many [Soviet] people...spoke loudly in buses," offering their endorsement of China's views.<sup>29</sup>

An empathetic historian would perhaps admit that both Moscow's and Beijing's ideological viewpoints were "reasonable," given their respective degree of socialization and their

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<sup>27</sup> Jian Chen emphasizes the importance of comprehending China's perspective. See Jian Chen, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, p. 282.

<sup>28</sup> "Liu Ningyi tongzhi: Guanyu fanxiu douzheng wenti de baogao (jilu gao)" (Comrade Liu Ningyi: The Report on the Struggle against Revisionism (The Recorded Copy)), 10 April 1964, JPA, *Quanzong hao*: 3124 long, *Quanzong mincheng*: Provincial Foreign Affairs Office, *Juan hao*: 212.

<sup>29</sup> Item No. 1: The Center, "Muqian guoji xingshi wenti" (The Issues regarding Current International Situation), September 1963, JPA, *Quanzong hao*: 3124 long, *Quanzong mincheng*: Provincial Foreign Affairs Office, *Juanhao*: 177.

relative power position in the international system.<sup>30</sup> On the one hand, the Soviet Union had largely been socialized into the system. With the ebbing of ideological passions and the increasingly felt pressure of the international system, the Soviet definition and perception of national interests as well as its strategic preferences had undergone gradual but decisive changes. The Soviet Union had been gradually transformed from a radical “revolutionary state” or “revisionist state” that aimed at changing and even overthrowing the existing international system to a “status quo state” that preferred to maintain the existing international order. By contrast, China, barely socialized into the international system and in fact virtually excluded from the system, was still a “revolutionary state” that had a strong impulse to challenge and topple the existing international power structure.

Thus Chen Yi was on point when he observed in late 1962 that the emergence of Khrushchevian revisionism was an “international phenomenon” and was not entirely a problem of Khrushchev’s “individual character,” but that it emerged because Moscow had been “frightened by the atomic threat” and had “illusions about the temporary prosperity in the U.S., Britain, and France since World War II.”<sup>31</sup> From Beijing’s perspective, it saw the “social base” of the burgeoning Khrushchevian revisionism as lying in the rise of a “high-pay stratum and rich peasants” in Soviet society.<sup>32</sup> In this sense, Beijing’s defining of Khrushchevian revisionism was *not* altogether instrumental, and it was indeed derived from Beijing’s genuine ideological belief. The problem is, of course, that it is oftentimes difficult to disentangle empirically the two elements—instrumentality and genuineness—of ideology, especially when the discourse of the Khrushchevian revisionist group as an imaginary enemy was closely intertwined with the logic and need of Chinese domestic political development in the years leading up to the tumultuous Cultural Revolution.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, the dual nature of the communist ideology—instrumentality and genuineness—might be at work simultaneously, especially when they are entangled with power and/or domestic politics, rendering a careful diagnosis which would specify the conditionality of the dual elements of ideology all the more necessary.

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<sup>30</sup> For a discussion of socialization in international relations, see Alastair Iain Johnston, “Socialization in International Relations: The ASEAN Way and International Relations Theory,” in G. John Ikenberry and Michael Mastanduno, eds., *International Relations Theory and the Asia-Pacific* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), pp. 107-162.

<sup>31</sup> Item No. 6: The State Council Foreign Affairs Office, “Chen Yi fuzhongli zai difang waishi huiyi jieshu qian de jianghua yaodian (jilu gao)” (The Main Points of Vice Premier Chen Yi’s Talk Given before the Conclusion of the Regional Foreign Affairs Meeting (Recorded Copy), 28 November 1962, JPA, *Quanzong hao*: 3124, *Quanzong mincheng*: Provincial Foreign Affairs Office, *Juanhao*: 145.

<sup>32</sup> “Liu Ningyi tongzhi: Guanyu fanxiu douzheng wenti de baogao (jilu gao)”, 10 April 1964, JPA, *Quanzong hao*: 3124 long, *Quanzong mincheng*: Provincial Foreign Affairs Office, *Juan hao*: 212.

<sup>33</sup> This might relate to another critique of Lüthi that he sometimes seems to be vacillating between the ideology argument and the domestic politics argument (pp. 243-244). Without recognizing the different boundaries of ideology and domestic politics, and without identifying the dynamics of interactions between the two, Lüthi occasionally confuses the different logics of ideology and domestic politics, leaving the readers wonder whether his argument is about ideology, domestic politics, or both. However, as our analysis here suggests, the three variables—ideology, power, and domestic politics—could interact in a complex but not nonmeaningful way. Deciphering the dynamics of interactions among ideology, power, and domestic politics will be important for us to understand better the Sino-Soviet split.

Clearly, from China's perspective, it was increasingly convinced that the Soviet leadership had degenerated into morally condemnable revisionism, lost the spiritual purity of revolution, betrayed the interests of revolutionary forces, and surrendered to imperialist powers. Therefore, China's struggle with Khrushchevian revisionism sought to counter the influence of the corrupt revisionism, restore the lost revolutionary spirit, and champion the revolutionary cause. China's framing of the Sino-Soviet split in a discursively moralistic tone would enhance the legitimacy of China's claim to leadership of the international communist movement. But like the case of duality in the communist ideology, it is always difficult to discern empirically whether the moralistic framing of the split was instrumental or genuine.

To be fair, China's leftist discourse was not in and of itself illogical or deceitful. In fact, China's views certainly had resonance among the socialist camp, and a handful of leftist communist parties were either sympathetic toward or supportive of Beijing's positions.<sup>34</sup> Ideological concord was surely not the sole factor. Beijing's close ties with these leftist parties were undergirded and reinforced by generous military and economic aids (for example, to North Vietnam, North Korea, Albania, and Indonesia) and, in many cases, were determined by the need of domestic political struggle, as was the case for Albania (p. 202). In any event, perceived ideological concord helped rationalize and justify Chinese behavior and enhanced the Chinese's sense of self-righteousness.

However, new Chinese evidence shows that the Chinese, at least up until early 1961, placed hopes on Khrushchev and repeatedly intended to repair their relationship with the Soviets. It was not until the Twenty-Second Congress of the CPSU in October 1961 that Mao and his colleagues concluded that Khrushchev had become a full-fledged revisionist. Successive events in 1962 convinced Chinese leaders that they could no longer trust Khrushchev, evidenced by the perceived breach of China's strategic and security interests by the Soviets in the Yili-Tacheng Incident and in the Sino-Indian border conflict.<sup>35</sup>

By late 1962, Beijing increasingly saw the disputes between China and the Soviet Union as a struggle between "Marxism vs. anti-Marxism and revisionism." Stressing that "it should be sufficiently acknowledged that the nature of the relationship between the two countries has changed," the Chinese leadership, by the end of 1962, had come to the consensus that "our struggle against revisionism is *essentially the issue of contention for leadership between Marxism-Leninism and revisionism*"; and "*it is duty-bound not to refuse to be the head of the leftist forces (yibu rongci, zuo zuopai de touzi)*."<sup>36</sup> Instrumentally speaking, defining Khrushchev as a morally condemnable revisionist would give Beijing the moral high ground, thus augmenting the legitimacy of its claim to power in the international communist movement. Meanwhile, Beijing's defining Khrushchev as a full-fledged revisionist who could no longer be "saved" or "pulled over" was also sustained by its genuine ideological belief, thus convincing Chinese leaders that China bear a compelling

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<sup>34</sup> Shen, ed., *Zhongsu guanxi shigang*, p. 330.

<sup>35</sup> Wang, "The Quarrelling Brothers," pp. 68-70.

<sup>36</sup> "Liu Ningyi tongzhi: Guanyu fanxiu douzheng wenti de baogao (jilu gao)", 10 April 1964, JPA, *Quanzong hao*: 3124 long, *Quanzong mincheng*: Provincial Foreign Affairs Office, *Juan hao*: 212.

moral obligation in contending for the leadership in the international communist movement.

It is worth noting that when Beijing formulated the strategy of openly “contend[ing] with revisionism for the leadership in the international struggle,” it clearly saw the rise of leftist forces in the international communist movement.<sup>37</sup> Besides the twelve leftist communist parties it identified as allies (Albania, North Korea, North Vietnam, Japan, Burma, Thailand, Malaya, New Zealand, Laos, Cambodia, Philippines, and Indonesia), Beijing also set eyes on the growth of leftist forces in Latin America and Western Europe. Beijing was even more heartened to observe that the leftist forces were “unprecedentedly active” in Eastern Europe. From Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia to Poland, Beijing saw that their views were welcomed and Chinese “pamphlets” were in high demand.<sup>38</sup> In this sense, Lüthi’s portrait of China as being completely isolated within the international communist movement might be different from what China perceived and believed. For instance, Lüthi provides a dramatic narrative of how the Chinese were isolated at the five European party congresses from early 1962 to late January 1963. When one Chinese delegate’s speech assailed Tito, and by extension, Moscow, it was greeted with denunciation by “almost all delegates of the Italian party congress.” Another Chinese delegate’s speech attacking Soviet foreign policy in Prague was met with “banging, trampling, hushing, and shouting” from the floor (pp. 228-231). New Chinese evidence, however, offers a different version of the story. Using newly declassified regional archives, Shen Zihua and a few other prominent Chinese historians reveal that among the 30 or so foreign delegations attending the Italian party congress, nearly half of them did not take an anti-China stance and that the Chinese delegate Ambassador Zhao Yimin’s speech was greeted by “enthusiastic applause.” Moreover, during the Bulgarian, Hungarian, and Czechoslovakian party congresses, several parties publicly supported China’s views, and some leftist parties, in defiance of Soviet pressure, contacted CCP delegates, attended events hosted by the Chinese embassies, or offered sympathy toward China during informal “lounge discussion.”<sup>39</sup> How the apparent discrepancies in historical evidence are to be reconciled is a matter of scholarly research and debate. The existence of a Chinese version of the story, however, not only underlines the ambiguities of history, but also speaks to the importance of understanding the Chinese perspective. Last but not least, from the Chinese point of view, the “banging, trampling, hushing, and shouting” they received reinforced the Chinese sense of being victimized and vindicated their sense of self-righteousness in the struggle against revisionism, as Chinese leaders observed in internal assessments that the revisionists were “going crazy” with their anti-China activities which “came to a climax” (*dengfeng zaoji*) at the European party congresses.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Item No. 2 “Guowuyuan waiban: diliuci quanguo waishi huiyi chuanda yaodian” (The Main Points Transmitted by the Sixth National Foreign Affairs Meeting), 17 December 1962, *Quanzong hao*: 3124 long, *Quanzong mincheng*: Provincial Foreign Affairs Office, *Juanhao*: 145.

<sup>38</sup> Item No. 1: The Center, “Muqian guoji xingshi wenti,” September 1963, JPA, *Quanzong hao*: 3124 long, *Quanzong mincheng*: Provincial Affairs Office, *Juanhao*: 177.

<sup>39</sup> Shen ed., *Zhongguo guanxi shigang*, p. 333.

<sup>40</sup> “Liu Ningyi tongzhi: Guanyu fanxiu douzheng wenti de baogao (jilu gao)”, 10 April 1964, JPA, *Quanzong hao*: 3124 long, *Quanzong mincheng*: Provincial Foreign Affairs Office, *Juanhao*: 212.

Chen Yi once noted in November 1962, a time when a split had become increasingly unequivocal and when Beijing was beginning to openly contend for the leadership of the international communist movement, that “it would be surely great should, after the death of Stalin, China and the Soviet Union be united in one accord and have him [the Soviet Union] as the head to deal with imperialism through concerted cooperation; that would have been the most ideal. The reality, however, was that Khrushchevian revisionism had arisen.” Chen then implied that China bore a moral responsibility in the struggle against revisionism, “[We] cannot be pessimistic. We should change such a reality.”<sup>41</sup> When a CCP Central Committee report quoted many Poles as telling Chinese diplomats that “you’ve got many friends; the real hope of world revolution lies in China,” the Chinese could not but feel convinced that the center of world revolution had “shifted from Moscow to Beijing.”<sup>42</sup> Therefore, China’s contention for leadership of the communist movement might be better understood through a combination of factors—a faith in the correctness and attraction of its own proclaimed orthodox communist ideology, a perceived (or misperceived) correlation of forces tilting in favor of Beijing, an optimistic (though misguided) assessment of its own strength, as well as a moral fulfillment of a sense of self-righteousness.

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<sup>41</sup> Item No. 6: The State Council Foreign Affairs Office, “Chen Yi fuzhongli zai difang waishi huiyi jieshu qian de jianghua yaodian (jilu gao)”, 28 November 1962, JPA, *Quanzong hao*: 3124, *Quanzong mincheng*: Provincial Foreign Affairs Office, *Juanhao*: 145.

<sup>42</sup> Item No. 1: The Center, “Muqian guoji xingshi wenti,” September 1963, JPA, *Quanzong hao*: 3124 long, *Quanzong mincheng*: Provincial Foreign Affairs Office, *Juanhao*: 177; Shen ed., *Zhongsu guanxi shigang*, pp. 330-331.

**Author's Response by Lorenz M. Lüthi**

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I want to thank Vojtech Mastny, Michael Sheng, Sergey Radchenko, Dong Wang, Douglas Selvage, and Qiang Zhai for their warm praise and the effort they took in reviewing my book in a fair and comprehensive manner. I am also grateful to Xia Yafeng for organizing this roundtable. The reviewers raise stimulating questions and perceptive criticisms which I fear I will not be able to respond to completely. But I am particularly satisfied with the heated discussion my book has caused; I secretly always wished this would happen.

I too remember my first meeting with Sergey Radchenko in Moscow in the late winter of 2002. That I was dressed well, I don't recall. But this is entirely possible since my roommate, a University of Chicago Ph.D. student from Germany, was convinced that smart dress worked well in the Russian archives. I chickened out of ice-skating since I feared that Sergey Radchenko would just run circles around me on the Dinamo rink. Russians are known to be graceful ice skaters; the Swiss are more into racing down steep hills on skis. His recollections confirm a suspicion I have entertained ever since that winter: that only persistence could convince the Russian archivists to give me the documents I really wanted to see. However, what worried me most when I met Sergey Radchenko for the first time was that somebody was writing my dissertation. Having just finished reading his great book on Sino-Soviet relations, which will be published by Stanford in late 2008, I am happy to say that our books are different in focus, argument, interpretation, and style.

Let me begin with the reiteration that my book is, primarily, an exploration of why the Sino-Soviet alliance collapsed so suddenly and on such bitter terms. I identify disagreements over economic development, de-Stalinization, and the proper approach for dealing with imperialism as primary reasons for the split. I also argue that the split became a function of a domestic leadership struggle in China following the collapse of the Great Leap Forward. My book is not primarily about the role of ideology in international relations, although it clearly touches on this problem. I also avoid using the term "blame," naming a "culprit," or assigning "guilt" for the Sino-Soviet Split, because I don't believe that these are meaningful analytical categories.

My response to the six reviews will first address some of the larger issues raised by the reviewers and then focus on individual criticisms of particular chapters. In the first category are questions about the rationality of the Chinese leaders, the role of ideology, the relationship of nationalism and communism, the self-righteousness of the Chinese leadership, and the nature of alliances between authoritarian states. In the second fall questions related to my interpretation of Mao's rejection of Bureaucratic Stalinism (chapter 1), peaceful coexistence (chapter 3), the Paris Summit (chapter 5), the timing of the collapse of the Sino-Soviet alliance (chapters 8-10), and the American factor in the split (chapter 8).

I did not expect that my book would result in two conflicting reviews with regard to my interpretation of the rationality of the Chinese leaders. This is probably related to my

emphasis on ideology and domestic politics and my oblique treatment of questions of rationality. In Michael Sheng's reading, I join a long succession of historians who have argued that Mao was a rational actor but suggests that more research on "the irrational dimension of the charismatic leadership" is necessary. Wang Dong, in comparison, asserts that the Mao I describe is "irrational or foolish." Throughout the manuscript, I hardly use terms such as "rational," "irrational," or "foolish." I do call the economic policies of the High Tide and the Great Leap Forward "foolish" (347) and I do suggest, though only indirectly, that they were irrational (125, 205). I also label Mao's policy of self-isolation and hostility towards the outside world in the 1960s "a folly" (5). I don't call the Chinese leaders, or their Soviet counterparts, irrational or foolish, although I believe that the Chairman suffered from flights of megalomania (349, 352) starting in the early 1960s.

In order to bring clarity to this issue, I suggest separating rational behavior (logical thinking and the ability to calculate) from rational policies (sensible plans of action) and from the political exploitation of irrational fears and desires (the politics of fear). As to the first, there is no doubt in my mind that Mao was a supreme tactician who managed to assess situations and humans accurately. This enabled him to maneuver through complex political circumstances with the result that he often was a step or two ahead of his rivals. In his four-decade-long political career as the supreme leader of the Chinese Communists, he repeatedly succeeded in escaping dicey political situations. It is hard to believe that this was the result of a string of irrational decisions that somehow turned out to be suitable in every circumstance and thus guaranteed his political survival. This all suggests that he was able to think through problems logically and to calculate rationally. Nevertheless, this leaves the possibility that his thinking was not always rational. Indeed, there are some indications that he harbored irrational fears about his own leadership position, or, as Michael Sheng writes, that the idea that his fellow leaders in the early 1960s were out there to get him "occurred first and foremost in Mao's head." Also his implicit claim that he was the center of world revolution had clear megalomaniacal aspects.

As to the second, rational behavior does not save any leader from embarking on irrational policies. Most historians probably agree that the economic policies promoted during Great Leap Forward were foolish. For example, they proceeded from irrational assumptions about human behavior, such as the role of mass enthusiasm, and sheer ignorance about agriculture, such as the idea of close planting. Yet, I would not agree with Michael Sheng that Mao had no strategic plan during the Great Leap Forward. In fact, he clearly stated that the Great Leap Forward would enable China to enter communism before the Soviet Union. He simply lacked detailed ideas about how this was supposed to happen. How could he have known the path to communism, given that no country had ever undertaken this, and since the classical Marxist-Leninist texts were essentially silent on how to achieve it? Mao's lack of detailed ideas was also related to his preference of keeping options open for the sake of tactical flexibility and of improvisation as events unfolded.

Finally, I agree with Michael Sheng that we need to examine further "the irrational dimension of the charismatic relationship between the leader and followers." Mao often appealed to the dark fears and burning desires of the Chinese people who, at the same time, were kept in a state of ignorance about the outside world by stultifying propaganda and

media reports devoid of any meaningful content. At the beginning of the Great Leap Forward and of the Cultural Revolution, he turned out to be a master at manipulating the anxieties and yearnings of the Chinese people when he and his supporters created an atmosphere of a China encircled by hostile powers. Yet, this suggests a leader who uses rational calculation to exploit irrationality—a phenomenon we usually call the politics of fear. While I agree with Michael Sheng on this issue, it is not the focus of my book.

I completely concur with Wang Dong's assertion that Mao and his fellow leaders were rationally assessing Sino-Soviet relations from 1959 to 1962. I also see the Chairman's decision to give up on the Sino-Soviet alliance in late 1959 as a rational judgment, simply because he coldly calculated that the partnership had run its course regarding military deterrence, technology transfers, and economic support provided by the Soviet Union since 1950. Yet, we should not confuse irrational behavior with radical policies, as Wang Dong's criticism implies, and I don't suggest that all Chinese leaders were as radical as Mao turned out to be in the 1960s. In fact, I write that Zhou Enlai, Liu Shaoqi, and Deng Xiaoping were "comparatively moderate leaders who were capable of implementing reasonable policies" (351), and I bring up numerous examples throughout the book to corroborate this point (53, 85, 168, 187, 196-197, 204, 213).

I always imagined that reviewers would take issue with my emphasis on ideology. Wang Dong correctly points out that there is nothing inherently irrational in the behavior of ideological states "to promote their own ideologies ... abroad." I also concur that the export of communism—or its Chinese variation after the Sino-Soviet split—may have been a sound strategy for increasing security and power in the international system, although it did lead to conflict with the United States on the Korean peninsula. I diverge from Wang Dong's assessment in my conviction that the radical nature of Chinese foreign policy was not sensible, given that the People's Republic of China (PRC) often lacked the resources to carry it out. Zhou Enlai's explanation for the rationale behind China's worldwide foreign aid commitment in May 15, 1965, which Wang Dong cites, made rhetorical sense against the background of the escalating Vietnam War, but came a week after Zhou had decided to cut overall foreign aid in light of China's economic problems (204-205). The expansion of world revolution on the basis of foreign aid primarily was a fantasy, as was Mao's call late that fall to open up an anti-American battlefront in all of South East Asia (330).

Sergey Radchenko asserts, in my view, accurately, that differences between ideology as a genuine belief system and as an instrumental tool are "impossible to pin down." Even if we had access to all the existing documents, I fear that we would not be able to assess this issue satisfactorily. While there are numerous points in the book where I leave it up to the readers to come to their own judgments—my decision to err "on the side of ambiguity," in Radchenko's words—there are also some hard cases for identifying one over the other that strongly support my argument of this duality. There is no doubt in my mind that the debates on economic development in 1955 were highly influenced by genuine ideological thinking, because non-Communist options did not cross the minds of the Chinese leadership. Conversely, Mao's decision to smear his external and internal rivals in the run-up to the Cultural Revolution clearly points to his instrumental use of ideology.

The reasons why Sergey Radchenko and I disagree in our assessments of the level of ideological cynicism in Mao's behavior probably rest in our different approaches to exploring Sino-Soviet relations in the 1950s. While we basically agree that Mao acted cynically in the years leading up to the Cultural Revolution, Sergey Radchenko, given his book's focus on 1962 to 1967, seeks to explore the antecedents of Mao's behavior and his quest for leadership of the international communist movement. Considering the Chairman's "desire to supersede Khrushchev," he thus sees the role of ideology in the mid-1950s in contextual rather than causal terms. In contrast, my focus is on how Sino-Soviet ideological affinity stemming from the late 1940s and early 1950s turned into ideological hostility over the course of a decade or so. I am not convinced that Mao desired to supersede Khrushchev by the mid-1950s, simply because of the small quantity and low quality of the little contemporaneous Chinese evidence we have to support this interpretation. As is often the case with Chinese historiography and memoir literature, much has entered the record retroactively. In my view, Mao's preoccupations in 1956 and 1957 were about restoring his pre-eminent position internally and about seeking equality among all socialist states within the communist world. Only some years later would they be about ideological superiority and leadership of the international proletarian enterprise.

While we both find a remarkable flexibility in Mao's foreign policy in the 1960s (with regard to Albania and Vietnam, for example), we seem to disagree on whether Mao's fellow leaders followed the Chairman's quest for equality in the communist world in the years between the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution. Whereas I see this quest as a function of Mao's own domestic policy needs, Sergey Radchenko suggests that his fellow leaders shared Mao's resentment about the "relationship of perpetual inequality" with the Soviet Union, particularly in the wake of the withdrawal of the Soviet advisers in 1960 and the Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty three years later. Thus, he suggests, they subscribed to Mao's hard-line policy towards the Soviet revisionists. Although their public pronouncements tend to buttress this interpretation, it might be more useful to assess their actions in the early 1960s, rather than their words. Given our limited evidence, Liu comes across as the most conciliatory because he understood the enormous role the Soviet Union could play both in China's economic construction and within the communist world at large. Zhou and Deng displayed policy pragmatism at home regarding economic reconstruction, and Foreign Minister Chen Yi, with Zhou's approval, pursued a cautious economic opening up to the outside world. While they were all probably disappointed with Soviet behavior towards China, my impression is that they were less concerned about abstract ideas of equality within the sagging Sino-Soviet alliance than Mao was. In fact, they had nothing to gain politically—neither at home nor abroad—by a further deterioration of Sino-Soviet relations, but much to lose in terms of restoring China's economic health. Only Mao hoped to gain personally from the split: leadership of the Communist world abroad and, more importantly, through it, a restoration of his political supremacy at home.

Douglas Selvage's reference to Chen Jian's notion of "revolutionary nationalism" brings up a point I wrestled with during my research and the composition of the book. Of course, the Chinese Communists constructed a victim mentality with the purpose of mobilizing the Chinese population to embrace their revolutionary programs. Yet, this essentially points to its instrumental use, not to a preexisting body of national myths. Even if there was a long-

standing concept of China's centrality to the world, it had always been an intellectual construct that was discussed within the educated class—a very small segment of the overall Chinese society—before 1949. Douglas Selvage has a point in arguing that Chen Jian's interpretation better explains mass mobilization in China, but this is not a primary focus of my book. As my subsequent comments suggest, nationalism was just one of many arrows in China's quiver of anti-Soviet propaganda.

Selvage's reference points to the need to clarify the relationship between nationalism and communism in different parts of the socialist camp. The national communism that emerged in East Europe (most notably in Romania, Albania, and Poland) during the Cold War could build on older versions of a national myth that had been constructed by intellectuals in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and that had been instilled in the population at large through a rudimentary primary school system erected for precisely that purpose (mass nationalism). Soviet-style communism, with its emphasis on a proletarian internationalism that was imposed on East European countries in the mid-1940s, fundamentally went against these older versions of nationalism. Over the course of the early Cold War, East European leaders tried to reconcile communism with nationalism—a task greatly simplified by Khrushchev's liberalization.

The story is different in China, and probably also in other East Asian nations that joined the socialist camp in the early Cold War (most notably, Vietnam). Chinese communism emerged in a country whose population generally had not enjoyed wide-spread, rudimentary schooling under the old regime (although Chiang Kai-shek tried to instill some sort of a unifying ideology in China's relatively small, urban population in the 1930s). The new political ideology imposed by the communist experience led to mass alphabetization, which made possible for the first time the dissemination of a national myth outside of the educated elites or cities, where most Chinese lived. Communism in China did not need to be reconciled with a preexisting mass nationalism; it actually created one for its own purposes. While East European communist countries in the 1950s and 1960s produced their own national forms of communism (national communism), the Chinese Communists, in my view, produced a communist nationalism. Thus, nationalism was a part of the communist ideology, not something separate, and the communist regime instrumentally used it for its own goals. This might also help to explain why the Chinese Communist Party enjoys such staying power in China to this very day.

Wang Dong raises the “strong sense of self-righteousness in the Chinese discourse,” which he sees as linked to the moralist thinking rooted in Chinese political culture—Confucian traditions of political behavior—and the victim mentality, addressed above. Throughout my research on Chinese foreign policy, I have always been struck by the inflated, moralistic tone and the rhetoric of principle in Chinese missives to the Soviet comrades during the late 1950s and 1960s. However, I personally have been unable to reconcile this discourse of self-righteousness with hard evidence that would link it to a particularly Confucian (and thus more generally East Asian) way of thinking. Albanian leaders used similar rhetoric once the Soviet-Albanian rift opened in 1960, while Vietnamese leaders largely abstained from this kind of rhetoric when conflict with the Soviets occurred. I do not discard the influence of Chinese traditions on the thinking of some Chinese leaders, especially in the

case of Mao, who liked to read classical texts and histories (though mostly as a supply station of concepts and ideas that fit his preconceived ideas or political needs). But many of the Chinese leaders had not enjoyed significant training in classical Chinese learning under the old regime beyond a rudimentary understanding. I see the self-righteous tone more as a part of the Chinese Communist political culture that slowly developed in the 1950s particularly as a response to increasing problems with the Sino-Soviet alliance. Given that the Chinese Communist regime turned out to be a serial violator of bilateral agreements within the alliance (as I point out in several places), its self-righteous—and increasingly arrogant—tone also rings hollow and artificial.

Vojtech Mastny concludes from reading my book that alliances between ideological dictatorships are inherently fragile. While I intuitively agree, his hypothesis nevertheless calls for further and systematic study of this topic. From a historical point of view, most alliances emerged between authoritarian regimes and tended to be short. We should not forget that, in terms of quantity, long-lasting alliances are the exception rather than the norm. While some alliances among democracies (the British-American quasi-alliance since 1815, NATO since 1949, and ANZUS since 1951, for example) have endured, this is comparatively rare. Given this standard, the duration of the Sino-Soviet alliance (10 to 15 years) was no mean feat.

Regarding alliances between authoritarian regimes, it is important to distinguish between alliances of ideologically opposite and like-minded regimes. The first—infamously exemplified by the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 1939—tend to be instrumental and short, while the second should, given the commonality of goals, be longer-lasting. Indeed, when Moscow and Beijing signed the alliance in mid-February of 1950, they shared a number of basic long-term political goals: the strengthening of socialism in China, the growth of the socialist world, victory over imperialism, and world revolution. Yet given these common goals (and the comparatively long duration of the other important socialist treaty system, the Warsaw Pact), the duration of the Sino-Soviet alliance and its bitter collapse appears to be oddly short.

Vojtech Mastny points out that alliances between like-minded dictatorships are “inherently fragile,” particularly if “ beholden to ideological preconceptions.” But this seems to be related to basic characteristics of authoritarian regimes that translate into several aspects of their policies. The lack of a separation of power, legality, and structured decision-making processes make such states prone to radical, or even irrational, policies, and resistant to necessary internal reform and adaptation to external changes. As a consequence, these regimes are less likely to survive as stable entities for a long period of time. If this is all correct, their external alliances just seem to be embodiments of their domestic political systems and cultures.

Some of the reviewers brought up more detailed criticism to which I want to turn now. Sergey Radchenko sees the High Tide and the Great Leap Forward a rejection of Soviet modernity (chapter 1). Some of his criticism is related to the earlier discussion about the cynical use of ideology for instrumental reasons and about Mao’s aim to supersede

Khrushchev. I agree that Mao rejected late Stalinist modernity in 1955 and 1958, but I still maintain that he just replaced it with an earlier version of Soviet modernity. The extent to which Mao knew about and copied Revolutionary Stalinism, or how much he independently arrived at similar conclusions, is difficult to assess without further documentary evidence. However, what is clear to me is that there were good reasons to abandon Bureaucratic Stalinism: a structural crisis in China's economy that would only worsen if not addressed, and the general unsuitability of contemporaneous Soviet economic ideas to China. Given Mao's ideological leanings, the Great Leap Forward was not necessarily a conscious rejection of Soviet modernity, but a great flight away from seemingly insolvable structural problems.

I am not convinced that I am "caught up in the terminology" about peaceful coexistence (chapter 3), as Sergey Radchenko writes. Sino-Indian peaceful coexistence (Pancha Shila) addressed the regulation of interactions between two states with different socio-economic internal structures, whereas the Soviet proposal for peaceful coexistence was about finding a framework for superpower rapprochement. While Beijing's version of peaceful coexistence, even in relation to the United States, was about the nature of bilateral relations in principle (although Mao privately asserted that the promotion of revolution in other countries could supersede Pancha Shila), Moscow's version sought to establish a *modus vivendi* between the Soviet Union and the United States. Sino-Soviet disagreements emerged over the Soviet proposal, not primarily over Pancha Shila. That does not exclude the possibility, however, that Mao used criticism about peaceful coexistence for instrumental reasons, as Sergey Radchenko suggests.

Why did Khrushchev blow the Paris Summit in 1960? Qiang Zhai suggests that I see Khrushchev's decision solely as the result of his volatile personality (chapter 5). As I have written, pressure by the Chinese comrades set the stage for the decision (165), but those who were close to Khrushchev in May 1965 (Fedor Burlatsky and Oleg Troyanovskii; see also William Taubman's Khrushchev biography for further evidence) testify that the final decision was taken on the trip to Paris while the Soviet leader was in a testy mood. Khrushchev's arguments about taking Chinese concerns seriously may have been genuine, but the problem is that they were expressed after the abrogation of the Paris Summit in a circular to the other socialist countries. Given Khrushchev's volatile character and the limited evidence we have about his decision-making in the crucial days before the summit, it is entirely possible that he acted in a fit of uncontrollable anger. Once he had blown the summit and, with that, the possibility of further pursuing peaceful coexistence with the United States, he somehow had to explain the pile of broken glass to his startled East European allies. What better strategy could he have pursued than to draw close to the Chinese comrades?

When I set out to research this book, I believed that the Sino-Soviet split had become final in the summer of 1963, as Douglas Selva suggests (chapters 8-10). I soon realized that this left some open ends in the overall story. I agree that the Sino-Soviet alliance was in dire straits after the collapse of party talks and the concurrent nuclear test ban treaty negotiations (both in Moscow), but there was still the potential for reconciliation. On the one hand, Mao "naïvely hoped" that Khrushchev's fall might lead to a resurrection of the

relationship, although this was very unlikely. However, the Chairman's final turn against his internal enemies, real or perceived, and the related need to break completely with the Soviet revisionists occurred only after Khrushchev's fall in October 1964. On the other hand, the escalation of the Second Vietnam War was the final opportunity for the Chinese leaders to cooperate with their Soviet comrades against American imperialist aggression, which was the last aspect of the alliance treaty that still remained intact. Yet, Mao's ideological rejection of pragmatic cooperation for the higher purpose of strengthening the socialist world in times of emergency turned out to be the final nail in the alliance's coffin.

In a related issue, Douglas Selvage and, indirectly, Qiang Zhai raise that there is an inherent contradiction in my argument that "U.S. policy 'only worked in the later stages of the breakup'" (chapter 8), pointing to Khrushchev's visit to Eisenhower and Mao's study of Dulles' speeches, both in 1959, as counterexamples. Of course, the United States had played a role in Sino-Soviet relations from the very beginning. The alliance was directed against U.S. imperialism; Washington formulated the wedge strategy early on; and Sino-Soviet disagreements over peaceful coexistence were about how to deal with the United States. However, my argument is that an American policy to exacerbate the Sino-Soviet disagreements was only effective as of late 1962, once the rift had occurred. Before, the United States did try to apply the wedge policy, but it usually had few opportunities and little insight as to how to apply it effectively. Until late 1962, Sino-Soviet disagreements occurred over the United States in the larger context of disagreements over the Soviet version of peaceful coexistence. Only after the Cuban Missile Crisis did the United States find an opening to aggravate the rift through active means—the nuclear test ban negotiations.

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