

**American Perceptions of Sino-Soviet Relations: 1944 - 1963**

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## **Abstract**

For the first half of the Cold War, the Soviet Union and China were perceived by many within the U.S. government to be a monolithic communist bloc. However, the development of the Sino-Soviet Split proved monolithic communism false. Why then did the U.S. take so long to realize the mounting differences and problems between China and the Soviet Union? My thesis explores the American perceptions of Sino-Soviet relations and what drove these perceptions in the period between 1944 and 1963. My research shows that U.S. perceptions of relations between Soviet Communists and Chinese Communists were fairly open and diverse prior to 1950. A series of events in 1949/50 then caused perceptions to become rigid and monolithic. These events included the Communist victory in the Chinese Civil War, the rise of McCarthyism, the adoption of a militant Cold War grand strategy as embodied in NSC-68, and the Chinese intervention in the Korean War. The rigidity in perceptions of the Sino-Soviet relationship between 1950 and 1956 especially in the higher echelon of policymakers was a setback for U.S. foreign policy, but some degree of pluralism in perceptions was preserved in the lower ranks of the intelligence community. Following Khrushchev's "Secret Speech" of early 1956, which marked a definitive ideological split between the Soviet Union and China, U.S. perceptions of Sino-Soviet relations began shedding its paralyzing rigidity. Between 1956 and 1963, the intelligence community became increasingly cognizant of Sino-Soviet problems and sources of potential conflict, but were still slow to explicitly state that a Sino-Soviet Split has occurred. Not until 1962-3 did the CIA make this explicit.

## **Acknowledgement**

What interests me in history are the larger big-picture forces that effect the world as a whole. Naturally, international wars, trade, and diplomacy, among other global topics, capture my attention. The Sino-Soviet Split and the perceptions of it by the United States became a perfect topic for me. Here is a global topic that is deeply relevant to geopolitics today and into the future, and yet it is relatively understudied despite its centrality to the Cold War. Given my own transnational background – born in China and raised in the U.S. – and a latent personal desire, vague and perhaps naïve as it may be, to make an impact on the world, I found American perceptions of Sino-Soviet relations to be a topic that fit my bill. Frankly, it is a topic that I knew I would not bore of over the year-long duration of the thesis research and writing process.

I am deeply honored and grateful to have the former U.S. Ambassador to the Soviet Union, Jack F. Matlock Jr., as my thesis advisor. Given his diplomatic and academic career spanning the entirety of the Cold War, Matlock has been a great resource with personal insights on the events discussed in my thesis as well as a diligent advisor. I also owe thanks to Professor Dirk Bonker, who has helped me greatly in shaping the structure and argument of my thesis. Lastly, I extend my thanks to my fellow peers who have all read and critiqued large parts of my thesis.

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## Introduction

Renowned foreign policy journalist Walther Lippmann was credited with popularizing the term “cold war” in 1947 to describe the recent state of world affairs in his time. The term implied a state of indirect and unofficial war between nations. Such a war could be waged economically, culturally, ideologically, through proxy wars of client states, and through propaganda.<sup>1</sup>

The Cold War was a “cold war” in more ways than one. The most obvious “cold war” arrayed the United States and its allies against the Soviet Union and its allies. Another lesser-known “cold war” was between the Soviet Union and another communist giant: China. While its significance is obvious given the hindsight of history, the Sino-Soviet cold war was for too long widely overlooked by the American foreign policy community at large. This thesis analyzes the American perceptions of the Sino-Soviet relationship between 1944 and 1963 in light of the developing Sino-Soviet Split. It explores how the communism-as-a-monolith misconception formed and the ways this misconception hindered many policymakers from seeing potential problems in the Sino-Soviet relationship from its onset. Simultaneously, this thesis examines how a handful of U.S. experts did see problems in Sino-Soviet relations, but were hindered from sharing their views with more influential officials, let alone, taking actions on them.

Based on arduous but by no means conclusive research on U.S. assessments and policies towards the Sino-Soviet alliance during the period in question, I argue that American official perceptions of Sino-Soviet relations evolved drastically from initial openness and diversity to increasing rigidity and dogmatism to eventual openness and diversity once again. The degree of openness and diversity or rigidity and dogmatism in American perceptions is measured by the

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<sup>1</sup> Alden Whitman, “Walter Lippmann, Political Analyst, Dead at 85,” *New York Times* (New York, NY), December

actual recorded opinions, assessments, and policy proposals from the period. Attention is paid to rhetoric when Sino-Soviet relations are discussed. Throughout the thesis, I use the terms “perception,” “view,” and “opinion” interchangeably when applied to Sino-Soviet relations.

### A Brief History of Relations between the Three Nations

Before defining the role of U.S. actors involved, introducing my research methodology, laying out the structure of my thesis, and diving into my chapter-by-chapter analysis, a history of the relations of the three countries in question is provided to better ground the analysis of perceptions into its proper context. During World War II, the United States, the Soviet Union, and China were allied in the fight against the fascist powers of Nazi Germany and the Empire of Japan. The U.S., led by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, for much of its involvement in the world war (December 1941 – August 1945), fought both enemies in two theaters: in the Pacific against Japan and in Europe/North Africa against Germany. The Soviet Union, led by Joseph Stalin fought entirely against the Germans until the very end of the war (August 1945) when it deployed troops against the Japanese in Manchuria. While China’s participation in the world war was wholly focused on fighting the invading Japanese from 1937 to the war’s end, its forces were not unified in this effort. The Nationalists or Kuomintang, led by Chiang Kai-shek, were the *de jure* government of China and possessed the bulk of the resources in the war against Japan. The Communists, led by Mao Zedong, were in de facto control of the north central part of China and were likewise fighting the Japanese but with fewer resources than the Nationalists.<sup>2</sup>

In the wartime alliance, the U.S. generously provided 11.3 billion dollars (\$154 billion today) of Lend Lease aid to the Soviet Union and relations between the two nations were generally good. Yet, some mistrust still existed below the surface of the alliance. Unbeknownst

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<sup>2</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War* (New York: Penguin Press, 2005) 8-15.

to American officials at the time, Soviets were spying on the Manhattan Project which developed the first nuclear bomb.<sup>3</sup> U.S. relations with China during the war were officially strong as the U.S. provided 1.6 billion dollars (\$21.7 billion today) of Lend Lease aid to the Republic of China. However, many officials in the U.S. were less than satisfied with Chiang's prosecution of the war, accusing him of corruption. The need to reach out to the Chinese Communists was realized in early 1944 and became the motivation for the so-called Dixie Mission.<sup>4</sup> Lastly, the relationship between the Soviet Union and China during the war could also be described as strong. The Soviets had been providing military aid to the Nationalists long before the Americans began Lend Lease. Despite their common political orientation, the Soviets had maintained little if any relations with the Chinese Communists during the war.<sup>5</sup>

In the five years directly following the end of World War II in August 1945, vast changes took place in the three nations and their relations with each other. Both the Soviet Union and the U.S. had to rethink their roles in the world. The Soviet Union propped up communist governments across Eastern Europe, continued Stalin's cult of personality, and developed their own nuclear bomb in 1949.<sup>6</sup> The U.S., now under the Truman administration, provided massive economic aid to war-ravaged Western Europe as well as Japan. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), a mutual defense organization, was created by the U.S. and its Western European allies to defend themselves from potential Soviet invasion.<sup>7</sup> Meanwhile, China was

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<sup>3</sup> I.C.B. Dear and M.R.D. Foot, *The Oxford Companion to World War II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 678, 700.

<sup>4</sup> Barbara Tuchman, *Stilwell and the American Experience in China, 1911-45* (New York: Macmillan, 1971), 480-520.

<sup>5</sup> John Paton Davies Jr., *China Hand: an autobiography* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 50-61.

<sup>6</sup> Ruud van Dijk et al., *Encyclopedia of the Cold War* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 526-7.

<sup>7</sup> Van Dijk et al. *Encyclopedia of the Cold War*, 646-7.

engrossed in civil war between the Nationalists and Communists in which the Nationalists gradually lost control of mainland China.<sup>8</sup>

Between 1945 and 1950, the Cold War took shape between the United States and the Soviet Union. The development of the Truman Doctrine, following the breakdown of U.S.-Soviet cooperation in Germany and American provisioning of aid to Greece to quell internal communist insurrection, laid down the long-standing Cold War principle of supporting “free peoples” around the world struggling against external or internal authoritarian forces. This represented a direct challenge to the Soviet Union, which had just installed authoritarian communist governments across Eastern Europe.<sup>9</sup> U.S. relations with China were quite complex in this period which initially saw the U.S. attempt to broker a coalition government between Nationalists and Communists. When the coalition talks failed and civil war resumed, the U.S. defaulted to backing the Nationalists with military aid. Even after the Communists sent the Nationalists retreating to Taiwan and established the People’s Republic of China (PRC) on mainland China, the U.S. continued backing the Nationalists and refused to recognize the PRC.<sup>10</sup> Soviet relations with China began in this period with a Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship with the Nationalists and concluded in this period with a similar Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship with the Communists. Thus, sometime between 1945 and 1950, the Soviet Union clandestinely and gradually switched from formally backing the Nationalists to formally backing the Communists.<sup>11</sup>

The period between 1950 and 1956 generally witnessed increased militarization in all three nations. NSC-68, a classified report issued by the U.S. National Security Council in 1950

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<sup>8</sup> Van Dijk et al., 140.

<sup>9</sup> Van Dijk et al., 909-12.

<sup>10</sup> Van Dijk et al., 140.

<sup>11</sup> Van Dijk et al., 145.



cast the Soviet Union's principal goal as spreading communism across the globe. Thus, the U.S. must counter the spread of Soviet power with a policy of militant containment.<sup>12</sup> The Democratic Truman administration, heavily criticized by Republicans for the "loss of China" to the Communists, was replaced by Eisenhower's Republican administration following the 1952 presidential election. Throughout these years, a Red Scare gripped the nation in which anticommunist sentiments and paranoia of communist subversion ran high.<sup>13</sup> The Soviet Union, through their propaganda portrayed the capitalist West as a corrupt society rife with crime and poverty. Stalin, the Soviet totalitarian leader for a quarter of a century, died in 1953 and triggered a succession crisis in which Nikita Khrushchev eventually came to the forefront. To counter NATO, the Soviet Union formed the Warsaw Pact among its Eastern European satellite states.<sup>14</sup> The Chinese Communist Party rapidly consolidated its power in mainland China in the early-1950s. In the Korean War, when U.S. and South Korean troops encroached upon the Chinese border, China intervened on North Korea's behalf. China then agitated for the "liberation of Taiwan" in 1954-5 with artillery shelling and a large buildup of troops across from Taiwan. Throughout this period, China also began large scale industrialization and collectivization efforts.<sup>15</sup>

Relations between the U.S. and the Soviet Union in this period were among the worst during the entire Cold War. The arms race between the two nations intensified as both nations developed ever more powerful nuclear weapons, long-range bombers, missiles, and other weapons. However, following Stalin's death, the tensions would relax slightly.<sup>16</sup> Relations between the U.S. and China was arguably the worst ever in the 20<sup>th</sup> century since both nations

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<sup>12</sup> Van Dijk et al., 650-1.

<sup>13</sup> Van Dijk et al., 739-42.

<sup>14</sup> Van Dijk et al., 849, 849, 960-2.

<sup>15</sup> Van Dijk et al., 520-1, 878-9, 147.

<sup>16</sup> Van Dijk et al., 36-7, 851.

were at war with each other during the Korean conflict. In the Korean War, the Chinese Communists fought the U.S., South Koreans, and their allies to a stalemate while suffering massive casualties. Additionally, the U.S. blocked all trade and travel with China, continued to refuse recognition of the PRC, and prevented the PRC from taking a seat in the UN.<sup>17</sup> Sino-Soviet relations were officially quite strong in this period, or so it seemed to the West. In any case, the Soviet Union provided many economic, military, and political advisors to China to help build its industry and modernize its military.<sup>18</sup>

Between 1956 and 1963, relations between China and the two other powers worsened while American-Soviet relations oscillated between détente and hostility. The United States in this period increased its commitments abroad in deterring communism globally, whether in Southeast Asia, the Middle East, or Europe. The Cuban Revolution that brought Fidel Castro into power now made Cuba a potentially dire threat to the U.S., culminating in the Cuban Missile Crisis.<sup>19</sup> The Soviet Union under Khrushchev now set itself on an altered path of development and international engagement. Following Khrushchev's landmark "Secret Speech," Stalinism was denounced across the Soviet Union while the realities of nuclear war led Khrushchev to embrace peaceful coexistence with the West. However, within Soviet satellite states, new leadership believed to be inauspicious to the Soviet Union were nonetheless removed from power as was the case in Poland and Hungary.<sup>20</sup> China now took a more radical path to communism by undertaking the so-called Great Leap Forward, a program that sought to rapidly industrialize the country by placing the burden of industrialization on the hundreds of millions of

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<sup>17</sup> Van Dijk et al., 520-1, 146, 929.

<sup>18</sup> Van Dijk et al., 788-90.

<sup>19</sup> Van Dijk et al., 288-90, 208-10.

<sup>20</sup> Van Dijk et al., 220-1, 228-9, 689-90, 502.

rural peasants. The disastrous policy and the massive famine that ensued left tens of millions dead across China and greatly weakened the economy of China.<sup>21</sup>

Though marked by moments of tense hostility, U.S.-Soviet relations were slowly improving between 1956 and 1963. The Eisenhower administration was cautiously receptive to Khrushchev's policy of peaceful coexistence. Cultural exchange programs were conducted and top leaders from both countries visited the other. However, the moments of hostility included the U-2 spy plane incident, a showdown in Berlin, and most notably, the Cuban Missile Crisis.<sup>22</sup> Sino-American relations were all but nonexistent in this period. Chinese propaganda was viciously anti-American throughout this time while the U.S. reciprocally snubbed China. The flare-up of a Second Taiwan Strait Crisis brought the U.S. close to launching nuclear attacks on China for at least a third time within the decade.<sup>23</sup> Khrushchev's "Secret Speech" initiated an ideological split between Soviet and Chinese Communists. Mao would accuse Khrushchev of Marxist revisionism while the Soviets were appalled by the radical turn of Chinese Communism. Sino-Soviet relations soured after the 1956 speech and rapidly deteriorated starting in 1959. Soon thereafter, Khrushchev withdrew all Soviet advisors from China and refused to provide nuclear weapons or to help the Chinese develop their own nuclear arsenal.<sup>24</sup>

Following 1963, the U.S. became much more involved in the Vietnam War, a war in which the Soviet Union and the Chinese competed with each other for the favor of North Vietnam by providing it with aid.<sup>25</sup> The U.S. under both the Johnson (1963-9) and Nixon (1969-74) administrations and the Soviet Union under Brezhnev (1964-82) achieved détente and

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<sup>21</sup> Van Dijk et al., 379-81.

<sup>22</sup> Van Dijk et al., 501-4, 689-90.

<sup>23</sup> Van Dijk et al., 878-90.

<sup>24</sup> Van Dijk et al., 789-09, 503-4.

<sup>25</sup> Van Dijk et al., 950.

successfully concluded a series of nuclear arms limitation treaties.<sup>26</sup> Sino-Soviet relations had definitively split and by the late-1960s were at the brink of war. The Sino-Soviet Split culminated in the 1969 border clashes in which hundreds of casualties were sustained on either side.<sup>27</sup> Meanwhile, the so-called Cultural Revolution (1966-76) engulfed China in which bourgeois elements were to be rooted out and both Western and Soviet-aligned powers were vilified as China's enemies.<sup>28</sup> Yet in the midst of the Cultural Revolution, a seemingly most unlikely time for Sino-American rapprochement, diplomatic contact between China and America was initiated, in large part due to Chinese fears of Soviet invasion or nuclear attack. Hence, Nixon and Kissinger's rapprochement with Mao and Zhou Enlai was born out of the Sino-Soviet Split.<sup>29</sup>

### Defining U.S. Actors

The U.S. observers and policymakers, whose perceptions are at the core of this thesis, can be distinguished into five main actors: four groups and one individual. These five actors are the Department of State, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the National Security Council (NSC), academics or journalists outside the government, and the President.

The Department of State (State Department) is a federal executive department that advises the President and leads the country in foreign policy issues with the mission of advancing the national interests of the United States on the international stage. The State Department is headed by the Secretary of State and maintains a network of U.S. embassies in most countries around the world. Each embassy is headed by the U.S. ambassador delegated to

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<sup>26</sup> Van Dijk et al., 250-54.

<sup>27</sup> Van Dijk et al., 792-94.

<sup>28</sup> Van Dijk et al., 215-218.

<sup>29</sup> Van Dijk et al., 792, 793.

that country. Thus, the State Department is split between diplomats abroad and personnel within the U.S. (including policymakers). Diplomats abroad regularly communicate the situation in the countries in which they are posted to the Secretary of State.<sup>30</sup>

The Central Intelligence Agency is the foreign intelligence service of the U.S. federal government. Its task is to gather, process, and analyze national security information from around the world. The CIA was created through the National Security Act of 1947. In its early years, the CIA lacked its own intelligence gathering capabilities and relied on a daily take of State Department telegrams, military dispatches, and other public documents. Then, soon after the start of the Korean War in 1950 the CIA greatly expanded its intelligence gathering abilities. The CIA played a central role in conducting research for and coordinating the development of National Intelligence Estimates (NIEs), high level classified intelligence documents reflecting the judgment of the intelligence community as a whole. NIEs are important primary sources for this thesis.<sup>31</sup>

The National Security Council is part of the Executive Office of the President (colloquially called “the White House”) and is tasked with advising and assisting the President on national security, foreign policy, and military issues. President Truman created the NSC in 1947 at the same time as the CIA in order to centralize and coordinate the U.S. military, CIA, and other governmental bodies pertaining to national security in light of increasing tensions between the Soviet Union and the U.S.<sup>32</sup> In the period covered in my thesis, the main members of the NSC included the President, Vice President, Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Director of the CIA. However, the structure and authority of the

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<sup>30</sup> Alexander DeConde, Richard Dean Burns, and Fredrik Logevall editors, *Encyclopedia of American Foreign Policy, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*, Vol. 1 (New York: Scribner, 2002), 451-61.

<sup>31</sup> DeConde, Burns, and Logevall, *Encyclopedia of American Foreign Policy*, Vol. 1: 236-237.

<sup>32</sup> DeConde, Burns, and Logevall, Vol. 2: 498 – 500.

NSC varied with each administration. Truman mostly relied on advice directly from his secretaries of State and Defense and only regularly convened with the NSC during the Korean War. Eisenhower, however, relied on the NSC more heavily and created a structured system of policy review. Under Kennedy, the influence of the NSC was reduced and foreign policy decisions were left to the State Department or ad hoc committees.<sup>33</sup> The policy reports issued by the NSC (simply titled “NSC” followed by an identifying number) broadly guided U.S. foreign policy.

The last group of U.S. actors is the broad category of nongovernmental academics and journalists – some of whom with government experience – who have been deemed experts of Sino-Soviet relations. Unlike the works of governmental actors, their works were usually accessible to the general public and were read by government officials and the public alike. Academic works had an influence on the creation of governmental documents and sometimes governmental documents also influenced academic works. For clarity, in this thesis, I divide the academics and journalists along generational lines, those who acquired expertise in Sino-Soviet matters prior to WWII and those who did so after.

Finally, the President, as chief of state, is officially the top-most diplomat of the United States. The President is usually the one to make the ultimate foreign policy decisions. All of the four groups previously described influence the President in his decision-making. The three Presidents – Truman, Eisenhower, and Kennedy – covered in the period of my thesis came into office with varying degrees of diplomatic experience and developed distinct overarching foreign policy outlooks, yet shared a common goal of opposing communism for the sake of American security.

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<sup>33</sup> DeConde, Burns, and Logevall, Vol. 2: 500 – 503.

## Historiography of American Perceptions of Sino-Soviet Relations

When American experts first began seriously studying Sino-Soviet relations in detail in the late-1950s and early 1960s, they focused on the causes and development of the Sino-Soviet Split. Among these early experts were Donald Zagoria and Allen Whiting. With the Sino-American rapprochement of the 1970s, there came a general increase in scholarship on all things China, including China's conflict with the Soviet Union. Later scholarship from the mid-1980s through the 1990s, when U.S. government documents from the 1950s became declassified, moved beyond analyzing the causes and development of the split to examining why the American intelligence community and policymakers did not recognize the split soon enough. Hence, a scholarly focus on perceptions of Sino-Soviet relations was emerging. Historians writing from this period include David Allan Mayers and Gordon H. Chang, are more critical of American foreign policy setbacks regarding Sino-Soviet relations than previous scholars. Mayers in particular lays heavy blame on McCarthyism and the China Lobby for obstructing foreign policymaking. Nevertheless, both Mayers and Chang emphasize just how much more nuanced the views of the three presidential administrations covered in the thesis were, regarding communism or Sino-Soviet relations, than is commonly ascribed to them.<sup>34</sup> More modern scholarship from the 21<sup>st</sup> century, such as the works of Marc J. Selverstone, have then explored American perceptions of Sino-Soviet relations (and the Cold War more generally) through sociological and cultural lenses.<sup>35</sup> Additionally, non-American scholars, such as Lorenz Lüthi,

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<sup>34</sup> David Allan Mayers, *Cracking the Monolith : U.S. Policy against the Sino-Soviet Alliance, 1949-1955*, Political Traditions in Foreign Policy Series (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986); Gordon H. Chang, *Friends and Enemies The United States, China, and the Soviet Union, 1948-1972* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990).

<sup>35</sup> Marc J. Selverstone, *Constructing the Monolith The United States, Great Britain, and International Communism, 1945-1950*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 4.

Sergey Radchenko, and Yafeng Xia have added diverse, international perspectives to scholarship on the Sino-Soviet Split.<sup>36</sup>

In this thesis, my research aligns closely with the works of Mayers and Chang and confirms many of their conclusions. However, while both Mayers and Chang begin their analysis of the tri-polar relationship between the United States, China, and the Soviet Union only from the late-1940s around the time of the PRC's establishment, my research traces this tri-polar relationship even earlier to 1944 when the U.S. made its first official contact with the Chinese Communists. Additionally, and more importantly, I make the evolving nature of American perceptions of Sino-Soviet relations more explicit by framing it against the spectrum of intellectual rigidity/diversity.

### Sources

In conducting my research, I utilized a plethora of primary and secondary sources. For primary sources, I rely on many of the declassified memorandums and communiqués written by diplomats stationed abroad and policymakers in Washington. Nearly all of the memos and communiqués were found in the *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS)*, a book series published by the State Department containing documents pertaining to U.S. foreign policy decisions and diplomatic activity. Policy reports issued by the National Security Council (NSC) and intelligence reports issued by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) are also frequently cited and were found in either *FRUS* or the CIA Library or the presidential library of the report's respective administration. Meeting minutes from the White House, Congressional hearings, and press conference addresses are additional primary sources. Academic works, such as John

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<sup>36</sup> "Lorenz Lüthi," McGill | History and Classical Studies, <https://www.mcgill.ca/history/lorenz-l%C3%BCthi>; "Sergey Radchenko," Wilson Center, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/person/sergey-radchenko>; "Yafeng Xia," Wilson Center, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/person/yafeng-xia>.



Fairbank's *The United States and China*, published during the years that I focus on are treated as primary sources as well.

### Structure of Thesis

My thesis falls into three, chronologically arranged chapters. The first chapter analyzes the emergent American perceptions of Sino-Soviet relations between 1944 and 1950. With insufficient intelligence to base perceptions upon, American perceptions were characterized by a diverse array of opinions and hypotheses regarding the nature Sino-Soviet relations.

Additionally, American perceptions remained mostly unaffected by strong domestic political agendas or a solidly defined postwar grand strategy. A case in point is the Dixie Mission and how U.S. officers of this mission were able to draw surprisingly accurate conclusions about the Chinese Communists. They, like other experts on China, predicted the inevitable resumption of civil war in China and the eventual victory of the Chinese Communists. As the American-Soviet Cold War took shape and Chinese Communist victories climbed, perceptions of Sino-Soviet relations changed accordingly.

Chapter 2 explores the turn to rigidity and anticommunist dogmatism in perceptions of Sino-Soviet relations between 1950 and 1956. Communism was viewed by many prominent government officials, including at times the President and the Secretary of State, as a monolithic international movement under the direction of the Soviet Union. Contributing to this misconception was the framing of America's Cold War posture according to NSC-68 and NSC-162, armed hostilities with China, and the influence of McCarthyism and the China Lobby. While this misconception proved an enduring detriment to flexible and diverse American

perceptions of the Sino-Soviet alliance among the most influential policymakers, some degree of diversity in perceptions were preserved in the lower ranks of the intelligence community.

Chapter 3 discusses the reemergence of flexibility and diversity in perceptions of Sino-Soviet relations between 1956 and 1963 and the ultimate realization of the Sino-Soviet Split. Communist propaganda upholding the superficial Sino-Soviet unity and perceived Soviet collusion in the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis created confusion for the second Eisenhower administration in its assessments of Sino-Soviet relations. Mounting evidence of Sino-Soviet discord eventually dispelled the confusion and gradually pointed to a break. This chapter also looks at why, in spite of all the evidence, the CIA was hesitant to definitively point out a Sino-Soviet Split, thus delaying U.S. official recognition of the Split's emergence. But once the CIA became more confident in the assessment of the reality of Sino-Soviet conflict, the wider policymaking community quickly followed suit.

## Chapter 1: Emerging Perceptions, 1944 – 1950

### Introduction

By 1944, China had been at war with Japanese invaders for seven years. However, China's fight against Japan had hardly been a unified one. The Chinese Nationalists, also known as the Kuomintang (KMT), led by Chiang Kai-shek, was the *de jure* government of China. But in the north central region of China, the Chinese Communists (CCP) were in *de facto* control. American Lend Lease aid had been provided only to the Nationalist KMT government. It was already widely known among top U.S. military personnel and the Foreign Service staff in China that the KMT was a corrupt government, ineffective in its war against Japan. Their inefficiency in prosecuting the war against Japan was in large part due to Chiang's hope of finally defeating the Communists, whom he had been at war with prior to the Japanese invasion. Thus, many U.S. observers in China would accuse Chiang of withholding resources for prosecuting the war against Japan so they could be used against the Communists.<sup>37</sup>

Prior to July 1944, there had been no official contact between the U.S. government and the Chinese Communists. What little understanding U.S. officials had of the Chinese Communists came from the few Western journalists who had lived with and reported on them before and during the Second Sino-Japanese War, which had started in 1937. Perhaps the most influential text regarding the Chinese Communists for Western audiences at the time was Edgar Snow's book *Red Star over China*, published originally in 1937. Edgar Snow was a journalist who reported on the struggles of Chinese Communists against the Nationalist government in the 1930s. He was among the first Westerners to interview Mao Zedong. His book cast Chinese communists in a sympathetic light, casting them as oppressed, egalitarian, agrarian reformers.

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<sup>37</sup> Tuchman, *Stilwell*, 480-520.

Due to the popularity of this book, American perceptions of the Chinese Communists were more or less positive, that they were effective fighters defending their homeland against the Japanese invaders.<sup>38</sup>

Regarding the relationship between the Soviet Union and China during the war, the Soviet Union, like the U.S., provided aid only to the KMT, as they were the legitimate government of China. There was very little contact between the Soviet Union and the Chinese Communists prior to late 1945, probably due to Soviet preoccupation with fighting Nazi Germany. This would all change very soon. Starting in 1944-45, both the U.S. and the Soviet Union would become intimately engaged with the Chinese Communists for political and military reasons.

For American perceptions of Sino-Soviet relations, more specifically Chinese Communist – Soviet Communist relations, the years from 1944 to 1950 were a nascent period. Few officials within the U.S. government, or even the State Department, bothered to consider the relations between the two communist groups seriously during this period. But for those few diplomats and military leaders who did, their insights on Chinese Communist – Soviet relations were particularly keen, sometimes even prophetic. These individuals included Foreign Service Officers (FSOs) John Paton Davies Jr., John Service, George F. Kennan, and General George C. Marshall.

In this chapter, I argue that American observers and officials held a more open and pluralistic view of Chinese communism and the relationship between the Chinese Communists and the Soviet Union in the 1944-1949 period relative to the view advanced after 1949. As the Cold War and America's developing bipolar view of the world was still in its nascent stages,

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<sup>38</sup> Donald Zagoria, "Red Star Over China – Book Review." Capsule Review, *Foreign Affairs*, Sept./Oct. 1997, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/reviews/1997-09-01/red-star-over-china>

U.S. foreign policy experts were not yet locked into a zero-sum, communist vs. capitalist mode of thinking. It was not until 1949-50 with the communist victory in the Chinese Civil War and the Chinese Communist intervention in the Korean War that U.S. views on international communism and the Sino-Soviet relationship lost nuance and became rigid.

### The Dixie Mission

The year 1944 marks the beginning of official U.S. government contact with the Chinese Communists. The Dixie Mission represented the first U.S. government attempt to establish official relations with the Chinese Communists. The Dixie Mission – so named because the Communists were viewed as “rebels” in analogy to the American Civil War – was initiated at the request of Foreign Service Officer John Paton Davies Jr. He had noted in a January 15, 1944 memorandum that U.S. relations with the Chinese Communists would be important in the continued war against Japan and more importantly to “reduce the [Communists’] tendency toward dependence on Russia.” Thus, he argued that a military and political observers’ mission to the Communist-controlled part of China be dispatched immediately so that it can “obtain accurate estimates of the strength of Communist armies, report on Russian operations in North China and Manchuria should Russia attack Japan, and assess the possibility of North China and Manchuria developing into a separate Chinese state – perhaps even as a Russian satellite.”<sup>39</sup>

Davies knew that Chiang Kai-Shek would oppose American meetings with the Chinese Communists if ordinary diplomatic channels were used for the request, so he recommended that President Roosevelt directly request Chiang to allow a special mission. Such a mission would allow the U.S. to have greater bargaining power. Though Chiang initially refused the request, he

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<sup>39</sup> “Memo by the Second Secretary of Embassy in China (Davies),” January 15, 1944, in U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1944, Volume VI: China*, (Washington, 1967), 307-8, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1944v06/d256>

eventually acquiesced after U.S. Vice-President Henry Wallace visited Chiang in late June of 1944.<sup>40</sup>

The first delegates of the Dixie Mission arrived in the Chinese Communist capital of Yanan in the arid region of north central China in late July 1944. Prominent members of the Dixie Mission included Foreign Service Officers John S. Service and John Paton Davies Jr. and military observer Colonel David D. Barrett. All three were so-called China hands, that is, they all had significant prior experience in China.

John S. Service was the lead political observer on the Dixie Mission. Born in 1909 in Chengdu, China to missionary parents, John S. Service spent much of his childhood in China where he not only mastered Mandarin, but also the local dialect. Service attended high school and college in the United States, graduating from Oberlin College with majors in art history and economics. After graduation, Service joined the Foreign Service in 1933 and was posted to China where he worked for eleven years prior to the Dixie Mission.<sup>41</sup>

John Paton Davies Jr. was the Foreign Service Officer responsible for initiating the Dixie Mission. Davies's background nearly mirrors that of Service. In fact they grew up together in China. Like Service, Davies was born in China to missionary parents and spent much of his childhood there. He attended college at Columbia University and joined the Foreign Service upon graduation in 1931. Two years later, he was posted to China. During World War II, Davies became the political attaché to General Joseph Stillwell, the commander of the China-Burma-India Theater. He would join the Dixie Mission in October of 1944.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Carolle J. Carter, *Mission to Yanan: American Liaison with the Chinese Communists 1944-47* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1997), 20.

<sup>41</sup> Lynne Joiner, *Honorable Survivor: Mao's China, McCarthy's America, and the Persecution of John S. Service* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2009), 12.

<sup>42</sup> Davies Jr., *China Hand: An Autobiography*, 8-40.

Colonel David D. Barrett was the lead military observer on the Dixie Mission. Before embarking on the Dixie Mission, Barrett had a military career spanning thirty-five years. He first arrived in China in 1924 as an assistant military attaché, mastered Mandarin and became well-read in Chinese literature. In his long career in China, Barrett would witness first-hand the first shots fired in China's war against Japan and later advise the Chinese Nationalist armies.<sup>43</sup> For his part during the Dixie Mission, Barrett observed Chinese Communist officers participate in war games and was impressed with their guerilla warfare tactics.<sup>44</sup>

During his time in Yen-an, Davies interviewed many CCP leaders including Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai. Regarding the relationship of the Soviet Union with the Chinese Communists in the year before the end of World War II, Davies noted that there was no issue that could cause "conflict between Russian and Chinese Communist foreign policy."<sup>45</sup> This was in spite of the fact that the Soviet Union had withheld military aid to the Chinese Communists since 1937. Soviet materiel had gone to the KMT instead. Davies also noted that the Chinese Communists would not seem to fear Soviet dominance in China if and when the Soviet Union entered into war with Japan and invaded Manchuria.<sup>46</sup>

Like Davies, Service met with many CCP leaders. His reports on the Chinese Communists described them as progressive and democratic. Meanwhile, his reports on the Nationalists were highly critical, describing them as corrupt and incompetent.<sup>47</sup> Both Service and Davies on the Dixie Mission felt that civil war between the Communists and the Nationalists was inevitable and that the Communists were bound to win. They believed that if the United States

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<sup>43</sup> John N. Hart, *The Making of an Army Old China Hand: A Memoir of Colonel David D. Barrett* (Berkeley, CA: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1985), 8-34.

<sup>44</sup> "Memorandum by the Chief of the Division of Chinese Affairs (Vincent)," October 25, 1944, *FRUS 1944, Volume VI: China*, 181-182, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1944v06/d163>

<sup>45</sup> "Memorandum by the Second Secretary of Embassy in China (Davies)," November 7, 1944, *FRUS 1944, Volume VI: China*, 668, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1944v06/p668>

<sup>46</sup> "Memorandum by the Second Secretary of Embassy in China (Davies)," 668.

<sup>47</sup> Joiner, *Honorable Survivor*, 151.

supported a coalition government led by both Communists and Nationalists, the U.S. could keep the Chinese Communists from falling under Soviet influence. (Though later toward the end of 1945 Davies would realize that such a coalition would be impossible.) If the U.S. antagonized the Communists, then they would be driven to seek alliance with the Soviets.<sup>48</sup>

As of mid-November 1944, Davies thought that the United States needed to “urgently expand” its “relations with Yen-an and try to ‘capture politically’ the Chinese Communists rather than watching them ‘go by default wholly to the Russians.’” He argued that “we [the United States] could not expect, of course, to win over the Communists entirely to us should the Russians invade North China and Manchuria, but through wartime and postwar aid we could influence them toward Chinese nationalism and independence from the Soviet Union.”<sup>49</sup>

Service also noted that as of March 1945, there was very little contact between the Soviet government and the CCP. In Yen-an, there were only three Russians, a *pro bono* surgeon and two reporters (possibly intelligence officers) for the Soviet Tass News Agency. In Chongqing, the Nationalist capital of China, the Soviet embassy was ordered to “stay away from the Chinese Communists” there. The Chinese Communists also denied that they had any relations with the Soviet Government. Chinese Communists would also have had no way of acquiring Soviet arms or equipment as any import into China from the Soviet Union would be carefully controlled by Nationalist border guards.<sup>50</sup> Supposing Service’s report was accurate, one can reasonably assume that the Chinese Communists were operating entirely independent from Moscow as of 1945 and probably had been doing so for several years.

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<sup>48</sup> Joiner, 171.

<sup>49</sup> Davies Jr., *China Hand: An Autobiography*, 238.

<sup>50</sup> “Report by the Second Secretary of Embassy in China (Service),” March 23, 1945, in U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1945, Volume VII: The Far East, China* (Washington, 1969), 301-4. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1945v07/d215>



In March 1945, Service noted that the CCP did not expect the Soviets to intervene in the general war against Japan at a later stage. They also did not believe that the Soviets would demand territory or special concessions in Manchuria, insisting that “the days of Russian imperialism are over.”<sup>51</sup> Within a year, the CCP would be proven wrong in this regard following the Soviet invasion and occupation of Manchuria and signing of the Sino-Soviet Treaty, which gave the Soviet Union special concessions in Manchuria.

American perceptions of the ideological firmness of the Chinese Communists are also important to note, because perceptions at that time reflected diversity and a lack of rigidity. The Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs V.M. Molotov was suspicious of their ideological purity. The U.S. Ambassador to the Soviet Union W. Averell Harriman noted as early as September 1944, in a telegram to U.S. Secretary of State Cordell Hull, that Molotov believed many Chinese were calling themselves “Communists” to merely express their dissatisfaction with current economic conditions, but once economic conditions improved, “they would forget their political inclinations.”<sup>52</sup>

In November 1944, Davies raised the question of “How red are the Chinese Communists?” He portrayed them as “backsliders” with several reasons for moderation: for one, Confucian influence predisposed them toward compromise and harmony; second, they were realists who recognized that the Chinese masses were mostly semi-feudal peasants; and third, they were nationalists fighting a long war against a foreign enemy.<sup>53</sup> In retrospect, writing in his autobiography, Davies admitted that he had underestimated the CCP’s commitment to ideology

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<sup>51</sup> “Report by the Second Secretary of Embassy in China (Service),” March 14, 1945, in U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1945, Volume VII: The Far East, China* (Washington, 1969), 279-283. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1945v07/d198>

<sup>52</sup> “The Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Harriman) to the Secretary of State,” September, 5, 1944, in *FRUS 1944, Volume VI: China*, 255. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1944v06/p255>

<sup>53</sup> “Memorandum by the Second Secretary of Embassy in China (Davies),” November 7, 1944, in *FRUS 1944, Volume VI: China*, 669-670. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1944v06/d485>

and revolutionary ardor.<sup>54</sup> Nevertheless, by questioning the ideological purity of Chinese Communists rather than assuming absolute dogmatism reflects the flexibility of American perceptions in this period.

Davies and Service believed that building strong relations with the Chinese Communists would reduce their tendency toward dependence on the Soviets. This realization was significant because it implied that the U.S. should take an active role in hindering the relationship between Chinese Communists and Soviet Communists. They had come to this conclusion well before hindering of Sino-Soviet relations became officially documented policy in late 1953.

However accurate Davie and Service's predictions were, their vision did not become official policy due to the arrival of the obdurate General Patrick Hurley in Yen-an in November 1944. With no prior experience in China and little understanding of the Chinese political situation, Hurley had remarked prior to his departure that the conflict between Nationalists and Communists resembled that between Republicans and Democrats, an all too obvious misunderstanding. He soon took command of the mission in November 1944 and immediately set about to negotiate with Mao to form a coalition government between the CCP and the KMT with Chiang Kai-shek at its head. By this time, Davies felt that such a coalition was impossible and that Chiang's KMT Nationalists were no longer in America's interests to support.<sup>55</sup> Due to this disagreement, Hurley transferred Davies out of Yen-an and the Dixie Mission to serve in Moscow. He later blamed Davies and the rest of the Dixie Mission officials for the failure of the proposed coalition government.<sup>56</sup>

The implication for Soviet-CCP relations of the failure to form a coalition government between Communists and Nationalists was that the Chinese Communists would eventually

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<sup>54</sup> Davies *China Hand: An Autobiography*, 224.

<sup>55</sup> Davies, 232-238.

<sup>56</sup> Davies, 240.

become dependent on Soviet aid in the ensuing civil war while the Nationalists would continue to receive U.S. aid. Renewed civil war thus meant that the U.S. was forced to take sides. Nationalists would be supported against the Communists. Thus, hopes of an immediate compromise with the Communists would be lost.

### Chinese Civil War

On August 14, 1945 – one day before Japan’s unconditional surrender and the end of World War II – the Soviet Union signed the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Alliance with the incumbent Nationalist government of the Republic of China. While requiring Chinese recognition of the independence of Mongolia and Sino-Soviet joint control of the Chinese Eastern Railway, the treaty stated that the Soviet Union was to cease providing aid to the Chinese Communist Party.<sup>57</sup>

Meanwhile, Soviet troops had invaded Manchuria in order to drive out the Japanese occupiers. With Soviet troops in effect now occupying Manchuria, they stripped the region of its industrial plants and equipment to be sent to the Soviet Union. Soviet seizure of Manchurian industry along with mass looting and other atrocities made the Russians very unpopular among the Manchurian population. But the Soviet presence in Manchuria also strengthened the Chinese Communist’s position in Manchuria as a result of the transfer of captured Japanese weapons to the Chinese Communists.<sup>58</sup>

From December 1945 through January 1947, General George C. Marshall was leading a new diplomatic mission attempting to negotiate a coalition government between the Nationalists

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<sup>57</sup> “China, Soviet Union: Treaty of Friendship and Alliance,” *The American Journal of International Law* 40, no. 2 (1946): 51-63. doi: 10.2307/2213813.

<sup>58</sup> David Allan Mayers, *Cracking the Monolith : U.S. Policy against the Sino-Soviet Alliance, 1949-1955*, Political Traditions in Foreign Policy Series (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986), 15.

and Communists. Marshall had a very distinguished military career spanning forty-five years. During World War II, Marshall, as Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army, had planned the Allied invasion of Europe and coordinated operations in the Pacific as well. Like Hurley before him, Marshall failed, but not due to inexperience. He viewed the Chinese Communists as the “Trojan Horse” through which the Soviets could dominate Chinese affairs. Shortly after his arrival in China, he quickly appraised the political situation as one in which “neither KMT nor CCP believed in the good faith of the other, each convinced the other wanted one-party rule.”<sup>59</sup> Indeed, the Nationalists and the Communists could not come to any agreements and used the time of the year-long negotiations to stall and prepare themselves for the resumption of civil war.<sup>60</sup>

In the atmosphere of impending civil war, George F. Kennan, the soon-to-be author of the containment strategy, laid out his assessment of Soviet intentions in China. Writing to the Secretary of State James F. Byrnes from the U.S. Embassy in Moscow in January 1946, he noted that the USSR sought predominant influence in China but was patient and cautious in its approach. The USSR would prefer a united China (i.e. a coalition government) as it was in the Soviet interest to achieve influence over the whole of China rather than just a Communist region of North China. In regards to Soviet relations with Chinese Communists, Kennan admitted that he could not be certain. He was prepared to believe that the “Chinese CP like other CP’s is subservient to Moscow” but hesitated “to accept such an interpretation as definitive” since the Chinese Communists enjoy “what might seem to be a surprising degree of independence of

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<sup>59</sup> Ed Cray, *General of the Army George C. Marshall, Soldier and Statesman* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1990), 562.

<sup>60</sup> Mayers 1986, 51.

Moscow.”<sup>61</sup> Kennan’s insight indicated openness towards varying interpretations of Soviet relations with the CCP. Such an openness to entertain diverse interpretations of Sino-Soviet relations was more prevalent among China Hands and stateside foreign policy experts alike in the mid/late-1940s than in the 1950s.

By July of 1947, the CCP and the KMT had been openly fighting a civil war for several months. By then, U.S. diplomats in China were beginning to realize just how dogmatically communist the Chinese Communists were. First Secretary of the Embassy in China, Raymond Ludden, noted that it “was always apparent, however, at Yen’an and in Communist forward area that top Communist leaders were firmly Marxist Communist... and no ideological deviations could be expected...”<sup>62</sup> This observation would supplant Davies’s questioning of the “redness” of Chinese Communists made less than three years prior with certainty of their “redness”.

The importance of Sino-Soviet relations (both between the Soviets and the Nationalists and between Soviets and Chinese Communists) attracted greater attention in 1947. Second Secretary of the U.S. Embassy in China John F. Melby noted this growing importance in a memo from July 31, 1947. “In a sense the whole problem of Sino-Soviet relations must be considered as an extension of Soviet-American relations... The most important and pressing factor in Sino-Soviet relations is, of course, the relationship between the Soviet Union and the Chinese Communist Party...”<sup>63</sup>

Over the course of 1948, Communist victories had given the CCP greater momentum in the war. It was also during this time that more and more China observers noted that the CCP’s

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<sup>61</sup> “The Charge in the Soviet Union (Kennan) to the Secretary of State,” January 10, 1946, in U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1946, Volume IX: The Far East, China* (Washington, 1972), 116-119. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1946v09/d23>

<sup>62</sup> “Memorandum by the First Secretary of Embassy in China (Ludden),” July 31, 1947, in U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1947, Volume VII: The Far East: China* (Washington, 1972), 693-695. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1947v07/d571>

<sup>63</sup> “Memorandum by the Second Secretary of Embassy in China (Melby),” undated, *FRUS 1947, Volume VII: The Far East: China*, 678-682. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1947v07/d561>

ideology increasingly followed that of Moscow. In a memo to Secretary of State Byrnes on November 21, 1948, Ambassador John L. Stuart in China noticed that CCP broadcasts in the previous month “not only seem to demonstrate complete ideological affinity between CCP and Moscow, but also represent a significant change in CCP policy as it was announced last winter by Mao Tse-tung” in which “there were signs of conciliation to non-Communist groups and the US...”<sup>64</sup>

### U.S. Domestic Perceptions and Policy Regarding Soviet Union and China

On the U.S. home front, the U.S. government policy towards the Soviet Union was fast changing. George F. Kennan, writing from the U.S. Embassy in Moscow in February 1946, advocated a policy of containment of the Soviet Union and the spread of communism. A year later, President Truman would make an address to Congress pledging to “support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures.”<sup>65</sup> In what would become the Truman Doctrine, President Truman sought to support nations threatened by Soviet communism.

U.S. policy towards China was also fast changing. Washington’s long-standing goal was to establish an ally in China. Whether China kept a multi-party democratic government or the incumbent autocratic Nationalist government was secondary to keeping China an ally, though most policymakers preferred the former.

In January 1947, immediately after his return from China, General George C. Marshall was appointed Secretary of State and would serve in that capacity for exactly two years. In

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<sup>64</sup> “The Ambassador in China (Stuart) to the Secretary of State,” November 21, 1948, in U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1948, Volume VII: The Far East: China* (Washington, 1973), 593-597. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1948v07/d486>

<sup>65</sup> Melvyn P. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992).

February 1947, Marshall reported to the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations his assessment of the situation in China, the Chinese Communists, and their relations with the Soviet Union. Regarding aid to the KMT, he made it clear to the Senators that “We must never just give them money...” and that aid must be a very delicately controlled matter so that the KMT can’t squander it.<sup>66</sup> When Senator Connally inquired whether the Chinese Communists were truly communist, Marshall affirmed their ideological purity and their sympathy for, but not subservience to, Moscow.<sup>67</sup> Throughout the rest of his time as Secretary of State, Marshall would disagree with the prevailing opinions within both the State Department and the Defense Department, which saw the Nationalist’s success as vital to American interests. Based on his own experience with Chiang, Marshall was disdainful of the Nationalists and had hoped to forge some accommodation with the Communists.<sup>68</sup>

Over the course of Marshall’s mission to negotiate a compromise between the Communists and the Nationalists for a coalition government (December 1945 – January 1947), Washington had suspended weapons sales to the Nationalists. By 1948, as Communist victories in China increased, Congress considered renewing aid to the Nationalists.<sup>69</sup> In April 1948, Congress passed the China Aid Act, which included a \$400 million aid package to the Nationalists. Marshall felt this aid would at most delay Nationalist defeat.<sup>70</sup>

In the wake of Tito’s split with Stalin in the summer of 1948, the U.S. began publicizing American economic strength in aiding Western Europe’s postwar recovery in the hopes of exploiting strains in the Soviet bloc. Cognizant of communist ideology’s weakness in binding

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<sup>66</sup> “Report by the Secretary of State (Marshall),” in *Executive Session of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (Historical Series) Volume I Eightieth Congress First and Second Sessions 1947-48* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1976), 4.

<sup>67</sup> “Report by the Secretary of State (Marshall),” 6.

<sup>68</sup> Robert L. Beisner, *Dean Acheson: A Life in the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 172.

<sup>69</sup> Mayers, *Cracking the Monolith*, 21.

<sup>70</sup> Mayers, 23-24.

foreign communists to Moscow as Tito had shown, the National Security Council would nevertheless begin to lay out a broad outline for U.S. policy toward a new Sino-Soviet coalition.<sup>71</sup> NSC-34 stated that U.S. policy toward China for the foreseeable future included continued recognition of the KMT government even after its defeat while recognition of the communist government would depend on circumstance. NSC-34 also sought “to prevent so far as possible China’s becoming an adjunct of Soviet politico-military power.”<sup>72</sup>

In January 1949, Dean Acheson was appointed Secretary of State after Marshall resigned. Acheson had been serving as the Undersecretary of State since 1945 and possessed similar views regarding China and the Soviet Union as Marshall.<sup>73</sup> Like Marshall, Acheson disliked the Nationalists and hoped to make some accommodations with the Communists. Also like Marshall, Acheson was more concerned with Soviet influence in China than what its own communists may do.<sup>74</sup>

By early 1949, attitudes within the U.S. government towards China fell into three groups. The Truman administration and the State Department sought to disengage with the Nationalists “as gracefully as possible.” The Department of Defense proposed to increase aid, if only to delay the establishment of Communist China a bit further. A third group, which included conservative, anticommunist members of Congress, called for direct intervention. This third group was driven by a special interest that was just then beginning to gain strength and would see its peak in the early 1950s: the China Lobby.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Mayers, 29.

<sup>72</sup> “Memorandum by the Policy Planning Staff,” September 7, 1948, in U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1948, Volume VIII: The Far East: China*, (Washington, 1973), 147-164. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1948v08/d122>

<sup>73</sup> Mayers, *Cracking the Monolith*, 33.

<sup>74</sup> Beisner, *Dean Acheson*, 172.

<sup>75</sup> Mayers, *Cracking the Monolith*, 30-31.



Broadly speaking, the China Lobby was a group of mostly Republican Congressmen, businessmen, media magnates/journalists, and former military officers that supported the Nationalist government. This group could be more appropriately and descriptively called the “Kuomintang Lobby” or the “Republic of China Lobby.” During World War II, they advocated delivering military aid to the KMT in their war against the Japanese. During the resumption of the Chinese Civil War, the China Lobby again supported boosting aid to the KMT in their war against the Chinese Communists.

Among the most influential members of the China Lobby were Senator William F. Knowland (R., CA), Representative Walter Judd (R., MN), and media magnate Henry Luce. Senator Knowland would later be known as the “Senator from Formosa.” In the summer of 1949, Senator Knowland initiated a move to prevent the recognition of the Chinese Communist regime. He accused the Truman administration and Secretary of State Dean Acheson of fostering a “spirit of defeatism.”<sup>76</sup> Representative Walter Judd essentially defined the conservative position on China as all-out support for the Nationalists. As early as 1944, Judd accused American Communists of being responsible for China’s setbacks in its war against Japan. Media magnate Henry Luce wielded the greatest influence in opinions of China and communism among the American general public. His magazines *Time*, which summarized and interpreted weekly news, and *Life*, a picture magazine that dominated the American visual perception of the world, were widely read by Americans. Using his popular magazines, Luce steered sentiment in favor of the Nationalists.<sup>77</sup>

The latter half of 1949 was a time when the China Lobby became increasingly vociferous in reproaching the Democratic Truman administration for the “loss of China.” In August 1949,

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<sup>76</sup> Ross Y. Koen, *The China Lobby in American Politics* (New York: Octagon Books, 1974), 99.

<sup>77</sup> Alan Brinkley, *Henry Luce and his American Century* (New York: Alfred. A. Knopf, 2010).

the State Department released its White Paper on China, a massive report chronicling the Sino-American relations since 1944. The conclusion of the paper was that American intervention in China on behalf of the Nationalist government had been doomed to failure due to the corruption and inefficiency of the Nationalist government. In response, the China Lobby wasted no time in attacking the administration for being pessimistic and “selling out their Chinese ally.”<sup>78</sup>

### Views of China Experts Outside of Government

The view of influential scholars and journalists on China also held sway on domestic perceptions. One such scholar was John K. Fairbanks. Fairbanks began his studies on China in 1929 at Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar. In 1932, he travelled to China to resume his studies. After completing his doctorate at Oxford in 1936, Fairbanks joined the Harvard faculty where he transformed Sinology from a field largely concerned with Chinese antiquity to one that included China’s recent past. During World War II, Fairbanks served with the Office of Strategic Services, a predecessor of the CIA, in the Chinese capital of Chongqing. In 1946, Fairbanks returned to the U.S. and wrote the first edition of *The United States and China*, which ends with a recommendation for U.S. policy regarding China.<sup>79</sup>

Unlike the various memos and letters written by foreign service officers, Fairbank’s book was available to the American public. The introduction provided an overview of policy views regarding China held by many experts at the time. A large number of experts believed that the U.S. should solely support and strengthen the KMT, lest China “become a mere satrapy of the Soviet Union.” A smaller though no less vociferous group of experts held that the CCP is “a purely autonomous regime, by no means subservient to Moscow,” and that the CCP could

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<sup>78</sup> Mayers, *Cracking the Monolith*, 51-55.

<sup>79</sup> David Gonzalez, “John K. Fairbank, China Scholar Of Wide Influence, Is Dead at 84,” *The New York Times* (New York, NY), September 16, 1991.

fashion “purely Chinese solutions” for the economic and social ills afflicting the Chinese people.<sup>80</sup> This overview of different policy opinions indicate a plurality of views regarding Chinese communism and their relations with the Soviet Union at home as well as among China Hands abroad. Fairbanks saw little chance of detaching the Chinese Communist revolution from its connection with the Soviet Union, but believed that arousing Chinese self-determination, nationalism, and awareness of Soviet imperialism would best serve American interests.<sup>81</sup>

Perhaps the most prominent journalist reporting on China in the 1940s was Theodore H. White of *Time* magazine. White had been a student of Fairbank as he was pursuing his bachelor’s degree in Chinese history at Harvard. His reporting during World War II in China showed Americans at home the great hardships that the Chinese suffered as well as the gross incompetence and corruption of the Nationalist government. Due to *Time*’s pro-Nationalist bias, White encountered many difficulties in publishing articles critical of the Nationalist government. His 1946 book *Thunder Out of China* became a bestseller. It was highly critical of the Nationalist regime as well as of U.S. foreign policy in China.<sup>82</sup> He blamed America’s pro-KMT orientation for proving “to the Chinese Communists that indeed the only friend they had was the Soviet Union...”<sup>83</sup> As the book was published in late 1946, White still held on to the hope that a multi-party government could be established in China.<sup>84</sup> White’s book and its sympathetic view of Chinese Communists provided many Americans with an alternative assessment of U.S. policy in China.

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<sup>80</sup> John King Fairbank, *The United States and China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1948), xi-xii.

<sup>81</sup> Fairbanks, *The United States and China*, 334-335.

<sup>82</sup> Eric Pace, "Theodore White, Chronicler of U.S. Politics, is Dead at 71," *The New York Times*, May 16, 1986.

<sup>83</sup> Theodore White and Annalee Jacoby. *Thunder Out of China* (New York: William Sloane Associates, 1946), 242.

<sup>84</sup> White and Jacoby, *Thunder Out of China*, 321-22.

## Making Sense of Communism

Between 1944 and 1950, there were multiple views regarding the Chinese Communists. Some, such as those with an understanding of China's cyclical history like Harvard Sinologist John Fairbank or those who read Edgar Snow's *Red Star over China*, saw them as agrarian reformers.<sup>85</sup> This view was coming under attack in the years directly after World War II. For instance, Theodore White wrote in *Thunder Out of China* that "The Chinese Communists flatly deny the assumption of many American friends that they are merely agrarian reformers, not Communists at all. They insist they are Communists in the full sense of the word, and they are proud of it."<sup>86</sup> Others, such as the lead political observer of the Dixie Mission, John Service, viewed them as progressive, democratic, European-styled socialists.<sup>87</sup> Still others view them as Bolsheviks, willing to carry out violent revolution.

Many China Hands at that time felt that the Soviets were attempting to establish a satellite state in Manchuria similar to those of Eastern Europe, but none were confident of this view.<sup>88</sup> Another view held at the time by diplomats such as Kennan, Davies, and Raymond P. Ludden, another FSO who had been on the Dixie Mission, was that the Chinese Communist Party itself was divided into two main factions. Both Kennan and Ludden believed that there existed within the CCP a pro-Moscow faction and a more nationalist faction. As of 1946, Ludden opined that the pro-Moscow faction was gaining the upper hand due to his observation that "recent trends in Chinese Communist propaganda and news releases shows a closer connection with Soviet policy statements than has been evident in recent years."<sup>89</sup> Davies believed that the

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<sup>85</sup> Kenneth E. Shewmaker, "The 'Agrarian Reformer' Myth," *The China Quarterly*, no. 34 (1968): 66-81. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/651370>

<sup>86</sup> White and Jacoby 1946, 234.

<sup>87</sup> Joiner 2009, 152.

<sup>88</sup> "Memorandum by the Second Secretary of Embassy in China (Ludden) to General Marshall," March 9, 1946, *FRUS Volume IX: The Far East: China*, 513-516. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1946v09/d228>

<sup>89</sup> "Memorandum by the Second Secretary of Embassy in China (Ludden) to General Marshall."

CCP was divided between a Maoist dogmatist faction and a more pragmatic and moderate faction more open to working with Americans.<sup>90</sup>

All in all, there was quite a diverse set of views regarding the Chinese Communists and their relations to the Soviets at the time. One reason for the wide range of perceptions was simply that hard evidence regarding the true nature of the Chinese Communist-Soviet relationship was lacking. Another reason for the diversity of perceptions, at least relative to the later 1950s period, was that a strong anti-communist interest group had not yet risen and enforced a misconception about communism that would warp U.S. policy on China and the Cold War in general.

Despite the plurality of perceptions among experts, all were united in their belief that the Soviet Union was the foremost threat to the United States. All policy proposals regarding China and the CCP were framed by a stated interest in limiting Soviet power and influence. Another common view held by experts was that nationalism and communism were at least somewhat mutually exclusive. The overarching goal of China Hands, as John Fairbank has argued, was for the United States to encourage Chinese nationalism among Chinese Communists so as to prevent their alignment with the Soviets.<sup>91</sup>

## Conclusion

The period between 1944 and 1949 was a period of diverse and dynamic views among China experts and the foreign policy community regarding the development of the CCP and their relationship with the Soviet Union. While Snow and Fairbank saw Chinese Communists as agrarian reformers, Service saw them as progressive, democratic socialists, yet still others saw them as revolutionary Bolsheviks. Just as views varied from individual to individual, they also

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<sup>90</sup> Davies Jr., *China Hand: An Autobiography*, 224.

<sup>91</sup> Fairbank, *The United States and China*, 335.

varied over time, year to year. At the beginning of this period, experts such as Kennan questioned the fervency of the CCP in their Marxist ideology. But as the Communists grew stronger, voicing their ideology ever louder, scoring ever more victories against the Nationalists, experts were convinced of the CCP's degree of communist fervency.

The greater degree of diversity in views in this period was due to at least a couple of reasons. Firstly, there was a lack of definitive intelligence gathered on the CCP and their relations with Moscow. Experts had to entertain multiple hypotheses to fill in the gap of their knowledge. Secondly, and more importantly, views of communism and the Sino-Soviet relationship had not yet become rigid. America's view of the world had not yet ossified into a dichotomous, zero-sum struggle between a communist world and a democratic world. But this was fast changing. The establishment of the Truman Doctrine and the policy of containment locked the U.S. into the Cold War with the Soviet Union. Perceptions of the Chinese Communists changed month by month due to the dynamic military and political developments in China.

As Chinese Communist victories increased in China, observers noted the CCP's growing alignment with Moscow's position. A self-fulfilling prophecy was seemingly sprung. Just as American direct intervention in China's civil war would have confirmed the CCP's Marxist-nationalist suspicion of the U.S, Communist victory in China confirmed America's suspicion of the invasive spread of communism. Yet amidst the diverse and dynamic views of international communism, one view became constant in the context of the developing Cold War: to better fight the Soviet Union, the U.S. must seek to deprive it of an ally in China.

## Chapter 2: Reinforcing Misconceptions, 1950 – 1956

### Introduction

“Ladies and gentlemen, while I cannot take the time to name all the men in the State Department who have been named as active members of the Communist Party and members of a spy ring, I have here in my hand a list of 205 – a list of names that were made known to the Secretary of State as being members of the Communist Party and who nevertheless are still working and shaping policy in the State Department.”<sup>92</sup> With this pronouncement delivered in a public address in Wheeling, West Virginia, on February 9, 1950, Senator Joseph McCarthy set off a nationwide sensationalist firestorm. A purge unlike any witnessed before or since was launched within the federal government to root out Communist spies, saboteurs, and sympathizers, real or imagined. The purge led to the sacking of more than 2,000 civil servants and cut short the careers of many academics, journalists, and even Hollywood producers.

McCarthy’s witch-hunt represented a huge setback to the progress of America’s foreign policy regarding Communist China and the Soviet Union. By extension, McCarthyism hindered accurate perceptions of Sino-Soviet relations by not only eliminating and silencing influential experts of China and the Soviet Union, but also replacing their educated voices with fear mongering. Yet, in spite of the best efforts of McCarthy and his supporters, diversity of perceptions regarding Sino-Soviet relations and non-monolithic views of communism survived in the recesses of the government that McCarthy could not reach: among lower ranking policy experts and within the private thoughts and considerations of experts at all levels.

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<sup>92</sup> Arthur Herman, *Joseph McCarthy: Reexamining the Life and Legacy of America's Most Hated Senator* (New York: Free Press, 2000), 99.

In any case, McCarthyism was not the only force reinforcing misconceptions of communism. U.S. Cold War strategy was already framing the world as a dualistic competitive arena while armed conflict between Communists and Americans seemingly confirmed American misconceptions about the international communist agenda.

In this chapter, I argue that American perceptions of Sino-Soviet relations became more rigid while communism was misconceived as a monolith due to the solidification of U.S. Cold War grand strategy, increasing aggressiveness of the Chinese Communists, and the influence of McCarthyism. NSC-68 and NSC-162 were policy documents, drafted in 1950 and 1953 respectively, which guided U.S. foreign policy along a heavily militarized path for the next thirty-five years of the Cold War. Chinese Communist intervention in the Korean War and their provocation of the First Taiwan Strait Crisis were interpreted as Soviet-directed and reckless aggression and was thus met with U.S. counter-action. Simultaneously, McCarthy's charges resulted in the purge of the many influential China experts from the State Department, thus reducing diversity and pluralism of perception and policy proposals among the higher ranks of policymaking. Despite this three-pronged assault on diverse perceptions of Sino-Soviet relations and the rise of monolithic views of communism, the plurality of viewpoints that had existed in the 1940s nevertheless survived this tumultuous period within the lower echelons of the intelligence community and among diplomats abroad, sometimes even making its way into the high level National Intelligence Estimates.

I began this chapter in 1950 as it is the year when the once open and diverse perceptions of communism held by top government officials such as Secretary of State Dean Acheson and President Truman turned rigid and monolithic. 1950 saw three events that helped construct the monolithic communism misconception: Senator McCarthy's speech "exposing" alleged



Communists in the State Department, the adoption of NSC-68 outlining the militarization of the Cold War, and the Chinese intervention in the Korean War. I end the chapter at the beginning of 1956, just before Khrushchev delivered his “Secret Speech,” which set off a definitive ideological split between the Soviets and the Chinese Communists.

### 1950: A Busy Year in U.S.-Sino-Soviet Relations

1950 began as a year of setbacks for the Truman Administration. Within the last five months of 1949, the Soviet Union detonated its first atomic bomb and the Chinese Communists solidified their control of mainland China. Acheson and Truman were taking the brunt of criticism from the China Lobby for the alleged “loss of China”. Publically, Acheson’s opinion on foreign policy at the beginning of 1950 seemed to indicate pull-back and non-intervention in China. For instance, ambiguous statements made by Secretary of the State Dean Acheson at a January 1950 National Press Club Speech seemed to suggest that neither Formosa nor Korea would be considered part of the U.S.’s Pacific defensive perimeter, which “runs along the Aleutians to Japan and then goes to the Ryukyus... to the Philippine Islands.”<sup>93</sup> In this speech, Acheson also made clear that Soviet communism was just a new form of Russian imperialism, seeking to detach China’s peripheral provinces and incorporate them into the Soviet Union.<sup>94</sup>

While Acheson’s ambiguous public statements implied non-intervention on continental Asia, Truman and some other top officials were already subscribing to a more rigid view of communism. President Truman in particular had made public statements about the monolithic nature of communism and linked China and the Soviet Union in a conspiracy against the free

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<sup>93</sup> “Speech on the Far East,” January 12, 1950, CIA Library. <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/1950-01-12.pdf>

<sup>94</sup> “Speech on the Far East.”

world.<sup>95</sup> In his January 1950 State of the Union Address, Truman stated that “In the world today we are confronted with the danger that the rising demand of people everywhere for freedom and a better life may be corrupted and betrayed by the false promises of communism.”<sup>96</sup> He would later claim in a public radio report that “the Communists in the Kremlin are engaged in a monstrous conspiracy to stamp out freedom all over the world.”<sup>97</sup>

Communist China and the Soviet Union were at the time negotiating the terms of the new Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance, and Mutual Assistance, signed on February 14, 1950. This treaty covered many of the same points as the previous 1945 treaty signed with the Nationalist government. Even before the treaty was concluded, Secretary of State Dean Acheson recognized that the negotiations were dragging on due to Chinese resistance to very high Soviet demands. These demands included mining, railroad and other concessions in the Chinese northern regions of Manchuria and Xinjiang as well as the use of two Chinese ports by the Soviet navy.<sup>98</sup> Secretary Acheson was particularly keen to have picked up on the potentially conflict-inducing haggling between the Chinese and the Soviets.

U.S. official foreign policy was also becoming more rigid. The National Security Council made explicit in NSC-48, approved on December 30, 1949, that it continued to recognize the Nationalist Government of China and was “giving no serious consideration to recognition of the Communist regime.”<sup>99</sup> Additionally, NSC-48 committed the U.S. to developing the military strength of non-communist countries in Asia, economic aid to those countries, and the reduction

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<sup>95</sup> Mayers, *Cracking the Monolith*, 62.

<sup>96</sup> “Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union,” January 4, 1950, Truman Library. <https://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/tap/1450.htm>

<sup>97</sup> “Radio Report to the American People on Korea and on U.S. Policy in the Far East,” April 11, 1951, Truman Library. <https://www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=290>

<sup>98</sup> “The Secretary of State to the Embassy in France,” February 11, 1950, in U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1950, Volume VI: East Asia and the Pacific*, (Washington, 1976), 310. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1950v06/p310>

<sup>99</sup> “National Security Council Progress Report by the Undersecretary of State (Webb),” February 27, 1950, in *FRUS 1950 Volume VI: East Asia and the Pacific*, 31-35. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1950v06/d16>

the influence of the USSR in Asia. Simultaneously, the U.S. had withdrawn all official government personnel from Communist areas in China, following the Communist seizure of the American Consulate General in Beijing.<sup>100</sup>

In April 1950, a landmark Cold War policy paper was presented to President Truman. NSC-68 called for significant peacetime military spending, increased military aid to U.S. allies, offensive operations to destroy Soviet war-making capacity, and implied a rejection of friendly détente with the Soviet Union.<sup>101</sup> In short, NSC-68 “provided the blueprint for the militarization of the Cold War from 1950 to the collapse of the Soviet Union at the beginning of the 1990s.”<sup>102</sup> The document called communism “a new fanatical faith, antithetical to our own...”<sup>103</sup> It also portrayed communism as entirely Soviet controlled in which countries that subscribe to it are “subservient to and controlled by the Kremlin.”<sup>104</sup> The U.S. would be locked into total rivalry against a communist monolith. Such a view of communism as espoused by this document would weigh on the minds of many policymakers of the entirety of the Cold War.

NSC-68 soon took on new importance and the Truman administration’s non-interventionist stance in China/East Asia would reverse entirely. On June 25, 1950, communist North Korea crossed the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel and invaded South Korea. The United States swiftly responded by deploying troops to support South Korea (also assisted by the United Nations), and surprised both Stalin and Mao who had bought into Truman’s previous non-interventionist stance in East Asia. Additionally, Truman also sent the U.S. Seventh Fleet to the Taiwan Strait, a show of force and support for the Nationalist government on Taiwan.<sup>105</sup> Despite initial setbacks, the

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<sup>100</sup> “National Security Council Progress Report by the Undersecretary of State (Webb).”

<sup>101</sup> “A Report to the National Security Council – NSC 68,” April 12, 1950, Truman Library. [https://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/coldwar/documents/pdf/10-1.pdf](https://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/coldwar/documents/pdf/10-1.pdf)

<sup>102</sup> Ernest R. May, *American Cold War Strategy Interpreting NSC 68* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 1993) vii.

<sup>103</sup> “A Report to the National Security Council – NSC 68,” 4.

<sup>104</sup> “A Report to the National Security Council – NSC 68,” 6.

<sup>105</sup> Henry Kissinger, *On China* (New York: Penguin Press, 2011), 130.

South Korean/United Nations forces were able to make large advances against the North Koreans, pushing the communist forces northward right against North Korea's border with China. Soon thereafter in November 1950, a massive Chinese intervention drove the South Korean/UN forces back down the peninsula.

As the U.S. no longer maintained an embassy in mainland, communist-controlled China, the Indians acted as the U.S.'s "behind-the-lines" China-observer. Most reports made by the Indian ambassador to the U.S. ambassador on the status of Sino-Soviet relations showed the Soviets to be in strong support of Mao. For instance, according to Indian observations, the Soviets provided military support if Mao decided to invade Taiwan. On the other hand, the U.S. ambassador to the Soviet Union Alexander C. Kirk reported to Acheson in July 1950 that Indian Ambassador Radhakrishnan "wondered whether [the U.S.] could expect Koreans not to be influenced in their political orientation by their proximity to [the] USSR and Communist China, adding, however that with Stalin's demise, he thought Mao would cut his apron-strings which now tie him to the Kremlin."<sup>106</sup>

It is precisely the latter part of Radhakrishnan's statement that highlights the potential for a Sino-Soviet Split. This part of the statement was also telling in that it differentiated between Mao's relationship with Stalin and Mao's relationship with the Kremlin. Radhakrishnan realized that once Stalin's successor replaces him, Mao may no longer have as close a relationship (if any relationship at all) with the new leader as Mao once had with Stalin. Reports by the Indians to

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<sup>106</sup> "The Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Kirk) to the Secretary of State," July 5, 1950, in U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1950, Volume VII: Korea* (Washington, 1976), 302. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1950v07/p302>

the U.S. in September of 1950 suggested that China was by no means a satellite of the USSR and that China was likely to “follow their own line while leaning to the side of the Soviets.”<sup>107</sup>

George Kennan was even more tolerant of the Chinese Communists than Secretary Acheson had been. Kennan was especially persistent in pursuing opportunities that could split the Chinese Communists and the Soviets. (He had earlier pursued efforts to exploit the Stalin-Tito split). Such an opportunity arose in July. On July 10, 1950, the PRC conveyed through the Indian envoy that it welcomed Korean armistice talks on the condition that Beijing was granted a UN seat and Korea restored to its status quo ante bellum by full UN Security Council participation. Such a move would include Soviet participation in stopping the war. The Soviet Union however rejected the latter condition. Given how badly the war was going for the South Koreans at the time, Kennan wrote in his diary that “we should not be negative about any efforts being made anywhere to solve the Korean affair, and especially when they appeared to reveal possibilities of splitting the Chinese Communists from the Russians on issues of real importance... This might place the Soviet government before the dilemma of returning to the Security Council and publically disagreeing with the Chinese Communists in the UN about Korea or remaining outside the Security Council while the Chinese Communists were in it, thus producing a very strange and embarrassing situation for themselves.”<sup>108</sup>

Following initial incursions by smaller Chinese forces in October, the People’s Liberation Army then launched an attack en masse in late November. The sudden attack along with the onset of a bitter cold winter caught the American troops off guard and forced them to retreat down the Korean peninsula.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> “The Ambassador to India (Henderson) to the Secretary of State,” September 20, 1950, in *FRUS 1950, Volume VII: Korea*, 743. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1950v07/p743>

<sup>108</sup> George F. Kennan, *Memoirs* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1967-72), 491-93.

<sup>109</sup> Marc J. Selverstone, *Constructing the Monolith The United States, Great Britain, and International Communism*,

Back in Washington, the Chinese intervention in the Korean War seemed to have had the effect of temporarily obscuring the potential strains of Sino-Soviet relations, even to Secretary Acheson himself. In a December 1950 White House cabinet meeting between President Truman and his staff (including Acheson and top generals) and British Prime Minister Clement Atlee, Acheson made a statement regarding the Chinese intervention in Korea that captured the essence of the monolithic communism misconception:

“The Chinese Communists were not looking at the matter [the Korean War] as Chinese but as communists who are subservient to Moscow. All they do is based on the Moscow pattern, and they are better pupils even than the Eastern European satellites. The Russians are no doubt pleased with the idea that we might be fully engaged in war with the Chinese Communists who are acting as their satellites.”<sup>110</sup>

Such a statement from Acheson represented a departure from his previous more open-minded statements regarding China’s long-term relationship with the Soviet Union as well as his appreciation of difficulties experienced by both China and the Soviet Union in negotiating the recent Sino-Soviet Treaty. His statement also had a paternalistic air and a racist undertone. But then again, his statement may not be all that surprising when viewed in the context of recent developments in the Korean War. The unexpected intervention by half a million Chinese troops put the U.S./UN forces in a precarious position.

In the cabinet meeting, President Truman declared that “they [China] are satellites of Russia and will be satellites so long as the present Peiping [Beijing] regime is in power.” He

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*1945-1950*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 183.

<sup>110</sup> “United States Delegation Minutes of the First Meeting of President Truman and Prime Minister Atlee,” December 4, 1950, in *FRUS 1950 Volume 7: Korea*, 1367.  
<https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1950v07/p1367>

added that the “only way to meet communism is to eliminate it.” British Prime Minister Attlee was less convinced on the degree to which Chinese Communists were satellites, even inquiring “when is it that you scratch a communist and find a nationalist?” He went on to remark that “Russia posed as the friend of Communist China,” and reminded the President and his staff that “Tito was also a full communist.”<sup>111</sup> It is likely that Attlee’s view was less rigid towards the Chinese Communists since Britain had recognized the People’s Republic of China as the legitimate government in China.

The Chinese intervention made Truman, Acheson, and many others in the administration reconsider their previously held pluralistic and non-monolithic view of communism. Even if the views of top officials regarding communism and Sino-Soviet relations had not solidified – thus retaining a degree of pluralism and openness – domestic political pressures would obscure evidence of the growing tensions between China and the Soviet Union and force non-monolithic views of communism off the main stage of policymaking. While party politics played a role – Democrats tried to placate the anti-communist Republicans in Congress – a new and more virulent type of anti-communism arose: McCarthyism.

### McCarthyism

Prior to his February 1950 speech, Republican Senator Joseph McCarthy was a little known politician from Wisconsin. In the few years before McCarthy’s sensationalist speech, communist infiltration had already become a concern within the U.S. government. President Truman had signed Executive Order 9835 in March 1947, which required all federal government employees to be screened for loyalty. Affiliation with or sympathy for totalitarian, fascist, communist, or subversive organizations was enough to determine disloyalty to the U.S.

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<sup>111</sup> “United States Delegation Minutes of the First Meeting of President Truman and Prime Minister Attlee,” 1369.

government.<sup>112</sup> Since the signing of the Executive Order, evidence that actual Soviet spies had infiltrated the U.S. government surfaced while the Chinese Communist victory and the Soviet testing of their first atomic bomb, both occurring in 1949, stoked fears of communism.<sup>113</sup> McCarthy's speech could not have been made at a more opportune time to stoke paranoia.

Within Congress, McCarthy found supporters among conservative Republicans as well as some Southern Democrats. These Senators were united in their anti-communism and saw the Truman administration's policies on communism as weak. Senator Pat McCarran, a Democrat from Nevada, became a natural ally of McCarthy. McCarran was already one of the Senate's most ardent anti-Communists, having blamed alleged Soviet spies in the State Department for the "loss of China" in 1949.<sup>114</sup> More importantly, Senator McCarran chaired the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee (SISS), the authority before which many supposed communist sympathizers testified and saw their careers ruined. One did not have to be convicted, simply being subpoenaed was often enough for one to lose his job. Among those who testified before SISS were many experts of China, such as scholars and Foreign Service officers.

Given its anti-communist agenda, the China Lobby was an obvious ally of McCarthy. Since the Chinese Communist victory, the goal of the China Lobby was to continue economic and military support for Chiang's government, prevent U.S. recognition of the People's Republic of China, and support American efforts to block Communist China from a seat in the United Nations. The "Senator from Formosa," William Knowland, was a vocal supporter of McCarthy.

One particular event that highlights the ties between McCarthyist circles and the China Lobby was a dinner hosted by the Nationalist Chinese ambassador in Washington following the 1952 presidential campaign. Senators McCarran, McCarthy, and Knowland were all in

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<sup>112</sup> Robert Justin Goldstein, "Prelude to McCarthyism: The Making of a Blacklist," *Prologue Magazine*, Fall 2006.

<sup>113</sup> Herman, *Joseph McCarthy*, 98.

<sup>114</sup> Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power*, 295.



attendance. In light of the Republican victory ushering in the Eisenhower administration, the three Senators, among others, raised their glasses and toasted, “Back to the mainland!” an unrealistic cry cheering on the Nationalists to re-conquer mainland China from the Communists.<sup>115</sup>

The McCarthyist hysteria directly affected the realm of foreign policy-making within the State Department and the White House. George Kennan declared in a May 1953 address to the Century Club that “I do not see how you can have a satisfactory situation as long as an atmosphere in which simple alternatives of foreign policy cannot even be discussed without leading to charges of subversion and treason – an atmosphere in which name calling and insinuation take the place of calm and free debate...”<sup>116</sup>

Simple alternatives of foreign policy here could refer to any policy suggestion in the least bit lenient to either Communist China or the Soviet Union. The disproportionate influence of Senator McCarthy paralyzed the free discussion and debate of foreign policy of two administrations for the better part of an entire decade. Since then, McCarthyism has become synonymous with the postwar Red Scare. Explicit statements that summed up the rhetoric of McCarthyists regarding communists included “Once you’ve seen one commie, you’ve seen them all” and “The only good commie is a dead one.” Such rhetoric enforced perception of communism as a monolith among many government officials and the American general public.

McCarthyists also believed that communism could only be Soviet and that all communists were completely under Soviet control. Applied domestically, this belief was exemplified in the claim that any member of the Communist Party USA was a puppet of Soviet intelligence services. Applied internationally, this belief held that “in six years, the communistic

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<sup>115</sup> Koen, *The China Lobby*, 99.

<sup>116</sup> Mayers, *Cracking the Monolith*, 161.

world had expanded from 180 to 800 million people under the absolute domination of Soviet Russia.”<sup>117</sup> This quote from McCarthy himself, meant that Eastern Europe and China (with a population of over 500 million at the time) had both come under absolute Soviet domination. In McCarthy’s eyes, a monolithic communist enemy had just grown nearly five-fold in size.

McCarthy’s colleague, Senator McCarran, held these views, too. In a November 1951 interview with *U.S. News and World Report*, McCarran stated: “You’ve got to come to the conclusion that today Communist China is the vassal of the Kremlin. There is no doubt in my mind at all as to that.”<sup>118</sup> Such words were the epitome of the Soviet-led monolithic communism misconception.

The influence of McCarthy on Truman and Eisenhower’s top administration officials such as their respective Secretaries of State, Acheson and Dulles, was disproportionate. Many of the State Department’s Foreign Service officers with expertise on China, found “guilty” of disloyalty and communist sympathies by McCarran’s SSISS, were ultimately fired by Acheson and Dulles under political pressure from McCarthy.

The China Hands of the Dixie Mission became easy targets for McCarthy. The lead political observer of the mission, John Service, had predicted in 1944 that a civil war between Communists and Nationalists and an eventual Communist victory were inevitable. Service’s starkly accurate forecast of China’s political future was interpreted by McCarthy as an expression of communist sympathies and part of a pro-Communist plot. Service was summoned before the State Department’s Loyalty Security Board in May of 1951 (though not the SSISS). Despite repeated testimonies that cleared Service of guilt of disloyalty, Service was periodically

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<sup>117</sup> Herman, *Joseph McCarthy*, 98.

<sup>118</sup> “Communist Threat inside U.S.,” *U.S. News and World Report*, November 16, 1951, 27-28.

re-investigated until the final review board found Service's loyalty doubtful. Secretary Acheson, under political pressures from McCarthyists, dismissed Service from the State Department.<sup>119</sup>

John Paton Davies Jr., the initiator of the Dixie Mission and among the earliest proponents of an active U.S. policy in hindering Sino-Soviet relations, suffered a similar fate. But unlike Service, Davies had to testify before McCarran and the SISS, who were considered the most intense anticommunist committees, in addition to the State Department's Loyalty Security Board. Nine investigations were conducted against Davies and none produced any evidence of disloyalty or communist sympathies. If anything, Davies was ultimately on the same side as his McCarthyist inquisitors in that both their goals were to weaken communism and the Soviet Union. Davis summarized his position on fighting the Soviets as follows:

“If in our struggle with the Soviet world we are to win out without resort to war, a split in the Soviet-Chinese bloc would seem to be an essential prerequisite. Short of the overthrow of the Soviet regime, the most devastating political defeat that the USSR could suffer would be Peking's defection from Moscow's camp.”<sup>120</sup>

Despite Davies' position and lack of incriminating evidence, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles fired him, under political pressure from Senator McCarthy.<sup>121</sup>

For simply having interacted with Chinese Communists as part of their duty and/or for having utilized their expertise to correctly forecast the communist victory in China, these China Hands of the Foreign Service were questioned of their loyalty to the United States and suspected of being communists themselves. Out of twenty-two China Hands in the State Department in

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<sup>119</sup> Joiner, *Honorable Survivor*, 275

<sup>120</sup> Davies Jr., *China Hand: An Autobiography*, 337.

<sup>121</sup> Davies Jr., 6.

1950, only two were still working on Chinese affairs after the McCarthyist purge.<sup>122</sup> Although some China Hands were not purged outright, they were often transferred to work in a different policy area for which they had little expertise. Service took up a private sector job before being reinstated by the State Department to head the U.S. consulate in Liverpool, England while Davies moved to Peru to begin a furniture business.

China Hands outside of the government were not safe from the McCarthyist witch-hunt either. Perhaps the most prominent of McCarthy's victims was the Sinologist Owen Lattimore, whom McCarthy had accused of being the top Soviet spy in the U.S.<sup>123</sup> The details of Lattimore's examination by McCarthy are worth discussing. By 1950, Lattimore was a leading scholar of Chinese and Mongolian culture, a professor of East Asian studies at Johns Hopkins University, and an occasional consultant to the State Department. Having mastered the Chinese language in the early 1920s through his business travel experiences in China, Lattimore then pursued academia and became editor of *Pacific Affairs*, a scholarly journal covering research on Asian/Pacific political, economic, and social issues, published by the Institute of Pacific Relations (IPR). During World War II, Lattimore was critical of Chiang and offered sympathetic views of the Chinese Communists.<sup>124</sup>

In 1950, McCarthy took up the attacks on Lattimore, accusing him of being the top Soviet agent in the U.S. Lattimore was summoned to testify numerous times before various Congressional committees.<sup>125</sup> His last testimony was before Senator McCarran's SISS in February 1952. The SISS testimony amounted to a twelve day shouting match between Lattimore on one side and McCarran and McCarthy on the other. McCarran charged the IPR of

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<sup>122</sup> James R. Fuchs, "Oral History Interview with Ambassador Philip D. Sprouse," February 11, 1974, Truman Presidential Library. <https://www.trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/sprousep.htm>

<sup>123</sup> Davies Jr., *China Hand: An Autobiography*, 326.

<sup>124</sup> Robert P. Newman, *Owen Lattimore and the "Loss" of China*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 20-140.

<sup>125</sup> Newman, *Owen Lattimore*, 250.

being “used for espionage purposes to collect and channel information of interest or value to the Russian Communists”<sup>126</sup> Lattimore was grilled on countless small details of his past writings and his motives, straining his own memory. Whenever Lattimore could not satisfactorily answer McCarran’s questions about arcane and obscure matters from his early days of editing *Pacific Affairs*, Lattimore was presumed to be lying. Thus, in the end, Lattimore was indicted by the SISS on seven counts of perjury. Lattimore’s case featured a common pattern to McCarthy’s prosecutions with other China Hands as well: repeated testimonies and aggressive questioning on minute details were meant deliberately to trap the victim.

Following his indictment, Lattimore was barred from consulting for the government in any capacity. Johns Hopkins put him on paid leave, but did not fire him even though many on the board of trustees wanted to. Three years after the indictment, a federal judge dismissed the charges and cleared Lattimore of any wrongdoing. However, Lattimore’s reputation was already damaged. The numerous speaking invitations that Lattimore once received from universities across America had all but disappeared.<sup>127</sup>

Fortunately for the State Department and other foreign policy institutions, McCarthy’s rampage was restrained by late 1954. In seeking to investigate communist subversion in the U.S. Army in 1954, McCarthy went too far and was discredited. Public opinion turned against him and the Senate voted to censure him in December 1954. McCarthy died in 1957 after his health declined due to alcoholism and heroin addiction.<sup>128</sup>

By then, the damage was done. Had Service, Davies, and other China Hands been allowed to keep their jobs and be promoted (as many were due for promotions prior to investigations), who knows what direction America’s Sino-Soviet policy could have taken from

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<sup>126</sup> Newman, 361.

<sup>127</sup> Newman, 441.

<sup>128</sup> Herman, *Joseph McCarthy*, 302-3.

the early 1950s onward? Instead, conduct of policy would limp forward as new China Hands gradually gained greater influence.

#### Korea: Sino-American Conflict, 1951-53

Despite McCarthy's assault on China Hands at home, China Hands in the Foreign Service abroad continued to provide observations and analysis on China the best they could. Perhaps the most prominent China Hand serving abroad during the Korean War years was Walter McConaughy. McConaughy, a Duke graduate from Alabama, had been working in the Foreign Service since 1930, seeing service across Latin America, Japan, and China. In 1948, he became the consul general in Shanghai, witnessed the Communist army capture the city, and closed the consulate in May 1950 as the last American Foreign Service post in mainland China. Throughout the Korean War, McConaughy was the consul general in British-controlled Hong Kong.<sup>129</sup>

Much of the analyses by McConaughy and other experts from early 1951 to the end of the Korean War in July 1953 focused on potential differences between how Moscow and Beijing wanted to prosecute the war. The issue of Soviet military aid to China was one point of contention. Historians now know that the CCP was less than satisfied with Soviet military aid during the war, which was of modest quantity, obsolete quality, and ungraciously required the CCP to pay for it in full.<sup>130</sup> Yet, even as early as September 1951, McConaughy noted that "The point has now been reached where additional [Chinese] dependence on the Soviets for economic necessities is more likely to work in our favor than against us by hastening the day when China becomes disillusioned with Russian aid. Only when the Chinese become convinced that they

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<sup>129</sup> Wolfgang Saxon, "Walter McConaughy, 92, Envoy in Asia, Dies," *The New York Times*, November 14, 2000.

<sup>130</sup> Mayers, *Cracking the Monolith*, 98.

have more to gain from rapprochement with the West than from continued dependence on the USSR will they be in a mood to loosen ties with Russia.”<sup>131</sup>

As the Korean War dragged on, even the most skeptical of Sino-Soviet cohesion were forced to abandon their longer term plans to drive a wedge between Moscow and Beijing. McConaughy noted on December 20, 1950 that “Not until thus far victorious advance of Communism in Asia can be checked will there be any conceivable hope of convincing Chinese Communists it is not China’s advantage to hitch their wagon to Russian Star [sic].”<sup>132</sup>

### Beginnings of In-Depth Studies of Sino-Soviet Relations

In-depth studies of Sino-Soviet relations by intelligence community analysts (distinct from diplomats) began to appear during the Korean War years. These studies demonstrated that plurality of perceptions of communism and Sino-Soviet relations weathered through the McCarthyist disruption, ensconced within the CIA or in the lower rungs of State Department’s bureaucracy. The survival of diverse perceptions among less conspicuous circles would make sense because McCarthy and his allies targeted high-level officials rather than officials of a lower profile. Additionally, the CIA and think tanks such as Rand, developed a reputation for protecting its employees from anti-communist witch hunts.<sup>133</sup>

Beginning in 1950, the CIA coordinated research and circulation of National Intelligence Estimates (NIE) through its Office of National Estimates sub-agency (ONE). These were “high-

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<sup>131</sup> Mayers, 103.

<sup>132</sup> “The Consul General at Hong Kong (McConaughy) to the Secretary of State,” December 20, 1950, *FRUS 1950 Volume VI: East Asia and the Pacific*. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1950v06/p605>

<sup>133</sup> Koen, *The China Lobby*, xiv.

level interdepartmental reports presenting authoritative appraisals of vital foreign policy problems.”<sup>134</sup> NIE reports were top-secret classified documents at the time.

Among the earliest NIE reports, NIE-55, issued in December of 1951, noted that while the Chinese Communists probably entered the Korean War in full accord with the USSR, the Chinese’s heavy burden in the war and its dependence on the USSR for war supplies have undoubtedly created problems in the relations between the two governments.<sup>135</sup> NIE-58, the CIA’s first comprehensive assessment of Sino-Soviet relations, issued on September 10, 1952, proposed various courses that future Sino-Soviet relations could take within a two-year time frame (1952-1954). Among reasons that would ensure the continuation of Sino-Soviet alliance were their common ideology, China’s military and economic dependence on the USSR for as long as the Korean War continued, and the U.S.’s continued assistance to the Nationalist government in Taiwan. Several reasons were given for why Sino-Soviet solidarity could weaken. First, there has been a long history of Sino-Russian border disputes. The Sino-Soviet Treaty of 1950 could not have permanently settled these disputes. Secondly, Communist China desired to be a center of influence in the Far East and may thus prioritize Far Eastern objectives much more than the Soviets do. Thirdly, while Moscow may try to extend and intensify its control over China, Chinese Communist leaders would not accept complete Soviet domination of China. Interestingly, the report also notes that both a Chinese effort to unilaterally revise its relationship

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<sup>134</sup> National Intelligence Estimate 58, “Relations Between the Chinese Communist Regime and the USSR: their present character and probable future courses,” September 10, 1952, in U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1952-54 Volume XIV Part 1: China and Japan* (Washington, 1985), 97-103.

<https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1952-54v14p1/d50>

<sup>135</sup> “Draft Statement of Policy Proposed by the National Security Council on United States Objectives and Courses of Action in Korea,” December 7, 1951, in U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1951 Volume VII Part 1: Korea and China* (Washington, 1983), 1272.

<https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1951v7p1/p1272>



with the USSR or a Soviet effort to reduce China to a status similar to the Eastern European satellites might lead to armed conflict between China and the USSR.<sup>136</sup>

By 1953, two and a half years before Khrushchev's landmark "Secret Speech," three China-observers of the CIA made an accurate prediction that "a deterioration in Sino-Soviet relations, for whatever cause, may quite probably be signaled first in divergent assertions regarding theoretical matters."<sup>137</sup> Theoretical matters include ideology, over which the "Secret Speech" instigated a divide.

### Policy under Eisenhower

In 1952, Dwight D. Eisenhower was elected into office in part due to public discontent with the ongoing Korean War and the "loss of China", both blamed on the Democrats. As soon as the Republican administration took office, its top policy-makers resumed their more rigid and militant stand against communism, at least publically. Beneath the pugnacious rhetoric, the Eisenhower administration retained much of Truman's foreign policy.<sup>138</sup>

As the administration changed, Acheson was replaced by John Foster Dulles as Secretary of State. A corporate lawyer by training, Dulles gained international experience in the private sector. In 1919, Dulles served as legal counsel to the U.S. delegation to the Versailles Peace Conference and throughout the 1920s was pivotal in restructuring German reparation payments.<sup>139</sup> Decades later in 1950, Truman appointed him to serve as a consultant to Acheson in order to promote bipartisanship in foreign policy. Indeed, Dulles was particularly competent with East Asian affairs and would become one of the most powerful Secretaries of State in U.S.

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<sup>136</sup> NIE-58, 97-103.

<sup>137</sup> Philip Bridgham, Arthur Cohen, and Leonard Jaffe, "Mao's Road and Sino-Soviet Relations: A View from Washington, 1953," *The China Quarterly*, no. 52, 670-698.

<sup>138</sup> Mayers, *Cracking the Monolith*, 110.

<sup>139</sup> "Dulles, John Foster, (1888-1959)," Biographical Directory of the United States Congress. <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=d000522>

history. The former five-star general and Allied Supreme Commander in Europe during World War II, Eisenhower was less experienced in diplomacy and relied heavily on Dulles.<sup>140</sup>

Eisenhower's so-called "New Look" foreign policy was laid out in NSC-162/2, approved by the President on October 30, 1953. NSC-162/2 further rigidified and militarized the rhetoric and policy regarding communism by suggesting a U.S. use of nuclear weapons against the Soviet Union or China if they attacked the U.S. or any country of the "Free World."<sup>141</sup> Regarding the Sino-Soviet alliance, NSC-162/2 stated that the "alliance between the regimes of Communist China and the USSR is based on common ideology and current community of interest. With the death of Stalin and the Korean truce, Communist China may tend more to emphasize its own interests though limited by its present economic and military dependence on the USSR, and, in the long run, basic differences may strain or break the alliance." For this last recognition to be made in 1953 in such an influential policy document suggests that top officials ultimately held reservations about communism being monolithic in spite of all the rhetoric.

Following on the heels of NSC 162/2 was NSC 166. Approved on November 6, 1953, this document "was the single most comprehensive assessment made of American policy toward China during Eisenhower's first term," according to historian David Allen Mayers.<sup>142</sup> NSC 166 called for continued economic sanctions on China to hinder "Chinese Communist efforts to achieve industrialization and oblige the USSR to continue to carry the burden of assisting Communist China."<sup>143</sup> The document also recognized that breaking the Sino-Soviet alliance could not be achieved through external pressures alone, but through the "inner workings of the

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<sup>140</sup> Mayers, *Cracking the Monolith*, 111.

<sup>141</sup> NSC-162/2, "Report to the National Security Council by the Executive Secretary (Lay)," October 30, 1953, in U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1952-1954 Volume II Part 1: National Security Affairs*, (Washington, 1984), 577-596. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1952-54v02p1/d101>

<sup>142</sup> Mayers, *Cracking the Monolith*, 123.

<sup>143</sup> NSC-166/1, "U.S. Policy Towards Communist China," November 6, 1953, *FRUS 1952-1954 Volume XIV Part 1*, 279-306. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1952-54v14p1/d149>

partnership.”<sup>144</sup> In both NSC 162/2 and 166 and in subsequent NSC documents, the phrase “Impair Sino-Soviet relations by all feasible overt and covert means” became something of a slogan.

While this “squeeze” policy of creating economic hardship for China so as to strain the USSR’s ability to help its ally, now formalized in NSC-166, had been stated by both McConaughy and Dulles since 1951, a “wedge” policy reminiscent of Dixie and Marshall Missions’ appeasement of the Chinese Communists was briefly resurrected. Chief U.S. negotiator of the Korean Armistice Agreement, Arthur Dean, suggested in early 1954 to improve relations with Mao.<sup>145</sup> But the China Lobby congressmen immediately rejected such a suggestion. These same congressmen also prevented Dulles from meeting with his Chinese counterpart, Zhou Enlai, at the Geneva Conference (April – July 1954), the first large-scale international conference attended by the PRC. The PRC’s attendance of the Geneva Conference helped it attain a greater degree of legitimacy on the international stage. During the conference, Dulles’ refusal to even shake hands with Zhou symbolized the U.S.’s lack of recognition of the PRC.<sup>146</sup>

In September 1954, Chinese Communist artillery opened fire on Quemoy (Jinmen) and Matsu, two islands in the Taiwan Strait only a few miles off the mainland coast occupied by the Nationalists. Back and forth shelling continued for eight months during which time the U.S. formally committed to help defend Taiwan (and Quemoy and Matsu) against Communist invasion, utilizing nuclear weapons if necessary.<sup>147</sup> Though hesitant at first, Eisenhower eventually gravitated toward a hardline response against the PRC by explicitly threatening the

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<sup>144</sup> NSC-166/1.

<sup>145</sup> Mayers, *Cracking the Monolith*, 130.

<sup>146</sup> Mayers, 131.

<sup>147</sup> Gordon H. Chang, *Friends and Enemies The United States, China, and the Soviet Union, 1948-1972* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 120-130.

use of nuclear weapons against the Chinese mainland as the crisis progressed. Fortunately for all sides involved, the U.S. never had to act on its commitment to Taiwan beyond delivering military aid and deploying its Seventh Fleet to the contested waters as a show of force. By late April 1955, the Chinese Communists stopped the shelling and asked to begin negotiations with the U.S.<sup>148</sup>

The State Department believed Moscow was uneasy with China's aggression. Eisenhower and Dulles both assumed that China was acting on its own in the crisis with little or no Soviet influence.<sup>149</sup> In fact, Dulles even stated in an executive session with the House Committee on Foreign Affairs that "the Soviet line has been less violent than the Chinese Communist line" and that "one would infer that their [Soviet's] disposition is to hold back the Chinese Communists."<sup>150</sup>

A recognition at the highest level of government – by Eisenhower and Dulles – that the Chinese Communists were acting independently of Soviets in an act of aggression represents a major departure from Truman and Acheson's thinking when the Chinese intervened in Korea four years earlier. They had expressed that the Chinese Communists were acting as pawns of the Soviets as illustrated in their talk with Attlee. While the general trend in those four years was a rigidification of perceptions of the Sino-Soviet relationship, there were certainly occasions such as this one where perceptions, even at the highest level of government, reflected a certain amount of intellectual flexibility.

By 1955, there were hopes within the Eisenhower administration that the "squeeze" strategy was beginning to work. At the July 1955 international Geneva conference, Dulles

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<sup>148</sup> Chang, *Friends and Enemies*, 137.

<sup>149</sup> Chang, 129.

<sup>150</sup> United States House Committee on Foreign Affairs, *U.S. Policy in the Far East: U.S. Policy and Japan. The Korean War and Peace Negotiations. South Asian and Related Problems* (Washington, 1980), 394.

learned from the British that the Soviets “regarded China as a drain on both their industrial and military sources.”<sup>151</sup> Additionally, British Prime Minister Harold MacMillan wondered following his meeting with the Soviets at Geneva when China would pose a threat to Soviet security in Siberia.<sup>152</sup> In hindsight, these hopes proved to be premature as the period between 1953 and 1956 represented a golden age in Sino-Soviet relations in which Khrushchev bolstered aid to China by sending thousands of economic specialists and political advisors.

A brief and fleeting moment for the relaxing of Sino-American tensions occurred in mid-1955 when Chinese foreign minister Zhou Enlai announced an end to the First Taiwan Strait Crisis and a desire to negotiate with the U.S. on a variety of issues. After some initial hesitation, Dulles agreed to commence talks with the PRC. The talks were held at the ambassadorial level in Warsaw between the Chinese ambassador to Czechoslovakia and the U.S. ambassador to Poland. These “Warsaw talks” would persist intermittently for the next fifteen years and serve as the principal point of contact between the U.S. and the PRC until Kissinger’s visit to China.

The only progress made during the talks was the release of some but not all American prisoners of war detained in China since the Korean War. No agreement could be made regarding the status of Taiwan, recognition of the PRC, trade, release of remaining prisoners, or any other issue. The hopes of those who advocated improving relations with China, such as Arthur Dean, were quashed.

## Conclusion

Regardless of one’s perceptions of Sino-Soviet relations, the overarching goal of U.S. policy was to at least damage the Sino-Soviet alliance. Those who believed communism to be

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<sup>151</sup> Mayers, *Cracking the Monolith*, 144.

<sup>152</sup> Mayers, 144.

monolithic sought to impair Sino-Soviet relations and those who knew communism wasn't monolithic sought the same. Impairing Sino-Soviet relations was carried out via two different strategies. Between 1944 and 1947, the U.S. tried – or was at least open to – appeasing the CCP (via KMT-CCP coalition negotiations) in an attempt to show them they need not rely on the USSR but can trust the U.S. This was the “wedge” strategy: it sought to drive a wedge between CCP and USSR. Such a strategy was conceptually possible at the time because the Truman administration had not developed a rigidly monolithic perception of communism yet. Then between 1947 and 1950, due to increased U.S. aid to the KMT, the CCP had no choice but to rely more on the USSR. The wedge strategy backfired during this time. Following Chinese intervention in the Korean War, impairing Sino-Soviet alliance was done via isolating China, economic sanctions, inflicting heavy Chinese casualties in war... anything to create hardships for China. This course of action was in effect the opposite of the wedge strategy. Instead, this “squeeze” strategy would force China to be more dependent on the USSR, knowing that USSR would eventually be unable to fulfill China's needs. McConaughy and Dulles both believed in the squeeze strategy. Politically, the squeeze strategy carried support from anti-communist hardliners and would not have roused McCarthy's hostility. In any case, a wedge strategy of appeasing the Chinese Communists no longer worked starting in 1950. Any appeasement now made the US look weak and confirmed the Chinese of their own growing international strength.

While McCarthyism played a major role in turning perceptions of communism more rigid and uncompromising, so too did actual communist hostilities abroad. As exemplified in Truman and Acheson's sharply hostile rhetoric following the Chinese intervention in the Korean War, much of the increasing rigidity in perceptions of communism and the Sino-Soviet relationship could be attributed to the Chinese intervention. What followed after 1950 was a vicious cycle of

hostility towards the Chinese Communists and increasing hostility to the U.S. in response. Rigidity of perception of the Communists was directly related to the degree of hostility of the Communists and vice versa. After the truce put a halt to the fighting in Korea, the rigidity of perceptions relaxed a bit as truce negotiator Arthur Dean briefly suggested improving relations with China. Not long after that, the flare up of the First Taiwan Strait Crisis put diverse perceptions back on hold again.

Despite McCarthy's anti-communist crusade, which led many top China Hands to be fired and stifled objective discussions on communism, U.S. foreign policy towards China and the Soviet Union ultimately responded much more to the realities of foreign developments than to the domestic politics of anti-communist interest groups. McCarthy and the China Lobby ultimately could not put an end to nuanced perceptions of communism and the Sino-Soviet relationship.

### Chapter 3: Split Revealed, 1956 – 1963

#### Introduction

“All the powers of State seemed to focus for the first time on the reality of a permanent Sino-Soviet split... The impact on the minds around the table that morning was dramatic and you could hear the ice of 12 years begin to snap and crackle as an intellectual thaw set in... One after another State’s operators and planners toyed with the new world possibilities that non-monolithic communism might offer to US policies.”<sup>153</sup>

This quote, from a letter written by James C. Thomson, Jr., an analyst at the time in the State Department’s Policy Planning Staff, describes vividly the moment that the Sino-Soviet Split moved to center stage in U.S. foreign policy at a January 1962 high-level meeting with then Secretary Dean Rusk. This eureka moment followed on the heels of several years of intelligence gathering, assessments, and doubts, and not to mention, backlash. Yet, even after realizing the implications of the Sino-Soviet Split for America’s Cold War grand strategy and world outlook, the Kennedy administration did not immediately seek to take advantage of it. Instead, the administration sought to sharpen the split. Another nine years would pass before the U.S. took actions to exploit the Sino-Soviet Split, culminating in Nixon and Kissinger’s rapprochement with China and simultaneous détente with the Soviet Union.

For the Sino-Soviet Split to become a well accepted fact among American foreign policymakers, perceptions of the Sino-Soviet relationship had to undergo a basic change. In this chapter, I argue that the Eisenhower administration in its second term was on a path towards restoring diversity and flexibility in perceptions of Sino-Soviet relations while assessments of

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<sup>153</sup> Roger Hilsman, *To Move a Nation: The Politics of Foreign Policy in the Administration of John F. Kennedy* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967), 344.



Sino-Soviet relations became increasingly accurate in the context of diverse and flexible perceptions created by the time Kennedy entered office. Additionally, high level assessments of Sino-Soviet relations up through the early 1960s, as expressed in National Intelligence Estimates, were cautious in explicitly “calling a Sino-Soviet Split” mostly due to bureaucratic reasons and an effort to avoid wishful thinking.

The chapter starts in 1956 with Khrushchev’s “Secret Speech” which most historians would agree initiated the ideological conflict in the Sino-Soviet Split. The chapter ends in 1963, the time by which policymakers, more or less across the board, were aware of the split and its implications for American Cold War strategy.

#### 1956 – 1958: Misconception to Confusion

On February 25, 1956 at the Twentieth Party Congress of the Soviet Communist Party, Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev delivered a landmark speech that would have widespread repercussions for international communism. Firstly, Khrushchev assailed Joseph Stalin, the long-time idol of Soviet communism, for his personality cult and brutality during the Great Purge. Secondly, Khrushchev declared a policy of peaceful coexistence with the West, whereby war should be avoided for communism’s sake.<sup>154</sup> Domestically in the Soviet Union, the “Secret Speech” began de-Stalinization, an initiative to remove Stalinist influences in Soviet society, while internationally, it led to a temporary relaxation of tensions with the United States.

Historians generally agree that Khrushchev’s so-called “Secret Speech” initiated the ideological rift of the Sino-Soviet Split. Mao’s communist policies for China were in line with Stalinist mass industrialization and rapid collectivization. Thus, Khrushchev’s attack on Stalin

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<sup>154</sup> Mayers, *Cracking the Monolith*, 152

de-legitimized Chinese communism.<sup>155</sup> In the years to come, Mao repeatedly attacked Khrushchev as a Marxist revisionist while Khrushchev was continuously appalled by Mao's radicalism. Moreover, China viewed peaceful coexistence as a setback for communism and an indirect threat to Chinese security.<sup>156</sup> Peaceful coexistence according to Khrushchev only meant peaceful coexistence between the Western bloc and the Communist bloc, but not necessarily between two communist countries. This emphasize raised fears among the Chinese concerning Soviet intervention in China.

U.S. intelligence did not immediately come to this conclusion at the time. As Khrushchev's "Secret Speech" was delivered behind closed doors to select Party members, U.S. intelligence did not receive the text of the speech until April 1956 after it was leaked by an Israeli agent via a Polish source.<sup>157</sup> U.S. observers realized the significance of the speech for international communism in general. Secretary of State Dulles stated that the Twentieth Congress signaled "a permanent shift of direction" for the Soviet Union.<sup>158</sup>

U.S. governmental analysis of the Secret Speech's impact on Sino-Soviet relations was slow to form. A National Intelligence Estimate from March 1957 described China's initial reaction to the denunciation of Stalin as "one of aloofness and noninvolvement, with Peiping [Beijing] taking care to point out Stalin's "strong points" as well as his "weaknesses."<sup>159</sup>

Khrushchev's speech aside, the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China were in the process of diverging in national interests and ideology by 1956-7. While the Soviet Union believed peaceful coexistence with the West was in its national interest since peace would allow

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<sup>155</sup> Donald S. Zagoria, *The Sino-Soviet Conflict, 1956-1961* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1962), 44.

<sup>156</sup> Mayers, *Cracking the Monolith*, 153.

<sup>157</sup> Matitahu Mayzel, "Israeli Intelligence and the Leakage of Khrushchev's 'Secret Speech'," *Journal of Israeli History* 32, no. 2 (2013): 257-283.

<sup>158</sup> Chang, *Friends and Enemies*, 158.

<sup>159</sup> National Intelligence Estimate 13-57, "Communist China Through 1961," March 19, 1957, in U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1955-1957 Volume III: China* (Washington, 1986), 497-509. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1955-57v03/d244>

the Soviet Union to focus on improving living standards rather than military alertness, China's interest (or rather Mao's interest) lay in continuing the communist revolution and the anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist struggle against the West.<sup>160</sup>

Given Khrushchev's expressed interest in peaceful coexistence with the West, the Eisenhower administration wanted to give the Soviets a chance to prove their sincerity in that regard. As a result, tensions between the U.S. and the Soviet Union relaxed slightly. Simultaneously, the U.S. continued applying pressure ("the squeeze strategy") on China with the ongoing economic embargo and the travel ban. By 1957, the "squeeze strategy" had been in place for six years but hadn't created visible strains on the Sino-Soviet alliance. Soviet military and economic aid to China had only increased since the Korean War. Historians have since called the three years between mid-1953 and mid-1956 the golden age of Sino-Soviet relations. It was during this time that Khrushchev worked towards further strengthening the Sino-Soviet alliance. Khrushchev sent thousands of economic specialists and political advisors to China to help China build up its industrial base. Mao also began to implement China's own Five Year Plan, centralized economic programs modeled after those of the Soviet Union.<sup>161</sup>

In light of the thaw in tensions with the Soviet Union, the Eisenhower administration modified its strategy such that it began soliciting Soviet involvement in its goal of straining Sino-Soviet relations while maintaining pressure on China. Instead of weaning the Chinese Communists off the Soviets as John Paton Davies suggested in the 1940s, the U.S. would now attempt to induce the Soviets away from the Chinese.

This new Soviet-focused wedge strategy was first proposed by Asian studies professor and psychological warfare specialist Paul M.A. Linebarger of the Johns Hopkins School of

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<sup>160</sup> Chang, *Friends and Enemies*, 206-207.

<sup>161</sup> Lorenz Luthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split: The Cold War in the Communist World* (Princeton, 2008)

Advanced International Studies in June 1955. Realizing that the U.S. could not persuade the Chinese Communists away from “world communism as represented by Moscow,” Linebarger sought to play on Chinese racist fears of “deals between alien Westerners (e.g. ‘white men’) at their expense” by giving the impression that a U.S.-Soviet deal would settle the PRC-ROC sovereignty problem. This would create paranoia among Chinese Communist leaders and seriously undermine their confidence in the Soviets.<sup>162</sup>

Linebarger’s proposed policy did not manifest itself in obvious ways, but nonetheless influenced U.S. diplomacy. During the mid-1955 Geneva Conference Eisenhower met with Marshal G.K. Zhukov of the Soviet Union and asked the Soviets to “use its influence with the Chinese in order to persuade them that problems should not be settled by fighting.” Zhukov agreed with Eisenhower.<sup>163</sup> Aside from direct talks with the Soviets regarding their Chinese allies, U.S. officials made public statements favoring the Soviets over the Chinese Communists. For example, following Khrushchev’s “Secret Speech,” Dulles castigated the Chinese Communists for “not disassociating themselves from Stalin.”<sup>164</sup> By this point, some policymakers would even contend that China, and not the Soviet Union, was the U.S.’s main enemy. The perception that China was the worse of two evils in the Sino-Soviet relationship represented a major departure from the predominant perception of the time in which the Soviets were the U.S.’s main enemy. In terms of saber-rattling, China was indeed the more belligerent of the two Communist giants, but it was the Soviet Union that had the bomb and not China.

What made intelligence experts’ analysis of tensions in the Sino-Soviet relationship particularly difficult during this time was that both communist powers publicly portrayed themselves as unified comrades. Chinese propaganda following the Soviet Union’s successful

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<sup>162</sup> Chang, *Friends and Enemies*, 152.

<sup>163</sup> Chang, 154.

<sup>164</sup> Chang, 160.

launch of Sputnik, the first man-made satellite to orbit the Earth, in October 1957 praised the Soviets, claiming that “the East Wind was prevailing over the West Wind.”<sup>165</sup>

By 1955, the Eisenhower administration was seriously considering a two-China policy. Such an idea had been floated as early as Chiang’s retreat to Taiwan in late 1949, but due to America’s alliance with Chiang and recognition of his government as the sole legitimate government of all China, not to mention the strength of the China Lobby, a two-China policy had been infeasible.<sup>166</sup> In 1950, Chiang’s government was still viewed as a government in exile with the slim hope of returning to the mainland if the Communist regime could not successfully solidify control. Years later, with no hope for Chiang of reconquering the mainland and increasing aggression on the part of the Chinese Communists, the U.S. realized that a one-China policy was not sustainable for the long-term. In theory, a two-China policy would make American diplomacy with China much more flexible. The U.S. would still be allied to the Nationalists and prevent the Communists from annexing Taiwan, but the U.S. would also free itself to separately deal with the PRC.<sup>167</sup> America’s strong support of the Nationalists as the sole legitimate government of China was also a major dividing point between the U.S. and its Western allies, especially Britain, which had recognized the PRC. In the end, neither the Communists nor the Nationalists could accept two Chinas as doing so would mutually undermine their own claim to sole legitimate sovereignty over China. Viewed in light of Linebarger’s approach of weakening the Sino-Soviet relationship, a two-China policy could allow the U.S. to continue applying pressure on the PRC while potentially working with the Soviets to arrive at a political solution for the PRC and ROC.

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<sup>165</sup> Luthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, 77.

<sup>166</sup> Chang, *Friends and Enemies*, 146.

<sup>167</sup> Chang, 145-48.

Such a two-China approach as part of an overarching strategy to weaken the Sino-Soviet alliance reflected a degree of plurality in perceptions of the Sino-Soviet relationship. It implied that the U.S. was willing to compromise on its adamant backing of the Nationalists while simultaneously implying that the Soviet Union was also willing to compromise on its support of the PRC.

Following Eisenhower's re-election in late 1956, many experts in the CIA as well as the foreign policy think tank Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) favored loosening the "squeeze" on China and introducing some flexibility into China policy. The most significant issue that reflected a softening of China policy discussed by the CFR was the possibility of granting the PRC a U.N. seat. These discussions proved to be extremely difficult and little progress was made. Regarding Sino-Soviet relations, the CFR still oscillated between "pushing them together" or "pulling them apart."<sup>168</sup> Eventually, the initiation of a Second Taiwan Strait Crisis in August-September 1958 hindered the possibility of adopting a more flexible China policy. Once again, a rigid public outlook on the Sino-Soviet alliance obscured the diversity of views held by foreign policy experts, as has been the case when the Chinese intervened in Korea nearly eight years earlier.<sup>169</sup>

### Second Taiwan Strait Crisis

On August 23, 1958, the PRC initiated the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis by shelling the ROC-controlled Jinmen (Quemoy) Island located only a few kilometers off the coast of the Chinese mainland. Mao declared this to be the first step in liberating Taiwan. The U.S. responded swiftly to the crisis with a massive show of force and considerable military aid to the

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<sup>168</sup> Arthur H. Dean, "Foreword," in Howard L. Boorman et al., *Moscow-Peking Axis: Strengths and Strains* (New York: Harper, 1957), vii.

<sup>169</sup> Chang, *Friends and Enemies*, 182.

Taiwan government. Within days, the U.S. deployed “the most powerful armada the world had ever seen,” including six aircraft carriers to Taiwanese waters.<sup>170</sup> Even the most technologically advanced weapons of the time such as Sidewinder air-to-air missiles and the F-104 Starfighter supersonic fighter jet were made available to the ROC. The use of tactical nuclear weapons was discussed but eventually rejected by Eisenhower. Bombardment of Jinmen continued daily until September 6<sup>th</sup> but resumed at a decreased volume for another twenty years.<sup>171</sup>

Historians have proposed many explanations for why Mao initiated the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis. For one, Mao wanted to build up a greater global role and gain more international recognition for China. U.S. intervention in Lebanon provided Mao with a pretext for the shelling.<sup>172</sup> In Mao’s own words, “The bombardment of Jinmen, frankly speaking, was our turn to create international tension for a purpose. We intended to teach the Americans a lesson... Americans started a fire in the Middle East, and we started another in the Far East. We would see what they would do with it.”<sup>173</sup> Second, the shelling served as a reaction to the U.S.’s suspension of U.S.-PRC talks, which lasted from 1955 through late-1957. These so-called Warsaw Talks resumed a few weeks after the shelling began, but made no progress. China demanded U.S. recognition of Beijing’s sovereignty over Taiwan, but the U.S. would not budge.<sup>174</sup> Third, Mao used the shelling as a test of U.S. resolve and U.S. commitment to Taiwan. Given this intention, the U.S. response certainly demonstrated great resolve and very high commitment to Taiwan. Fourth, the shelling also served as a test of Soviet commitment to China and Khrushchev’s

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<sup>170</sup> Chang, 185.

<sup>171</sup> Luthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, 95-105.

<sup>172</sup> Kissinger, *On China*, 172-173.

<sup>173</sup> Lengxi Wu, “Inside the Story of the Decision Making During the Shelling of Jinmen” (Zhuangji wenxue [Biographical Literature], Beijing, no. 1, 1994), as translated and reproduced in Li Xiaobing, Chen Jian, and David L. Wilson, eds., “Mao Zedong’s Handling of the Taiwan Strait Crisis of 1958: Chinese Recollections and Documents,” *Cold War International History Project Bulletin* 6/7. Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Winter 1995), 213-214.

<sup>174</sup> Chang, *Friends and Enemies*, 191.

commitment to peaceful coexistence. The Chinese had not consulted with the Soviets before the shelling and acted independently. If the U.S. were to directly attack the Chinese mainland, would the Soviet Union come to the aid of China even if it meant using nuclear weapons against the American troops? While Khrushchev sent a letter to Eisenhower indicating that the Soviet Union “will do everything... to defend the security of both states [China and the Soviet Union], Khrushchev also sent his foreign minister, Andrei Gromyko, to Beijing to urge restraint.<sup>175</sup> Ultimately, the Second Taiwan Strait Incident helped worsen Sino-Soviet relations as the Soviets believed the Chinese to be reckless and suspended deliveries of technical aid and material for China’s nuclear arms program.<sup>176</sup>

Opinions within the Eisenhower administration were divided over the nature of Sino-Soviet relations during the crisis. Given that Khrushchev met with Mao in China three weeks prior to the crisis, Eisenhower felt certain that Khrushchev was behind the crisis.<sup>177</sup> Dulles also believed that the Chinese Communists had Soviet backing.<sup>178</sup> Eisenhower and Dulles’ conclusion here differed from their conclusion during the First Taiwan Strait Crisis in which neither believed the Soviets played a role. The differences in interpretation of Soviet involvement might have been due to the fact that Mao and Khrushchev met prior to the Second Crisis but did not meet prior to the First. A Special National Intelligence Estimate, SNIE 100-11-58, submitted by the director of the CIA Allen Dulles (the younger brother of John Foster Dulles) on September 16, 1958 noted that ‘the Soviet perspective on the Taiwan Strait situation is almost certainly

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<sup>175</sup> Kissinger, *On China*, 175-176.

<sup>176</sup> Chang, *Friends and Enemies*, 187.

<sup>177</sup> Chang, 187.

<sup>178</sup> “Memorandum Prepared by Secretary of State Dulles,” September 4, 1958, in U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1958-1960, Volume XIX: China* (Washington, 1996), 131-134. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1958-60v19/d67>



based upon substantial knowledge of Chinese Communist plans and intentions.”<sup>179</sup> Despite knowledge of growing differences between the Chinese Communists and the Soviets, these three top government officials felt certain that the Chinese did not act alone and had Soviet backing. Naturally, the Mao-Khrushchev meeting of early August was interpreted as strong evidence of collusion between China and the Soviet Union. Additionally, strongly worded letters indicating Soviet support for China in the case of U.S. attack were sent by Khrushchev to Eisenhower during the crisis.<sup>180</sup> In reality, Khrushchev was never informed by Mao of his plans in the Taiwan Strait at their meeting.<sup>181</sup> And the letters were meant to placate the Chinese.

Unlike the First Taiwan Strait Crisis that dragged on for several months, the Second Crisis lasted one month. This episode proved to be a red herring for U.S. understanding of Sino-Soviet relations. Despite realizing rising differences between the two Communist giants, many top U.S. officials including Eisenhower and Dulles were genuinely perplexed by Soviet intentions in the crisis.

### U.S.-Soviet Common Interest in China

Following the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis, the Soviet Union was certainly displeased with China’s aggressiveness. By the end of 1958, both the U.S. and the Soviet Union realized they had a common interest in restraining Chinese bellicosity. At the same time, the U.S. and the Soviet Union had just concluded a temporary nuclear test ban on October 31, 1958. U.S.-Soviet relations were moving in the direction of détente with increasing dialogue.

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<sup>179</sup> Special National Intelligence Estimate 100-11-58, “Probable Chinese Communist and Soviet Intentions in the Taiwan Strait Area,” September 16, 1958, in *FRUS 1958-60, Volume XIX: China*, 203-207. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1958-60v19/d99>

<sup>180</sup> Kissinger, *On China*, 178.

<sup>181</sup> Nikita Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers: The Last Testament*, trans. and ed. Strobe Talbot, (Boston: Little, Brown, 1974), 261-263.

That dialogue now turned to China. On September 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>, 1959, Khrushchev became the first top Soviet leader to visit the United States. During those two days, he met with Eisenhower at Camp David to discuss world affairs. Although most of the discussion centered on Europe, Khrushchev did ultimately bring up China. When asked by Khrushchev what the future course of U.S. policy on China would be, Eisenhower answered that the U.S. would continue isolating China and that it was up to China to change its attitude before relations can improve. On the topic of Taiwan, the two leaders bitterly disagreed. Nevertheless, these two agreed, rather vaguely, that problems regarding China would continue for a long time.<sup>182</sup>

One day after his U.S. visit, Khrushchev travelled to China for what would become his last trip to meet Mao. Khrushchev arrived on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic during which lavish celebrations took place in spite of an ongoing famine. Unbeknownst to U.S. observers, Khrushchev's stay in China was hardly warm. His day-long meeting with Mao and Zhou Enlai were marked by bitter disagreement and frustration. Khrushchev urged the Chinese to "improve relations with the United States by reducing hostilities over Taiwan."<sup>183</sup> Zhou refuted, claiming "Taiwan was a Chinese internal affair."<sup>184</sup> No agreement could be reached on any other geopolitical issue. Prior to Khrushchev's China visit, the CIA had estimated that Moscow would not seek to restrain Mao and warned that "it would be a grave imprudence to assume major discord within the Moscow-Peking axis."<sup>185</sup> Up to the end of 1959, both China and the Soviet Union had done their part to cover up increasing strains by continuing to present a united communist front in public propaganda.

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<sup>182</sup> Chang, *Friends and Enemies*, 210.

<sup>183</sup> Luthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, 149.

<sup>184</sup> Luthi, 149.

<sup>185</sup> "The Tenth Anniversary Celebration of the People's Republic of China," Sept. 1, 1959, Eisenhower Library, White House Office, Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, NSC, Briefing Notes.

### Continued Observations and Cautious Reporting:

Throughout the 1950s, the analysis of Sino-Soviet relations by the CIA was generally more accurate than that of the State Department and other policymakers. Still, by 1959, despite several years of reporting on ever increasing Sino-Soviet discord, the CIA was hesitant to infer an actual split between the Soviet Union and Communist China. This cautiousness is evident in the CIA's National Intelligence Estimates of 1959. In February 1959, NIE 13-2-59 reported that "Although the leap forward and commune programs have caused some new frictions in Sino-Soviet relations, these frictions are highly unlikely to threaten Sino-Soviet solidarity against the Western world."<sup>186</sup> In July 1959, NIE 13-59 stated "The Sino-Soviet alliance will almost certainly remain firmly united against the West during the period of this estimate, with the USSR retaining its senior position in that alliance... Over the next five years, therefore, the main effect of these differences will be an increasing need for the two countries to make accommodations to each other in policy matters, not a weakening of the alliance itself."<sup>187</sup> Thus, as of 1959, the CIA was simply not confident enough to state that a Sino-Soviet Split was definitive. Those who held a monolithic perception of communism also could not believe in a Sino-Soviet Split, but their opinion was grounded in rigid dogma while the CIA's view was borne out of caution. Nevertheless, a former CIA analyst who closely studied Sino-Soviet relations, Harold P. Ford, has noted that the NIEs actually lagged behind the judgments of the individual CIA officers.<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> NIE 13-2-59, "PRESENT TRENDS IN COMMUNIST CHINA," January 2, 1959, CIA Library. [https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC\\_0001098220.pdf](https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC_0001098220.pdf); "the leap forward" refers to the Great Leap Forward, Mao's disastrous push to rapidly galvanize China's domestic economic production.

<sup>187</sup> National Intelligence Estimate 13-59, "Communist China," June 2, 1959, CIA Library. [https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC\\_0001085024.pdf](https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC_0001085024.pdf)

<sup>188</sup> Harold P. Ford, "Calling the Sino-Soviet Split," *Studies in Intelligence*, Winter 1998-1999 (Washington, D.C.: Center for the Study of Intelligence), 4. [https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/csi-studies/studies/winter98\\_99/art05.html](https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/csi-studies/studies/winter98_99/art05.html)

A year later in August 1960, the official CIA view changed little from 1959. According to NIE 100-3-60, “The Sino-Soviet relationship is not a Communist monolith,” but still maintained that “cohesive forces in the Sino-Soviet relationships will remain stronger than divisive forces as least through the period of this estimate [1960-65].” Nevertheless, the CIA noted that the possibility of an open break between the two powers could not be ruled out.<sup>189</sup>

NIE 13-60 issued in December 1960 more confidently asserted that Sino-Soviet relations were near a breaking point, though still not a definitive split. It noted that the fundamental issue underlying the Sino-Soviet dispute was “Peiping’s challenge to Soviet dominance of international communism” and that it seemed to the CIA “virtually impossible that there can be a return to the relationship of earlier days, with the Soviets dominating a close-knit alliance.”<sup>190</sup> NIE assessments of Sino-Soviet relations had come a long way over the previous eight years. Over time, they noted more and more difficulties in the Sino-Soviet relationship over the years and traced the worsening of Sino-Soviet relations. The refusal of NIEs to talk explicitly about a Sino-Soviet Split even in late 1960 may be quite understandable given the desire of U.S. policymakers of weakening the Sino-Soviet alliance. Policymakers could construe a definitive declaration of a Sino-Soviet Split as wishful thinking.

An additional reason for the hesitancy of NIEs to decisively declare a Sino-Soviet Split even as late as 1960 was the bureaucratic nature of the CIA (or the State Department or any other government agency for that matter). Diplomatic historian Sulmaan Khan has noted that the CIA, as an agency tasked with intelligence analysis, was by mandate prevented from mixing analysis with policymaking. Thus, the contributors of NIEs could not speculate on how U.S. policy could

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<sup>189</sup> National Intelligence Estimate 100-3-60, “Sino-Soviet Relations,” August 9, 1960, in U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1958-1960, Volume XIX: China* (Washington, 1996), 704, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1958-60v19/d344>.

<sup>190</sup> National Intelligence Estimate 13-60, “Communist China,” December 6, 1960, in CIA Library, [https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC\\_0001085024.pdf](https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC_0001085024.pdf).

impact Sino-Soviet relations. As Khan has also observed, NIEs were supposed to reflect a consensus among the intelligence community.<sup>191</sup> Achieving consensus across the board meant trimming out risky definitive statements, even if they did prove correct. These two bureaucratic impediments also delayed official U.S. recognition of a Sino-Soviet Split.

Despite hesitations of the CIA in affirming the Sino-Soviet Split in 1960, former CIA Sino-Soviet analyst Harold P. Ford recalled that 1960 was nonetheless a breakthrough year for U.S. understandings of Sino-Soviet relations. The CIA had known about Moscow's sudden and unilateral withdrawal of all Soviet experts from China in July 1960. The CIA had also known in 1960 that "Chinese and Soviet spokesmen had angrily confronted one another in a series of international Communist gatherings of unrivaled bitterness."<sup>192</sup> Most importantly, by 1960, the most senior CIA officers and CIA Director Allen Dulles were all convinced of the genuineness of Sino-Soviet discord. Dulles had by the end of 1960 informed the NSC and the outbound President Eisenhower of the CIA's "great deal of documentation" on the Sino-Soviet dispute.<sup>193</sup>

### New China Hands

While members of the Dixie Mission and other China experts of the 1940s – the "old" China Hands – had fallen victim to McCarthyism, a new generation of China experts – the "new" China Hands – came to the forefront in the wake of McCarthy's downfall. Walter McConaughy, the U.S. Consul General in Hong Kong during the Korea War straddled the generational gap between the old and new China Hands. Unlike many of the old China Hands who grew up and worked in mainland China and then entered the foreign service straight out of college, many of

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<sup>191</sup> Sulmaan Wasif Khan, "The Aesthetics of Analysis: National Intelligence Estimates and Other American Appraisals of the Cold War Triangular Relationship," *Diplomatic History* 32, no. 5 (2008).

<sup>192</sup> Ford, "Calling the Sino-Soviet Split," 4-5.

<sup>193</sup> Ford, 5.

the new China Hands had no experience in China and entered academia before beginning their careers in the foreign service or policymaking. Among the new China Hands were Allen Whiting and Donald Zagoria.

Allen Whiting graduated from Cornell in 1948, attained his PhD at Columbia University in 1952, and subsequently taught at various universities. He also worked as a social scientist for the RAND Corporation between 1957 and 1961 before joining the State Department as Director of the Office of Research and Analysis for the Far East.<sup>194</sup> Whiting was only beginning his career in academia during the McCarthy rampage and was thus unscathed by it. Many of his early scholarly works from the 1950s were already focused on Sino-Soviet relations. His 1958 book *Sinkiang: Pawn or Pivot?* explored the rivalry between the Soviet Union and Nationalist China of the 1930s and 1940s for influence in the peripheral province of Sinkiang (Xinjiang).<sup>195</sup> His 1960 book *China Crosses the Yalu* initiated a paradigm shift in Western historiographies of China's intervention in the Korean War. The conventional Western view of the time held the PRC to be a pawn of the Soviet Union when they intervened in Korea, but Whiting argued that the PRC intervened as self-defense against a perceived American invasion.<sup>196</sup>

Perhaps the most relevant work by Whiting from this period was his 1958 article "'Contradictions' in the Moscow-Peking Axis" published in *The Journal of Politics*, a quarterly academic journal published on behalf of the Southern Political Science Association. In this article, Whiting presented material evidence that the PRC was dissatisfied with its relations with the Soviet Union. For example, Whiting noted that the PRC was deeply in debt to the Soviets for its military imports. A spokesman for the PRC National Defense Council was quoted in the

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<sup>194</sup> "Allen S. Whiting," University of Arizona. <http://www.worldlymind.org/whiting.pdf>.

<sup>195</sup> Allen S. Whiting, *Sinkiang: Pawn or Pivot?* (East Lansing: Michigan State University, 1958).

<sup>196</sup> Allen S. Whiting, *China Crosses the Yalu: the Decision to Enter the Korean War* (New York: MacMillan 1960).

article protesting the ungraciousness of Soviet lending, juxtaposing it with the generosity of American Lend-Lease Aid.<sup>197</sup>

Donald Zagoria graduated from Rutgers University in 1950 and then earned his PhD at Columbia University. Zagoria and Whiting were likely colleagues at Columbia. Like Whiting, Zagoria taught at universities, worked for RAND, and conducted research on East Asia policy in the State Department.<sup>198</sup> In 1962, Zagoria published the first book to unambiguously focus on the Sino-Soviet split, *The Sino-Soviet Conflict*. Zagoria examined the development of the Sino-Soviet conflict between 1956 and 1961, using the “Secret Speech” as the starting point of an ideological split and closing with the recent October 1961 22<sup>nd</sup> Party Congress in which “the depth of the Sino-Soviet conflict became apparent to the entire world.”<sup>199</sup> The book was a culmination of much of the research conducted thus far within the CIA detailing the causes and nature of the Sino-Soviet conflict. More importantly, the book allowed what was only recently known to a select few within the intelligence community to be accessible to the general public.<sup>200</sup>

Allen Whiting and Donald Zagoria’s works were important for bringing the Sino-Soviet Split clearly into the limelight of the U.S. intelligence community, foreign policymaking bodies, and eventually the general public. Ultimately, their work on the nature of the Sino-Soviet Split informed Henry Kissinger and future President Nixon on how to leverage intra-communist bloc conflicts in U.S. triangular diplomacy with both powers to bring about Sino-American rapprochement and détente with the Soviet Union.<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> Allen S. Whiting, “‘Contradictions’ in the Moscow-Peking Axis,” *The Journal of Politics* 20, no. 1 (1958).

<sup>198</sup> “Donald S. Zagoria,” National Committee on American Foreign Policy. [www.ncafp.org/about-us/leadership/donald-s-zagoria/](http://www.ncafp.org/about-us/leadership/donald-s-zagoria/)

<sup>199</sup> Zagoria, *The Sino-Soviet Conflict*, 7.

<sup>200</sup> Ford, “Calling the Sino-Soviet Split,” 3.

<sup>201</sup> Khan “The Aesthetics of Analysis,” 869-870.

## 1960 – 1963: Split in the Open and President Kennedy’s Response

By 1960 and 1961, perceptions of the Sino-Soviet relationship across the U.S. foreign policy community were marked by considerable flexibility and diversity. Flexibility and diversity of perceptions was especially the case within the CIA, which was leading the charge in recognizing increasing problems in the Sino-Soviet relationship. Sino-Soviet specialists, such as Zagoria, had become so focused on rooting out Sino-Soviet discord by 1961 that at least a few experts began criticizing the rise of “Sinosovietology.” In an 1961 classified article circulated internally within the CIA, analyst John Dockham cautioned against overzealous searching for evidence of a Sino-Soviet rift, noting that “overeagerness to prove a theory can lead to carelessness and insufficiency of examination,” otherwise known as confirmation bias.<sup>202</sup> In barely two years time, perceptions of Sino-Soviet relations, at least within this small community of experts, expanded so much as to warrant meta-analysis of their research. Beyond this arcane “Sinosovietology” circle, the realization of severe and irreparable Sino-Soviet discord spread across the government in 1961.

After John F. Kennedy became President in 1961, he appointed Chester Bowles, a former U.S. Ambassador to India, as his under secretary of state and personal adviser on foreign affairs. A liberal Democrat, Bowles was critical of Eisenhower’s China policy, blaming the Republicans for conducting “a patronizing, arrogant policy toward Beijing and had failed to appreciate the possibilities for exploiting the differences between Beijing and Moscow.”<sup>203</sup> Yet, in many ways, Kennedy and Bowles’ policy towards China and Sino-Soviet relations were a continuation of Eisenhower’s. Bowles suggested that Kennedy adopted a two-China policy which would allow the U.S. to protect the Nationalists on Taiwan while dealing with the PRC with greater

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<sup>202</sup> John Dockham, “A Sharp Look at Sinosovietology,” *Studies in Intelligence* 5, no. 3 (1961).  
[https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/kent-csi/vol5no3/html/v05i3a09p\\_0001.htm](https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/kent-csi/vol5no3/html/v05i3a09p_0001.htm).

<sup>203</sup> Chang, *Friends and Enemies*, 218.



flexibility. This course of action had been suggested to Dulles and Eisenhower three years earlier. And as a continuation of Eisenhower's policy of favoring the Soviets against the Chinese, Bowles also suggested involving "the Russians in the long-term containment of Communist China."<sup>204</sup> Kennan, at the time about to be appointed Ambassador to Yugoslavia, concurred with Bowles' strategy and called for improved relations with Moscow in order to sow Sino-Soviet discord.<sup>205</sup>

For the duration of the Kennedy administration, Sino-Soviet discord was on full public display on the international stage. At the 22<sup>nd</sup> Congress of the Soviet Communist Party in October 1961 (the last one China attended), China attacked the Soviets for their ongoing de-Stalinization initiative. In December 1961, the Soviet Union broke diplomatic relations with Albania, a PRC client state. In the brief Sino-Indian border war of October 1962, the Soviet Union voiced support of India while the Chinese criticized the Soviets for backing down from the concurrent Cuban Missile Crisis.<sup>206</sup>

With regard to China, the Kennedy administration was from its very beginning concerned with China's development of its own nuclear weapons. Kennedy's advisers also believed that the Soviet Union had much to fear from a nuclear China. As a result, Kennedy was set on nuclear nonproliferation through pursuing a nuclear test ban treaty with the Soviet Union. In addition to the propaganda effect it would have on world public opinion, a nuclear test ban treaty, it was hoped, would prevent China (or any other nonnuclear country for that matter) from developing its own atomic weapons, a danger known as the "N<sup>th</sup> Country Problem."<sup>207</sup> Kennedy's initial forays on nuclear nonproliferation with Khrushchev at the June 1961 Vienna Summit were not

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<sup>204</sup> Chang, 219.

<sup>205</sup> David Allan Mayers, *George Kennan and the Dilemmas of US Foreign Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 208.

<sup>206</sup> Luthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, 237-53.

<sup>207</sup> Christoph Hohenemser, "The Nth Country Problem," *Nuclear Information* 5, no. 2 (1962).

productive.<sup>208</sup> Further nonproliferation talks in late-1961 and 1962 stalled because the Soviet Union disagreed over mechanisms of enforcement such as on-site inspections. The Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962 and a previous CIA report assessing that China was about to become a nuclear power added urgency to the Kennedy administration's pursuit of a test ban treaty.<sup>209</sup>

An obvious problem to a test ban treaty was that China was likely not to sign it and still develop nuclear weapons. Thus, viewed in light of Sino-Soviet disputes, a test ban was not so much meant to prevent China from developing nuclear weapons, but to sharpen Sino-Soviet discord while isolating China even more by drawing international condemnation against China's nuclear program. In mid-1963, the Soviet Union finally agreed to the terms of a nuclear test ban treaty and the Limited Test Ban Treaty (LTBT) was concluded on August 5, 1963. The U.S Embassy in Moscow concluded that "it was the outbreak of virtually undeclared war between Moscow and Peiping... which explained Soviet acceptance of a partial test ban agreement..."<sup>210</sup>

Since the beginning of 1963, reports from the CIA and State Department all confirmed the Sino-Soviet Split. A January 1963 CIA report noted that Sino-Soviet relations had reached a "new crisis," and that the two powers' "interests conflict on almost every major issue."<sup>211</sup> NIE 13-62 from May 1963 reported that "the present Sino-Soviet relationship can be characterized as one of de facto break."<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> Chang, *Friends and Enemies*, 231-32.

<sup>209</sup> Hilsman, *To Move a Nation*, 349.

<sup>210</sup> Chang, *Friends and Enemies*, 240.

<sup>211</sup> "Sino-Soviet Relations at a New Crisis," January 14, 1963, CIA Library, <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP79T00429A000300020013-1.pdf>.

<sup>212</sup> National Intelligence Estimate 13-62, "Problems and Prospects in Communist China," May 1, 1963, CIA Library. [https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC\\_0001098211.pdf](https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC_0001098211.pdf).

## Conclusion

In light of increasingly hostile rhetoric from China and the near completion of its first nuclear bomb (detonated in October 1964), the Kennedy administration did not seek to improve relations with the Chinese. Instead it continued applying pressure on China and sharpened the Sino-Soviet Split. Continuing détente with the Soviets through measures such as the Limited Test Ban Treaty pivoted the Soviets in accord with America and against China. Since 1949, the United States had hoped for Sino-Soviet division. But most assumed that if it did happen, China and the U.S. would side together against Soviet expansion. The experts of the 1940s would have likely been surprised that the U.S. would align with the Soviet Union in opposing China fifteen years later.

American perceptions of Sino-Soviet relations evolved drastically between 1956 and 1963. The rigid perceptions of a unified Sino-Soviet bloc colored by monolithic misconceptions of communism prior to 1956 evolved into genuine confusion about Sino-Soviet relations after 1956, especially given the perceived role of the Soviet Union in the 1958 Taiwan Strait Crisis. Provided mounting evidence of Sino-Soviet discord, genuine confusion morphed into cautious assessments of a developing Sino-Soviet conflict in the CIA in 1959/60. Cautious assessment transformed into increasingly confident evaluations of conflict in 1960/61, by which time the wider foreign policy community became aware of the Sino-Soviet dispute. Finally, increasingly confident evaluations became assertive declaration of a de facto split in 1963.

In 1963, the Sino-Soviet Split had become an accepted fact and a common staple among the makers of American foreign policy. In fact, the Sino-Soviet Split had become so well

recognized by the time of the Limited Test Ban Treaty's conclusion that the CIA even boasted that "the disintegration of the Sino-Soviet alliance had been 'largely our accomplishment.'"<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> Chang, *Friends and Enemies*, 252.

## Conclusion

After 1963, Sino-Soviet relations continued to worsen. The Soviet Union amassed 375,000 troops along its 4,380-kilometer (2,738 mile) border with China by 1968. China more than matched Soviet deployments by stationing 1.5 million troops on its side of the border. 1969 marked the trough of the Sino-Soviet Split.<sup>214</sup> In March 1969, Chinese soldiers ambushed Soviet patrols on a disputed island in the Ussuri River, which separates Siberia from Manchuria. Fierce fighting resulted in hundreds of casualties on both sides. According to Henry Kissinger, the Soviet leaders considered launching a nuclear attack on China's nuclear facilities in August 1969, but backed down when the U.S. convinced the Soviets otherwise.<sup>215</sup>

Sino-Soviet relations remained cold throughout the 1970s and saw the two communist powers competing for allies in the Third World. Communist Vietnam and Laos allied with the Soviet Union while Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge allied with China. After Vietnam invaded Cambodia in late 1978 and ousted the Khmer Rouge, China invaded Vietnam in retaliation. International communism could not have seemed more splintered. When the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, China provided aid to the mujahedeen in alliance with the U.S. Relations only began to improve in the mid-1980s when China, under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping, embraced economic liberalization while the Soviet Union, under Gorbachev, worked to restore relations with China.<sup>216</sup>

The United States under the Johnson administration became too enmeshed in the Vietnam War to exploit the Sino-Soviet Split. In the case of Vietnam, the Sino-Soviet Split was actually quite unfavorable to the U.S. as the Soviet Union and China competed for Vietnam's alliance by

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<sup>214</sup> Luthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, 326-7.

<sup>215</sup> Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1979), 183.

<sup>216</sup> Van Dijk et al., *Encyclopedia of American Foreign Policy*, 792-94.

providing more aid.<sup>217</sup> Only after the Nixon administration entered office did the U.S. set a new tone in its relationship to China. As the former vice president under Eisenhower, Nixon had been well remembered as a staunchly anti-communist Republican, but a 1967 *Foreign Affairs* article he had written showed that he possessed a sophisticated outlook on Asia. Regarding China, Nixon wrote, “we simply cannot afford to leave China forever outside the family of nations, there to nurture its fantasies, cherish its hates and threaten its neighbors... The world cannot be safe until China changes...”<sup>218</sup>

By 1969, now in office, Nixon sought to overhaul relations with China and greatly improve relations with the Soviet Union. Simultaneously, China, now shut off from the rest of the world while nearing war with the Soviet Union, was desperate to escape its geopolitical isolation. Through a series of secret, third-party channels in late 1969 through 1971, mid-level representatives from both countries met and probed each other’s intentions.<sup>219</sup> Finally, in July 1971, Henry Kissinger, Nixon’s National Security Advisor, made his first trip to Beijing in which the details and agenda for President Nixon’s trip to China were arranged.<sup>220</sup> The rest is history.

Sino-American rapprochement as we know it could hardly have occurred without the Sino-Soviet Split. The split was key to Nixon and Kissinger’s triangular diplomacy with China and the Soviet Union. By maintaining better relations with China and the Soviet Union than the two communist powers can with each other, the U.S. placed itself in a geopolitically advantageous position. A few months after Nixon’s first meeting with Mao, in which they agreed that the Soviet Union was their common threat, Nixon met with the Soviet leader Brezhnev who

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<sup>217</sup> Selverstone, *Constructing the Monolith*, 310.

<sup>218</sup> Richard Nixon, “Asia After Viet Nam,” *Foreign Affairs*, October 1967 Issue.

<sup>219</sup> Chang, *Friends and Enemies*, 287.

<sup>220</sup> Kissinger, *On China*, 230.

informally suggested that the Soviet Union and the United States should form an alliance against the Chinese.<sup>221</sup> All of a sudden, America's two greatest adversaries sought its friendship, seemingly jealous of each other's relationship with America. Such was the power of triangular diplomacy.

The Sino-Soviet Split provided a game-changing opportunity for the United States. These implications were not only tremendous for American perceptions of the Sino-Soviet relationship but also for America's outlook on the Cold War and its Cold War grand strategy. For American perceptions, the split cracked the assumption that communism was a monolith. The Sino-Soviet Split also changed American outlook on the Cold War from that of a bipolar conflict to a tri-polar conflict. Likewise, American Cold War grand strategy utilized the split by playing the two communist giants against one another, sometimes siding with the Soviet Union (as was the case between 1963 and 1969) and sometimes siding with China (as was the case in the 1980s Soviet-Afghan War).

As an intellectual practice, keeping an open mind, being able to entertain diverse viewpoints, and avoiding the trap of dogmatic or politically charged tunnel vision is obviously important. In foreign policy, open-mindedness is similarly important in that fostering pluralism and diversity of views allows policymakers to assess more accurately a situation than if they rely on theoretical dogma. However, there is little utility for holding diverse, non-rigid views if these views are silenced and given no opportunity of being shared with the wider intelligence/policy community.

In the 1944-49 period, when diplomats like Kennan, Davies, and Service – all of whom held diverse and dynamic views on Sino-Soviet relations – were allowed to communicate their views unfettered to higher-up officials, U.S. assessment and forecasting of Chinese Communist

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<sup>221</sup> "The Moscow Summit," *New York Times*, May 28, 1971.

developments and their relations with the Soviet Union were accurate to the point of being prophetic. Yet in the following period between 1950 and 1955, when rigidity in foreign policy outlook set in and the voices of the still open-minded Kennan, Davies, and Service were muffled, U.S. assessment and policy towards Communist China and the Sino-Soviet relationship suffered a setback. There was a clear correlation between accurate assessment and diversity of voiced views and a similar relationship between inaccurate assessment and rigidity of views.

Given the importance of fostering diverse views to making accurate analysis and successful policymaking, what then determined the degree of diversity/flexibility or rigidity/dogmatism in perceptions aside from political interests (e.g. McCarthyism)? A grand strategy based on a zero-sum view of the world could steer perceptions toward rigidity. NSC-68 and NSC-162 played a great role in framing preconceived notions of a bipolar world in which the Communist “other” was portrayed as seeking world domination. In seeking to frame perceptions within an overarching binary outlook, policy-makers incurred the danger of intellectual rigidity.

Lastly, a correlation exists between actual armed hostilities and rigidity of perceptions. Unfortunately the spacing of hostilities (1950-3 Korean War, 1954-5 First Strait Crisis, 1958 Second Crisis) covered in this thesis revived rigidity of perceptions just as perceptions were loosening/diversifying such that mini-cycles of rigidity/diversity marked the period. Yet, in spite of these obstacles, diverse and flexible perceptions persevered and put U.S. assessment of and policies toward the Soviet Union and China on a more favorable track.

The lessons learned from the Sino-Soviet Split are still important for foreign policy makers today and in the future. Triangular diplomacy is very relevant today as Russia, China, and the United States are still the three foremost powers in the world. While the geopolitical issues at stake today are different from the issues sixty years ago, the diplomatic strategies have



changed little. The relationship between China and Russia will continue to influence American foreign policy toward either country into the future.

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