

SUPERPOWER RELATIONS WITH CHINA (1950 – 1979)

SINO-SOVIET RELATIONS

1. Overview & Main Events in beginning, consolidation, worsening and to total split in Sino-Soviet relations
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 - a. Ideological splits
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Overview

Possible Questions:-

- How far was the breakdown in relations a result of ideological differences?
- "Rivals rather than ideological brothers." HFDYA with this statement with regards to Sino-Soviet relations from 1950 to 1979?
- Sino-Soviet relations between 1950 and 1979 were primarily influenced by Sino-American ties." How far do you agree with this?

Introduction

The Sino-Soviet split in the 1960s was unmistakably one of the **most significant events** during the Cold War era. Why did the **Sino-Soviet alliance**, hailed by its creators as 'unbreakable' and 'eternal' 'brotherly solidarity', **break up** and the bilateral relations eventually **evolve into open hostility and military confrontations** in the 1960s?

The answer commonly can be **attributed to security concerns** which did **evolve** through time and international political developments:

- 1950s: Traditional security concerns involve wider ideological conflict with the USA
- 1960s: Greater desire to exert global supremacy that aggravated security concerns between Soviets and China, which motivated irreconcilable differences and resulted in Sino-Soviet split in 1969.

The relationship between Russia and China could be described as that of **estranged siblings**.

- While both were communist from 1949, their relationship was lukewarm at best.
- Relations were frosty from 1960 onwards after the Sino-Soviet Split.
- Prospects for improvement only came about after the death of Mao, when more progressive and liberal-minded leaders like Gorbachev and Deng Xiao Ping focused on economic reforms.

“Insofar as its impact upon the Cold War’s overall development is concerned, the divergences between the Chinese and Soviet communists gradually shattered the foundation of the strategic alliance between Beijing and Moscow...both the socialist camp and the international communist movement became profoundly divided, and it was no longer viable for the communists to present a “coordinated challenge” to Capitalism’s worldwide reign; nor was it possible for the global Cold War to remain a general confrontation between two contending camps, systems, and ideologies.”

~ Chen Jian, *The Beginning of the End: 1956 as a Turning Point in Chinese & Cold War History*

1. Overview of key events in evolving Sino-Soviet Relationship [1917-1980]

1917 – 1949: Tense, tenuous relationship (Roots of ideological differences, historical animosity)

Although the 1917 Bolshevik revolution had inspired the founding of Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1921, where leaders of the ‘adopted the language, the symbols, and important parts of the worldview of the Russian Communists’, its **relations with USSR had been tense** and Mao’s contact with Moscow was neither **gratifying nor pleasant**.

The CCP fought a long civil war against the Nationalists, the Kuomintang, led by Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek from 1927 to 1949. The **seeds of ideological differences** were sown where Mao ignored most of the political and military advice that Stalin gave him because applying (traditional) Leninist revolutionary theory of an urban proletariat (working class) revolution proved difficult to implement in China. China, unlike Russia, had no great urban working class. Thus, he organised the peasants and farmers to fight the Chinese Revolution based on Mao’s version of agrarian socialism.

However, Stalin felt that Mao’s interpretation of Marxism was not genuine revolutionary Marxism, which should feature workers leading an urban-based class war. Hence, Stalin was afraid that Mao would pose a threat to Stalin’s orthodox ideology, which would then threaten his leadership in the communist world. Additionally, Mao’s aims and foreign policy priorities in 1949 was essentially about national survival, rather than benefiting the USSR.

- E.g. Mao felt that China needed to secure its control over outlying provinces like Tibet and Taiwan, and felt that Vladivostok and the surrounding areas should be returned to China from the Soviets.
E.g. Mao also felt that China needed to restore their identity and re-dress past humiliations, including Soviet domination. Mao wanted independence of action.

Hence, such conflicting interests that Stalin had with Mao convinced Mao that Stalin wanted a divided and weak China to leave the USSR dominant in Asia. He saw Stalin's policies as rooted in self-interests, rather than true revolutionary doctrine.

Moreover, Communist Party of Soviet Union (CPSU)-CCP relations were tenuous at times due to Soviet engagement of the CCP's enemy—the Kuomintang (Nationalist) government. **Stalin had aligned with the Kuomintang (KMT)** or Guomindang (GMD) and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to cooperate with the KMT. Stalin also provided **very limited support to the assistance to the CCP when the civil war erupted after 1945**. This was because Stalin was not interested in spreading the Cold War and Soviet commitments to Asia at that period of time when war in Europe seemed likely after WW2. Furthermore, Stalin knew that Chiang Kai-Shek (leader of KMT) would recognise Soviet claims to the disputed border territory along the frontiers in Manchuria and Xinjiang (geopolitical considerations).

Even after the CCP broke the KMT's hold over North China, Stalin refused to throw his full support behind the CCP. This resulted in Mao attempting to negotiate a truce along the Yangtze River while the USA and USSR discussed China's future. On 1st October 1949, CCP celebrated its victory over the KMT. The KMT had since fled to Taiwan [Formosa].

Despite Mao's discontentment over Stalin's attempted negotiations with the USA over China's future, his **main priority** was establishing a new relationship between the two countries **as he wanted a treaty that recognised the CCP government, to receive Soviet military protection and economic aid, and secure the Chinese border areas adjacent to the USSR**.

- Throughout the Chinese Civil War, it was evident that there were already deep-seated roots of mistrust and hidden hostilities between both nations as they each had differing interpretations of the Communist ideology.
- The creation of the PRC shocked the USA and caused them to panic. Consequently, US policies in Southeast Asia changed dramatically. *(More detail in Sino-USA relations notes)*
- Despite the reluctance of USSR to recognise Mao as the leader of China, the USSR still had to ensure alliance between the 2 nations out of mutual convenience as their identities were both communists.

1950 – 1953: Consolidation of Sino-Soviet relations

3. Treaty of Friendship, Alliance, and Mutual Assistance, Feb 1950

In February 1950, the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China signed a **Treaty of Friendship, Alliance, and Mutual Assistance** to foster cultural and technological cooperation between the Soviet bloc and the PRC. Immediately after the victory of the CCP, the Soviet press poured praise and admiration on Mao and the new PRC and Mao was invited to Moscow in 1950,

which both countries produced the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Alliance. However, negotiations were slow because China's need for the alliance was greater than USSR's need.

Reasons for the treaty:

- China was isolated from the West because it was a Communist state. Hence, Mao needed a **powerful ally to depend on for economic trade and political security**.
- Establishing trade relations with China would benefit the USSR's economy that was devastated due to WW2. However, the extent of USSR's interests in this treaty was not as big as China's interest.

Terms in the treaty:

- USSR promised economic assistance and Soviet expertise to China
- USSR promised protection against 'Japanese militarism', by which it meant capitalist nations.

Reactions of the treaty:

China: was offended by the rather 'unfriendly' treatment received as the Soviets had been superior in their dealings with the PRC officials and had not bothered to put on any entertainment for their guests. The Chinese realised soon after the 1950 treaty had been signed that the **Soviet Union was intent on exploiting the agreement in its own favour**. This was in spite of Mao's initial belief that the hard-won treaty had obliged the USSR to provide China with expertise and aid at low cost. Its wording, which spoke of 'friendship and equality' and 'economic and cultural co-operation', had appeared to promise much. But Stalin had struck a hard bargain.

Under the terms of the treaty:

- The \$300 million Soviet advance was a **loan** not a gift; the PRC had to undertake to repay the full amount plus interest
- The upkeep of the 10000 Soviet economic and military advisers who went to China had to be **paid fully** by China
- China had to give the **bulk of its bullion reserves** to the Soviet Union
- Mao had to accept the "independence" of Outer Mongolia
- There would be a joint Sino-Soviet exploitation of mineral resources in Sinkiang
- Joint administration of the Changchun Railway
- Joint use of Port Arthur and Dairen

USSR: It was soon evident that the USSR wanted to **exploit the treaty** in its own favour as the Soviet aid amounted to \$300 million in loans but was **repayable with interest**. Mao also had to recognise Soviet control over Outer Mongolia and influence in Manchuria.

Additionally, Stalin forced Mao to send support to the Vietminh in their struggle against the French in the First Indochina War. And the **USSR did not give aid to China to conquer Taiwan**, which remained in the hands of KMT. This was because the USSR feared provoking the USA.

Nevertheless, the treaty allowed China to begin economic modernisation:

- Soviet planners and engineers initially developed 200 Chinese construction projects in the 1950s.
- 6-fold increase in Sino-Soviet trade from 1950 to 1956, and by 1956, 60% of Chinese trade was conducted with the USSR.
- USSR also educated 9313 Chinese technical experts in top Russian universities and over 38,000 Chinese workers were given vocational training in Siberia.

In addition, the **PRC began to challenge the USSR** as the **ideological leader** of the world's communist movement. Mao promoted the idea that Asian and world communist movements should emulate China's model of peasant revolution, not Russia's model of urban revolution.

The Treaty of Friendship was also a **short-term alliance** of mere convenience since both nations had similar ideological preference of communism. However, both nations had **differing interpretations of the communist ideology**.

4. Korean War, 1950 – 1953

China and USSR aided the North Koreans in the Korean War by providing military weapons and aid.

When the US-led UN forces came close to the Chinese border near the Yalu River, **Stalin encouraged the PRC to send troops** into Korea. The Soviets gave **material assistance** to the one million North Korean troops engaged in battle. **China officially entered the Korean War in November 1950** by sending an approximately 3 million Chinese troops who took part in the war, where an estimated 400,000 to 1,000,000 Chinese were killed in the conflict, one of whom was Mao's son.

The USSR demanded that China pay \$1.35 billion for Soviet equipment and supplies that went for its military intervention in Korea.

Mao felt betrayed that Stalin went back on his earlier promise to provide China with military assistance should it enter the war.

Nevertheless, the Korean conflict **consolidated their Sino-Soviet Friendship** as the huge cost of the war **increased China's dependence on the USSR** to rebuild the war-shattered economy, and it proved **China as a reliable ally to USSR**.

This conflict, though weakened China economically, has benefited China politically as it strengthened the pride and position of the CCP. However, this also made China more determined to become more independent of Soviet aid.

5. Stalin's death (1953)

Although Mao had some respect for the Soviet leader, in particular, Stalin's firm methods of political rule, there had been tensions and suspicions in the relationship between Mao and Stalin. An armistice was signed in the Korean War soon after Stalin's death and, to a certain degree, there was a relaxation in tensions between USSR and China, referred to by historian Michael Lynch as something of a 'honeymoon' period, as the new Soviet leaders were more willing to supply further loans and technology.

This can be seen in that following the Korean War, there were 2 further Sino-Soviet agreements in 1953 and 1954. The USSR agreed to:

- A significant package of aid for China's first Five-Year Plan, including a **bigger loan** than had been agreed in 1950.
- Helped China to **build power plants**
- Handed over Lushan naval base to China
- Increased trade with China.

1954– 1959: Worsening of Sino-Soviet relations

1. Death of Stalin and rise of Khrushchev

When Stalin died in March 1953, Nikita Khrushchev emerged as the new Soviet leader after a power struggle and **denounced Stalin’s cult of personality** [reflected in his Secret Speech at the 20th Congress of the CPSU in February 1956. Khrushchev also spoke out against Stalin’s ‘Cult of Personality’ and his crimes, which portrayed Stalin as a selfish leader who placed himself above the party. Khrushchev also criticised Stalin’s regime for imposing monolithic control over the USSR and its satellite states, which **Mao interpreted it as a direct insult and attack on himself** as he had ruled China in a similar manner to Stalin. **Mao** read the denunciation of the cult of personality as Khrushchev’s **intended criticism of his own style of personality leadership in China**.

In addition, Mao did not get along with Khrushchev as he did not agree with his post-Stalin policies and viewed them as ‘heresy’ and called them Marxist ‘Revisionism’ that deviated from away from Marxism notion of inevitability of war with capitalism.

Mao was upset with Khrushchev for:

- Announcing the end of Cominform, which was established by Stalin to coordinate international communist movements.
- Restoring relations with Tito’s Yugoslavia whom Stalin had denounced in 1947. This irritated Mao who had supported Stalin’s ideologies and political moves.
- Pursuing ‘Peaceful Coexistence’ with capitalist countries and suggesting that conflict between capitalism and socialism was not inevitable. [Mao however adopted the ‘lean-to-one-side’ foreign policy that supported the communist bloc and stridently opposed the US-led capitalist bloc.] The Chinese leader **accused Khrushchev of being an American stooge** when he visited the United States and held a summit with President Eisenhower in September 1959.
- Allowing some degrees of consumerism and capitalism and lifestyle-choices in the USSR.

Hence, Mao thought that the Soviets under Khrushchev were retreating ideologically and militarily — from Marxism-Leninism and the global struggle to achieve global communism. Ideological differences between the two leaders caused them to have differing views of how the foreign policy of the communist world should be carried out. Hence, both of them were unable to work well with each other and saw each other in a negative light.

However, there were also short-term instances when there appeared to be good relations

This can be because at this point of time, **China still needed to maintain good relations** with the Soviet Union for its **economic and political growth**. Hence, when a group of Khrushchev’s opponents within the Communist Party of Soviet Union attempted to remove Khrushchev from power, China supported Khrushchev and rallied in numbers within the CPSU Central Committee to outvote his opponents.

In response, Khrushchev publicly stated in July 1957 that China had the right to build socialism in accordance with her national characteristics. At the same time, Pravda declared that Mao's theory of non-antagonistic contradictions contained points of significance for Marxist-Leninist Theory.

Evidence of this was that on 15 October 1957, an agreement between USSR and China "on new technology for nuclear defence" was concluded, under which the Chinese have claimed to be provided with "a sample of an atomic bomb and the technical data concerning its manufacture".

Thus, it can be argued that **the starting years in this period** of worsening tensions was not as significant **as the later years** as China was still willing to support Soviet for national benefit.

2. First Taiwan Strait Crisis (1954-1955)

Both the nationalists and the communists claimed that they were the legitimate government for all of China and neither would accept a two China solution. The islands of Quemoy and Matsu had been a source of tension during the Korean War as they had been protected by US naval patrols and an American declaration that the Strait was neutral. When Eisenhower was elected, he chose to remove US ships and hand *de facto* control over to the nationalists. However, Dulles also sought to prevent the further spread of communism through the creation of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO), a collective security agreement. Examining these issues, Mao saw the USA as an aggressor and sought to assert PRC strength in the region. Additionally, the nationalist response to the end of the US presence in the Strait was to strengthen its position with regards to mainland China.

To counter these actions, Mao ordered the strategic bombing of Quemoy and Matsu in September 1954. In **direct response to perceived threat** to the USA and its defence perimeter, the USA signed a Mutual Defence Treaty with Taiwan (Republic of China) three months later. The treaty prolonged and assisted the Republic of China (ROC) in **maintaining legitimacy** as the **sole government** of the whole of Taiwan AND mainland China until the early 1970s, despite the fact that the CCP had won in the mainland since 1949. This meant an increased presence of the US around Taiwan which alarmed the Soviet Union.

In early 1955, US officials suggested that use of atomic weapons was a viable option, causing a furore among NATO members who opposed any attack on the PRC. Khrushchev was concerned that this conflict could escalate and involve both the Americans and Soviets, so he travelled to China to discuss the possibilities with Mao. To Mao's disappointment, Khrushchev counselled restraint and peaceful reconciliation. **For some historians, this is seen as the beginning of the split: Khrushchev saw himself as protector of the entire communist world, and Mao saw the crisis as a domestic issue. The Soviet Union made it clear that it was not willing to go to war with the USA over the Chinese conflict, a stance that created a divide in the communist world, even if the West was unaware of it at the time. From this point forward there was tension between the two leaders.**

Despite Mao's determination to be defiant, the combination of Soviet pressure and internal affairs changed the official view of the PRC and in April 1955 it announced its willingness to negotiate with the USA regarding the crisis. The USA accepted and talks began in Geneva in September, thereby ending the First Taiwan Strait Crisis.

3. Khrushchev's First Visit to Beijing (August 1958)

In a bid to ease the growing tensions between USSR and China, Khrushchev visited Mao in Beijing. However, Khrushchev was not welcomed warmly with proper treatment, but with arrogance and disdain by Mao. (Who was also similarly treated with disdain in his 1st visit to Moscow in 1949 to Stalin) **Read about it in the short news article how Khrushchev was humiliated by Mao*

During the visit, Khrushchev proposed to create, with China, a joint fleet of submarines and radio stations on the Chinese coasts to enable better communication with its submarines in the Pacific. However, Mao interpreted this as an attempt to infringe on China's sovereignty by 'bringing China under Soviet military control', similar to the way Eastern Europe was controlled by Moscow.

4. Second Taiwan Strait Crisis, (1958)

Mao was determined to prove that the PRC was the true, revolutionary government in the communist world and sought to consolidate control in a number of ways, one of which was the renewed aggression against the Taiwanese Nationalist.

It was also a symbolic display of independence from Soviet Union and a test of the USSR's commitment to China. Furthermore, it confirmed Mao's belief that Khrushchev could not be relied on to advance China's strategic interests.

Mao wanted reunification with Taiwan and was furious about US support for the Nationalists. Hence, without seeking USSR's consent, PRC bombarded islands (Quemoy and Matsu) off the Taiwanese coast in the early 1950s but was **deterred from further action** by the US's 7th fleet patrols of the Straits between Taiwan and mainland China. Soon, Mao ordered a build-up of troop manoeuvres in the region, giving the impression that the **PRC was preparing for a full-scale attack on Taiwan**.

In response, Khrushchev denounced Mao's regime of 'dangerous adventurism' and being 'Trotskyist' in pursuing international revolution at any cost. The Soviets saw this action as evidence of Mao's lack of understanding of political reality and his tendency towards fanaticism.

The 2nd Taiwan Straits Crisis can be considered as a trigger event that highlighted a breakdown in Sino-Soviet relations as it made Moscow thoroughly rethink its support and procrastinate their aid to the Chinese nuclear programme, made in a treaty in late 1957. The Soviet had agreed earlier to help China produce its own nuclear weapons and missiles was soon terminated by mid-1959. However, by August 1960 the last of the Soviet nuclear advisors in China had returned to the USSR.

5. Great Leap Forward (May 1958-1962)

It was aimed to end China's considerable dependence on Soviet financial and industrial aid. Mao rejected the Soviet model of economic development that stressed on the role of expertise and the working class in developing the economy. He thus based the programme on the enthusiasm of the peasants.

However, serious problems began to emerge with the plans. To achieve both increased grain and steel production, Mao promoted the construction of small backyard steel furnaces in every commune and in each urban neighbourhood. Peasants and workers set about attempting to produce steel from scrap metal, stripping their local areas of all the potential fuel sources to burn in the furnaces. Due to the lack of experienced and expert leadership, the steel produced was of low quality, and many of China's harvest rotted in the fields.

To aggravate the issue, China was also hit by exceptionally bad weather that led to devastating droughts and floods. As a result, famine hit several areas, with millions dying from starvation.

The GLF was a total economic disaster for China. And in 1959, Mao was held responsible for the disaster that was emerging and was forced to step down as State Chairman of China, though he remained as Chairman of the CCP.

The USSR then openly criticised Mao's GLF and called it 'faulty in design and erroneous in practice'. Mao was **enraged at this criticism** and became fuelled by humiliation. When Khrushchev recalled Soviet economic experts from the PRC in July 1960, Mao made the excuse to make the Soviets the scapegoat for the failure of the GLF, claiming that it was the withdrawal of the Soviet assistance that led to the failure of the programme.

This domestic policy **signalled Mao's self-confidence and willingness to act independently**, undermining Khrushchev's leadership in the communist world. However, the utter failure and the open criticism against Mao's GLF by the USSR **worsened the tensions** between both countries.

This economic failure also led to the loss of power of the People's Republic of China in China, and therefore soon after, the infamous Cultural Revolution started to consolidate power.

6. Khrushchev's Second Visit to Beijing (October 1959)

To heal the growing rift in Sino-Soviet relations, Khrushchev visited China for the second time, and it was intended to be a celebration of the 10th anniversary of the Chinese Revolution. However, the **underlying animosity** between the two nations had already done a huge damage to the Sino-Soviet relations, and this meeting **displayed irreconcilable differences** between the leaders of the USSR and China.

Moreover, Mao **exploded** when Khrushchev, who had just returned from a trip to the USA, suggested on Eisenhower's behalf that Mao demonstrate 'goodwill' and return the US 5 Americans whom the Chinese army had taken captive during the Korean War.

Mao used this **opportunity to humiliate Khrushchev** in public, leaving no guard of honour to welcome him, and no microphone was provided. Both leaders openly insulted each other and mocked the other in private.

This event **reinforced the clash in personality** of both leaders which **affected their ideological lenses** on one another. Mao viewed Khrushchev as soft and weak, unfit as the leader of the Communist world, despite Khrushchev's attempts to be pragmatic and have geopolitical considerations.

It also displayed how **both countries were already at the tipping point of their acrimonious relationship**, and a **foreshadowing of the Sino-Soviet Confrontation and Split** in the later years.

Sino-Soviet Confrontation & Split, 1960 – 1985

1. U2 spy plane incident (May 1, 1960)

At the height of the cold war leading to the Cuban Missile Crisis, as critics of the Eisenhower administration complained about the growing "missile gap," the United States secretly gathered data on Soviet missile capabilities through photographs obtained from U-2 reconnaissance plane overflights of the Soviet Union. One such plane was shot down over Russia and its pilot, Francis Gary Powers was captured.

Mao had expected an aggressive response from Khrushchev about the U2 spy plane incident. At the 1960 Paris Summit meeting, Khrushchev did demand an official apology from the US President Eisenhower. But he refused.

Mao and the PRC took Eisenhower's aggressive response as a political affront to socialist countries, and they responded with political rallies demanding that Khrushchev act against the American aggressors. However, Khrushchev did not respond with military force.

As such, this incident **reinforced Mao's beliefs that Khrushchev was a soft and weak leader**, who is unfit to lead the Communist World. However, in fact, **Khrushchev was considering the wider geopolitical issues** at that point of time as any tensions with the US could endanger USSR and the world into a nuclear warfare.

2. International Meeting of Communist and Workers Parties in Romania (June 1960)

The quarrels between the CCP and CPSU leaders precipitated a conference represented by 81 communist parties from around the world to adjudicate the **dispute**.

The **Chinese delegation** ridiculed the idea of peaceful co-existence with the West as a mirage, argued for increased support for wars of liberation and national independence movements.

The **Soviets** retorted that the dangers of global war, including a nuclear war, were too great and that, since the Communist bloc had not achieved a decisive strategic superiority, it should act with caution. Moreover, they argued that that economic race would be the decisive factor and time favoured the Socialist camp.

However, the final communique of the conference **endorsed the Soviet view**. Although China reluctantly subscribed to the communique to preserve bloc solidarity, **bitterness remained**.

It was clear that Peking could challenge Moscow without the risk of expulsion from the bloc. The days of Soviet hegemony were over.

3. Soviet-Albania split (1961)

In January 1961, the USSR withdrew financial aid to Albania. And in October 1961, Khrushchev made a speech that year during the 22nd Moscow Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union that attacked Albania's leader Enver Hoxha for his 'Stalinist' doctrines and backward ways.

However, this speech was interpreted as an **attack on China**, and viewed the USSR as disloyal and a betrayal to the Communist Bloc.

In response, the PRC observer at the Congress, Zhou Enlai, **dramatically staged a rehearsed walk-out** in protest. Soon after, the PRC offered to replace Soviet money and technical assistance to Albania, as well as supply wheat to the Albanians.

In December 1961, the USSR broke diplomatic relations with the People's Socialist Republic of Albania.

The Soviet-Albania split displayed the **undisguised political and economic competition** between the 2 powers to be the global leader in the Communist World as Mao viewed Khrushchev as an increasingly incapable leader.

4. The Sino-Indian War (1962)

China did not recognise the boundary between India and China that had been drawn up during the British colonial period, and **Mao demanded that the border be renegotiated by China and India** themselves. However, India did not believe that there was anything to negotiate about as it was satisfied with the existing boundary.

In **May 1962**, clashes increased along the Tibetan border and the PRC began to prepare for war with India. Although outwardly aggressive, Mao was actually worried about triggering a war, as one of his key concerns was that the nuclear test site at Lop Nur in Northwest China was in missile range of India.

Both countries engaged in a brief war in **October 1962**, where a dispute over the Tibetan border between India and China again broke out into fighting. The PRC invaded Tibet in 1950, an area that was in China's domestic interest to bring under Chinese control. Part of the fallout from the war was that India allowed American U2s to fly from bases at Charbatia, where China's atomic bomb test was able to be photographed. **Khrushchev chose not to support China's claims and diplomatically defended India, which greatly offended the Chinese leaders.**

Although the USSR was officially neutral, however, **they supported India** by giving them MIG fighter jets and \$800 million worth of aid. This is because India was geopolitically important to the Soviet Union and Khrushchev did not want India to be destabilised.

This **aggravated tensions between USSR and China** as Mao viewed this as an outrageous hypocrisy and betrayal of the USSR. Therefore, he refused the Soviet foreign minister, Kosygin, to be a mediator to organise a ceasefire. Nonetheless, the war ended on 20th November 1962 when the Chinese had taken the disputed areas and unilaterally declared a ceasefire. Although the PRC had emerged victorious, the continuous brutality of the PRC forces in Tibet aroused international condemnation.

At this time, **China and the USSR were in a state of virtual non-cooperation** and this conflict **triggered** the **final severance of diplomatic relations** between the Soviets and the Chinese communists in 1962, after more than 10 years of growing hostility.

5. Cuban Missile Crisis and its aftermath (1962-1967)

Mao criticised Khrushchev for backing down in the Cuban missile crisis of October 1962 ("Khrushchev has moved from adventurism to capitulationism"), to which Khrushchev responded that Mao's policies would lead to a nuclear war.

Mao was openly disparaging about Khrushchev's handling of the crisis, and he seized on this perceived mismanagement as an opportunity to expose to the Communist world the lack of commitment of the USSR to the revolutionary cause. **Mao discredited the USSR as a coward** and its inability to lead the world communism.

In response, Khrushchev questioned the right of Mao to decide for the decisions made by the USSR; "What right have you to decide for us questions involving our very existence and our class struggle? We too want socialism, but we want to win it through class struggles, not by unleashing a world thermonuclear."

As such, the **CMC reinforced Mao's beliefs that Khrushchev was a soft and weak leader**, who is unfit to lead the Communist World. However, in fact, Khrushchev was considering the geopolitical issues at that point of time as any tensions with the US could endanger USSR into a nuclear warfare.

The CMC was also an event that clearly displayed the **ideological differences** between the 2 leaders on how the Communist revolutionary cause should be achieved.

In **August 1963**, the US and USSR signed the Limited Test Ban Treaty. China saw the treaty as evidence of an alliance between US and USSR against China and to monopolise nuclear weapons. Thus, in **October 1964**, to break the US-Soviet nuclear monopoly and to increase its international prestige, **China successfully exploded its first atomic bomb** and became a nuclear power in October 1964.

China then detonated **its first hydrogen bomb in June 1967**. Mao was no longer wary of a nuclear catastrophe as were the USSR and the USA. He suggested that the nuclear weapons were a tool of diplomacy and saw them as a key to China usurping the USSR's position as leader of the Communist world.

This nuclear issue clearly demonstrated how the **contrasting ideological differences** of how Communism should be achieved led to the desire for Mao to **gain superiority over the USSR and become the leader in the Communist world**.

6. Mao's political struggle in China & attempts to hold on to power, (1960-1966)

In 1960, Mao allowed his compatriots, Vice Chairman of the CCP Liu Shaoqi and Vice-Premier Deng Xiaoping to deal with the excesses of the Great Leap Forward. Mao became upset that both Liu and Deng introduced **moderate economic policies** and tried to reverse the course of the Great Leap Forward by introducing de-collectivisation by allowing private farming and household

contracting farming. Liu Shaoqi was also **critical of the Great Leap Forward and, indirectly, Mao's leadership.**

To complement Liu's and Deng's economic programmes, other Chinese leaders started to encourage moderation in China's relations with the USSR and encourage economic cooperation. In early 1962, Wang Jiaxing, head of the CCP's International Liaison Department, presented a report to Premier Zhou Enlai Foreign Minister Cheng Yi and Deng Xiaoping which argued that that China should try to create a **peaceful environment for its domestic economic development, ease tensions in China's external relations.**

By **1962**, Mao was concerned that these moderate party leaders and their subordinates were moving towards 'Revisionism' characterised by Soviet-style bureaucracy and economic management, rather than on class struggle and ideological purity.

To **curb the tendency of domestic revisionism** and enhance his political power, Mao decided to launch a massive political campaign nationwide, the Socialist Education Movement. **Mao wanted to use this campaign to prevent and oppose revisionism in China**, and he regarded the movement as a crucial struggle for the fate of the CCP and China.

By 1963, Mao intensified anti-Revisionist polemics against the moderate leaders who had advocated moderate reforms at home and better relations with the Soviet bloc, as well as the Khrushchev's revisionist domestic and foreign policies, such as the USSR's pursuit of peaceful co-existence with the US after the Cuban Missile crisis.

Cultural Revolution (1966-1976):

Not satisfied with his **weakening position** in the government, and **to purge his critics and resume control** of the PRC, Mao gathered a group of radicals to help him attack the moderate leaders and reassert his authority. This was a **key reason** that prompted Mao to launch the Cultural Revolution.

Mao shut down the nation's schools, calling for a massive youth mobilization to take current party leaders to task for their embrace of Revisionism. and lack of revolutionary spirit. In the months that followed, the movement escalated quickly as the students formed paramilitary groups called the Red Guards and **attacked and harassed the moderate leaders**, notably Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping.

Mao further **permitted the Red Guards to engage in anti-Soviet campaigns.** The Red Guards **attacked Soviet embassies**, while the **Chinese media attacked Soviet revisionism** and its influence on 'reactionary' party-state officials.

The USSR (under Brezhnev) continued to denounce the revolution as **total fanaticism** and **criticised Mao** for creating a state of anarchy (state of disorder due to absence of authority or other controlling systems).

In this sense, **Sino-Soviet relations soured beyond repair** when Mao used **anti-Soviet rhetoric** to mobilise the masses against his domestic political opponents.

7. Invasion of Czechoslovakia, 1968

Khrushchev stepped down in 1964 and was replaced by Leonid Brezhnev who followed a 'Stalinist' foreign policy. The Brezhnev Doctrine was a Soviet foreign policy that proclaimed any threat to socialist rule in any state of the Soviet Bloc in Central and Eastern Europe was a threat to them all, and therefore justified the **intervention of fellow socialist states by the Soviet Union**.

In 1968, when Czechoslovakia attempted to assert some independence, the Brezhnev Doctrine was realised and Soviet tanks were sent to crush the period of liberalisation, known as the Prague Spring. This invasion undermined the USSR's standing with other Communist states, and correspondingly damaged its attempts to isolate the PRC.

Mao condemned the use of force against Czechoslovakia as the USSR was not behaving in a 'truly socialist' manner. Additionally, he was **worried** that the Soviet military might and the Brezhnev Doctrine could be **turned against China** as China was also revolutionist and wanted independence from the control of the USSR.

8. Sino-Soviet Border clashes, 1969

There were already border disputes along the Xinjiang frontier and the Amur and Ussuri rivers. Both sides increased the number of troops facing one another across the border.

Example: On March 8, **1963**, Peking published a series of lost territories, including part of Southern Siberia, the Maritime Province, and at least 500 000 square miles of land in Russian Central Asia. It demanded that the Soviets acknowledge, for the record, that the current Sino-Soviet frontier was a product of "unequal" and therefore "illegal" treaties. Moscow denied having territorial problems with any neighbouring state and refused to admit the illegality of the old treaties with China.

On July 10, **1964**, Mao told a visiting Japanese Socialist Party delegation that Southern Siberia did not belong to USSR.

By the **end of the 1960s**, the **relationship between Chinese and the Soviets had become increasingly belligerent**. Both sides had nuclear weapons and continued to criticise each other. In 1967, China developed its first hydrogen bomb and the USSR became increasingly alarmed, stationing over 50 battle divisions along its China border.

This **hostility inevitably came to a head** in **violent clashes** along their mutual border. The PRC denounced the Soviets as 'imperialists', no different from the Tsars of old, as they still had not returned the territory taken from the Chinese in the 19th century.

In **1969**, the **frontier dispute erupted into a proper war**. According to the Chinese, the USSR had violated China's border 4189 times in the period up to 1969. The Red Guards intensified the problem as they crossed the Sino-Soviet border into Soviet territory, signalling their contempt for the USSR.

The tension **boiled over into actual fighting on 2 March 1969 on the Damansky Island** in the Ussuri River. By August, there was clearly the possibility of all-out war between the 2 Communist states, of which Mao feared a Soviet invasion and possible nuclear strikes. Hence, he ordered that tunnels be dug and supplies be stored in preparation for this, while fighting continued sporadically throughout the year.

The clashes **threatened to develop into full-scale war**: in an extraordinary development **both sides repositioned their nuclear-armed rockets** so that they now **faced inwards towards each other** rather than outwards towards their Western enemies.

In the end, there was **no escalation of the conflict**. However, the war had brought the world's 2 most powerful communist countries to a brink of war.

Some historians viewed this year as the lowest point in Sino-Soviet relations as it was a display of irreconcilable damaged relations between the 2 states, and a turning point that triggered worse hostilities between the countries in the later years.

*Furthermore, this was also a **trigger** that saw China to consider **better relations with the USA** to **offset the bigger Soviet security threat**.

Impact of Sino-Soviet Split

US-China Rapprochement (1972)

The escalating war in Vietnam led U.S. officials to look for ways to improve relations with Communist governments in Asia in the hopes that such a policy might lessen future conflict, undermine alliances between Communist countries, diplomatically isolate North Vietnam, and increase U.S. leverage against the Soviet Union.

Likewise, Sino-Soviet tension contributed to the Chinese leadership's desire for a rapprochement with the United States. In 1972, U.S. President Richard Nixon travelled to China and met with Mao Zedong, the Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party, and Zhou Enlai, the PRC Premier. Over the course of this visit, the two governments negotiated the **Shanghai Communiqué**, an important step toward improving relations between the **United States and the PRC** after many years of hostility.

In the communique:

- the US and China also agreed that neither they nor any other power should "seek hegemony in the Asia-Pacific region". This was of particular importance to China, which shared a militarized border with the Soviet Union.

- Regarding the political status of Taiwan, in the communiqué the **United States acknowledged the One-China policy** (but did not endorse the China's version of the policy) and agreed to cut back military installations on Taiwan.
- At that time, trade between China and the US grew around 25% every year.

The Sino-US rapprochement further forced the Soviets to pursue a policy of détente with the United States

Second communiqué (1979)

A second communiqué was signed between US and China in January 1979. The second communiqué formally announced the **commencement of normal relations between the United States and the People's Republic of China**. In so doing, the **US recognised** that the government of the **People's Republic of China was the sole legal government of China**.

In addition, the United States government declared that it would **end formal political relations with the Republic of China ("Taiwan")** while preserving economic and cultural ties. (However, US Congress passed the 'Taiwan Relations act' to provide military assistance to Taiwan).

Both sides reaffirmed their wish to reduce the risk of international conflict as well as avoidance of hegemony (referring to the USSR) of any nation in the Asia-Pacific region

9. Chinese Invasion of Vietnam and Soviet responses (1979)

Background:

While China had given large-scale support to North Vietnam during its struggle against the French and Americans, China stopped doing so once the US withdrew its force from Vietnam after signing the Paris Peace Accords in January 1973.

Vietnam's relationships with China further soured in reaction to Chinese détente with the US in 1972, when North Vietnam suspected that China had abandoned Vietnam's cause in a deal with the US over Indochina. As relations with cooled, **North Vietnam drew closer to the Soviet bloc**, which supplied much North Vietnam's needs in the last months of the Vietnam War.

When South Vietnam was defeated and Vietnam was reunified in 1975, a **Sino-Soviet proxy war** emerged between the pro-Soviet governments in Vietnam (Socialist Republic of Vietnam) and Laos (Lao People's Democratic Republic) against the pro-Chinese government in Cambodia (Democratic Kampuchea).

China's invasion of North Vietnam:

At first, Vietnam ignored the the Cambodian communist party, the Khmer Rouge, until the Khmer Rouge attacked the ethnic Vietnamese populace of Cambodia, and the border with Vietnam. Vietnam's counterattack **precipitated the Cambodian–Vietnamese War (1975–1979)** that

deposed the Khmer Rouge in 1978, established a pro-Vietnamese ‘puppet’ government in Cambodia. Vietnam’s invasion of Cambodia dragged the region further into the **ambit of Sino-Soviet rivalry**.

Beijing launched an incursion into the northern border of Vietnam in March 1979 ‘to teach Hanoi a lesson’ but **withdrew a few weeks** later after both sides sustained heavy losses.

Soviet reactions:

USSR denounced China’s incursion into Vietnam by chose not to intervene militarily. In the aftermath of the conflict, **Soviet military role in Vietnam increased** as the Soviets provided arms to Vietnam.

Soviet ships enjoyed access to the harbours at Danang and Cam Ranh Bay, and Soviet reconnaissance aircraft operated out of Vietnamese airfields. Also, the Soviets helped the Vietnamese to turn their border districts with China into “iron fortresses” manned by well-equipped and well-trained paramilitary troops.

Thus, the **invasion heightened tensions** between China and the Soviet Union, with both sides working to undermine each other’s position. The Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia were to remain **the most vexing problem in Sino-Soviet relations for a decade**.

The Vietnam War was a great example that showcased the divisive force between the 2 communist states to the point they saw each other as political rivals, and no longer allies to achieve communism on the international level.

10. Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan (1979) and Chinese response

Background:

In **December 1979**, the Soviet Union intervened military by sending its troops in support of the Afghan communist government in its conflict with anti-Communist Muslim guerrilla.

China was worried that it could be **further encircled by USSR**, which already had **close strategic ties with India**, while India had been supporting pro-Soviet Vietnam’s occupation of Cambodia. Soviet presence in Afghanistan also **opened a doorway to threaten China’s controlled Xinjiang**.

China’s response:

China “vigorously” condemned the hegemonistic action of the Soviet Union” and firmly demanded “the cessation of this aggression and intervention in Afghanistan and the withdrawal of all Soviet armed forces”. China accused the USSR of having long planned for this military invasion of Afghanistan for the purpose to access to the Indian Ocean and sea lanes and also seizing oil-rich areas.

China refused to recognize the Soviet-backed communist government in Afghanistan and ended formal relations with Afghanistan.

China began supporting the Afghan mujahideen militarily and diplomatically by providing US\$200 million of military supplies annually to the resistance through Pakistan. It also strengthened its alliance with Pakistan and ramped up its military presence in Xinjiang.

To defend itself from a Soviet attack from Afghanistan, China acquired military equipment from the United States. China's Olympic Committee also joined the United States' call to boycott the Moscow Olympics of 1980.

China also agreed to provide the US with listening posts to monitor Soviet Central Asia through secret stations through Xinjiang. After the Soviet invasion, US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), and the Chinese Intelligence services developed a close collaborative relationship to counter the Soviet forces in Afghanistan.

After years of hostility and mistrust, the relationship between both countries **was irreconcilable** and any invasion made by either country was viewed upon by negative light **that threatened each other's national security**.

Sino-Soviet Détente (1985)

By the 1980s, Deng Xiaoping in particular, adopted a much more tolerant line towards both the USSR and the West. He deliberately toned down the aggressive anti-Soviet approach that he had shown while serving under Mao.

He needed to as he was too preoccupied with socialist transformation, industrial development, and problems of leadership and "succession." The possibility of nuclear war between the USSR became increasingly remote.

Similarly, Gorbachev adopted his 'New Thinking' in Soviet foreign policy making, promising to reform the USSR and to end the occupation of Afghanistan. This welcomed new negotiations with China. Consequently, since 1985, the outlook for Sino-Soviet relations improved, albeit slowly.

- The Soviet Union treated China with greater flexibility: there was a plan to reduce Soviet troops in the Asia-Pacific region, in Afghanistan and Mongolia, and along the Sino-Soviet border.
- USSR also promised to work with China to resolve their differences over Vietnam's occupation Cambodia.

Both sides began to portray each other economic reforms in positive light. There were more areas of cooperation, such as the opening of a border railroad, space cooperation, and joint hydropower development.

In **1986**, trade agreements were signed and procedures **for full diplomatic relations were restored**. In May 1988, a cultural exchange agreement was completed.

Overall Analysis and Evaluation:

Change & Continuity

The Sino Soviet alliance contained the seeds of its own destruction from as early as the unequal Friendship Alliance in 1950 as China was already treated inferiorly with Soviet arrogance during Stalin's time. However, the ideological split between both nations were more prominent during Khrushchev and Brezhnev's time.

There was inherent weakness in the Sino-Soviet relations since the beginning of their alliance through the Sino-Soviet Friendship Treaty. This laid the foundation to increasing hostility between the nations. This suggests that the better relations with the USA in the later years might not be a consequence of the hostile relations that China has with the USSR.

2. Causes Leading to the breakdown in Sino-Soviet relations (1960 – 1979)



CAUSE: IDEOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES

Summary:

- **Ideological differences:** More about which country should be the **leading socialist actor**.
- Different interpretations of orthodox Marxism and Leninism by the two parties.
- **USSR was becoming moderate and pragmatic** while **China** adopted more **orthodox Marxism** and advocated **revolutionary struggles**.
- Mao believed that the **CCP** was **ideologically superior** to the CPSU and China, under Mao's leadership, should lead the international communist movement.

Key Evidence

- ***De-Stalinisation: Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU)***
- In Feb 1956, Khrushchev staggered the USSR and the Communist world by launching a detailed attack on Stalin for his 'crimes against the party.' **The open "self-criticism" of the CPSU and the unveiling of Stalin's mistakes lowered the CPSU's prestige and shook its leadership role in the socialist camp.**

- The **CCP leaders** perceived the failure on the part of the Soviet leaders to discuss the de-Stalinization issue with them as **unacceptable and offensive**. China had felt that the death of Stalin in March 1953 had **made the CCP** (and its leader Mao in particular) a **more central actor** in the international communist movement. **In this process, the CCP gained influence and new pride.**
- **Initial response by Mao** was positive, applauding Khrushchev's speech as shattering the myth that Stalin and the Soviet Union had been "always correct" and exposed Moscow's "erroneous tendency of treating other parties as inferiors within the international communist movement". However, **Mao** also asserted that the way Khrushchev had initiated the de-Stalinization campaign "*had made a mess*". By doing so, **Mao obviously meant to claim a morally superior position to Khrushchev** and his colleagues in the Soviet leadership, implying that **it was the CCP and he himself who had occupied the position to define the mainstream discourse for international communism in the post-Stalin era.**
- A particular charge that rang alarm bells in China was **Khrushchev's accusation** that Stalin had put himself above the party by engaging in a '**cult of personality.**' While Mao had had profound differences with Stalin, he found it necessary to defend Stalin because **this was a matter closely associated with CCP's own experience of building socialism in China**, and his own **political style** resembled very much of Stalin's. Mao read the denunciation of the cult of personality as an **intended criticism** of his own style of leadership in China.
- ***Differing interpretations of Communist ideology: Mao's armed struggle vs Khrushchev's revisionism***
 - To Mao, **Moscow** seemed to accept that there were **alternative ways of achieving revolution** in the modern world other than by armed struggle. This was evident from Khrushchev's promulgation of the '**Three peaceful**' communist ideology.
 - **Khrushchev** had by the late 1950s concluded that in a world of nuclear superpowers the Marxist-Leninist notion of a final violent conflict between the international proletariat and the forces of capitalism was no longer acceptable. He said that had comrade Lenin lived in a nuclear age he would have adjusted his views.
He believed in peaceful transition and peaceful co-existence with the West.
 - This was **rejected by Mao** as **heresy**. He believed that the **final struggle was unavoidable** and that it was the duty of all revolutionaries not only to prepare for it but also to hasten its coming (thus saw Khrushchev's de-Stalinization as an affirmation that **Moscow's revisionist path** and spurred his determination to go against it). Mao still believed in the **orthodox communist ideology** of class struggle and **revolution against the imperialist countries.**

- ***Differing views over nuclear war & foreign relations with the West, especially with USA***
- **Beijing** claimed that it was not afraid of the prospect of a nuclear war, believing that although the holocaust might kill 300 million Chinese, **more advanced industrial nations of the West would fare worse**.
Moreover, with the Nationalists retreating to Taiwan, with US support, the only solution appeared to be a military one.
- **Khrushchev disputed the Chinese view**. He argued that a potential war in Taiwan would become too devastating and that World War Three would decimate the earth, rendering meaningless the victory of Communism. **Khrushchev** contended that **victory over the West can be achieved through peaceful competition where the superior socialist superior system out-produce the capitalist world**.
- However, **Mao** felt that if the Soviets were placing so much emphasis on **avoiding confrontations** with the US alluding that the **real motivation** was due to **Moscow's reluctance to defend China** against US-led alliances.

Key Events that show rising hostility between Moscow & Beijing

- ***November Moscow Meeting, 1960***
- The **intensity of the argument** between Moscow and Peking **precipitated** a conference of eighty-one Communist parties in Moscow in 1960 **to adjudicate the dispute**.
- The **Chinese delegation ridiculed** the idea of peaceful co-existence as a mirage, argued for increased support for wars of liberation and national independence, and **belittled** the chances of peaceful take-over. They argued that the days of Soviet hegemony were over.
- The **Soviets** retorted that the dangers of global war were too great and that, since the **Communist bloc** had not achieved a decisive strategic superiority, it should **act with caution**. Moreover, the **economic race** would be the decisive factor and time favoured the Socialist camp.
- The final communique of the conference **endorsed the Soviet view**.
- Although China **reluctantly subscribed** to the communique to **preserve bloc solidarity**, **bitterness remained**. Furthermore, Soviet détente with the **West worsened Mao's suspicion** that the Soviet Union wanted to leave China internationally isolated.

Key Events in 1962

- ***Open letter from CCCP to all party organisations and communists of the Soviet Union, printed in Pravda***

- The Soviets then published an **open letter** to all Soviet communists. The letter answered the Chinese Proposal point by point. For example it accused China of ignoring the horrors of war and accused Beijing of twisting Soviet's Peace Policy Prosperity and Freedom. It's intention was **to criticize the Chinese** for their own **domestic political purposes** – notably as a means of **expressing anti-Stalinist views**
- **Aftermath of Cuban Missile Crisis**
 - The Soviet Union and the USA made a compromise settlement in which the former agreed to withdraw all its weapons and installations in Cuba in return for the USA's promise never to invade the island and to withdraw its own nuclear weapons from Turkey.
 - The USSR **further strained relations** with China by **unilaterally accepting a nuclear test ban treaty without consulting** the Chinese.
 - **China scorned Moscow** for its original 'adventurism' in siting detectable nuclear warheads in Cuba and for its subsequent 'capitulationism' in bowing to the US threat to retaliate. *"Was this, China asked contemptuously, the way to inspire the world's struggling masses in their fight against American imperialism?"*

In **1962**, Mao linked the class struggle in China to the situation in the Soviet Union and **used the Soviet Union as a negative example** to present his arguments that the Soviet Union had been in existence for several decades, but it was **still revisionist** and **serving international capitalism**.
 - In, **1962**, **Khrushchev** in the wake of the **Cuban missile crisis**, with his political confidence shored up after mending fences with the Cubans, decided to **confront the Chinese ideological challenge**. However, talks between the two was a *"dialogue between two deaf persons"*, and **ended without any substantive agreement**.

Possible Counter-argument for Ideological differences as most significant factor

- **Ideological differences** alone could not explain why Mao and the Soviet leaders was able to establish cordial ties in the 1950s, marked by the signing Treaty of Friendship, Alliance, and Mutual Assistance (1950). Neither does it explain the declining relations from the late-1950s.
- Another major flaw of this view is that it fails to take into account how and why **Mao** pursued détente with the US in 1972, but was **critical of Khrushchev's** pursuit of 'peaceful co-existence' with the West in the 1960s.

CAUSE: PERSONALITY CLASHES BETWEEN MAO, STALIN, AND KHRUSHCHEV

Summary:

- Emphasises the **personality clashes** and political rivalry between Mao and Soviet leaders Stalin and Khrushchev.

- Mao was ambitious to become the most significant communist leader and compete for leadership in the international communist movement. Thus even when Khrushchev rose to power, Mao developed a derogatory attitude towards Khrushchev as he saw him as naïve and unsophisticated.
- Khrushchev tended to be more moderate and pragmatic in outlook while Mao was more radical and aggressive in nature.

Key Evidence

- ***Personality clashes between Mao and Stalin (1950s)***

- During **Mao's first visit to Moscow in Dec 1950**, he was **offended** by Stalin's high-handedness and the air of superiority assumed by the Russians. Mao also **complained** that he had been dumped in a poor-quality villa outside Moscow with a wonky table-tennis table as the sole means of recreation. His hosts had made no arrangements to entertain him beyond the formal round of official meetings and banquets. His only outing was to the Bolshoi Theatre. **Mao, who was on his first visit abroad, felt slighted.**
- Biographers suggest that the two leaders **disliked** each other as people and this may explain why **Stalin was reluctant to meet Mao**, except formally. Their personalities conflicted because they were so similar in type.

- ***Personality clashes between Mao and Khrushchev (1958, 1959)***

- This unhappy trend continued when Khrushchev took over Stalin in 1953. When Khrushchev flew over to Beijing in **Aug 1958 to smooth over relations** which had been frayed by a series of disagreements, he was indeed subjected to humiliation.
- In a **tit-for-tat** for the poor treatment he had endured during his visits to Moscow, Mao deliberately set out to make Khrushchev uncomfortable. He arranged for the Soviet delegation to be put up in a hotel without air-conditioning; while the Russians sweltered in Beijing's fierce summer heat and were plagued by mosquitoes. In one notorious incident Mao insisted that a round of talks take place in his private pool. Mao was a regular swimmer; Khrushchev hated the water. Not surprisingly, the talks were not a success.
- The **results of the talks** were felt almost immediately. **Khrushchev ordered the removal of the USSR's advisers**, overruling aghast colleagues who suggested that they at least be allowed to see out their contracts. In retaliation, on **Khrushchev's next visit to Beijing, in 1959**, Taubman relates, there was "*no honor guard, no Chinese speeches, not even a microphone for the speech that Khrushchev insisted on giving, complete with accolades for Eisenhower that were sure to rile Mao.*" In turn, a **Chinese marshal named Chen Yi provoked the Soviets to a**

fury, prompting Khrushchev to yell: *“Don’t you dare spit on us from your marshal’s height. You don’t have enough spit.”*

- By **1966** the two sides were fighting a **barely contained border war**.

Possible Counter-argument why personality clashes is not the most significant factor

- **Does not explain Soviet’s attempts to repair relationships in 1962 despite poor relationship with Mao.**
- While **Mao** pushed for radicalism in China’s domestic and foreign politics, **Khrushchev** was hoping to **improve relations with China**. Moscow attempted to utilise China’s National Day celebrations to **mend fences** with China.
- According to cables from the Chinese embassy in Moscow, the **Soviets** *‘purposefully demonstrated their friendly postures’*. For example, the Soviet press increased reporting of Chinese affairs, even Mao’s activities and remarks, and did not directly or indirectly attack China. **Moscow** also attempted to **avoid contentious issues** and refrained from being provocative.
- In **October 1962**, when the Chinese ambassador Liu Xiao was about to retire from his position and return to China, the **Soviets held a grand farewell dinner party for him**. To Liu’s surprise, all CPSU Politburo members who were in Moscow at that time attended the party. **Khrushchev made a long speech**, in which he **vowed to take whatever means necessary to improve relations with China**. He told the Chinese ambassador that the two sides should write off all their previous differences and polemics and start a new page in Sino-Soviet relations. Kozlov and Kosygin also made similar speeches. In his meeting with Liu the day before, **Khrushchev had repeatedly and emphatically noted** that he would attempt to do everything possible to **restore bilateral relations** to their level **before 1958**.

CAUSE: DOMESTIC POLITICS IN CHINA & MAO’S POLITICAL AGENDA

Summary:

- Asserts that **Mao intentionally linked his foreign and internal political ideological struggles** and, to a large extent, **manipulated and escalated Sino-Soviet ideological disputes** for his **domestic political purposes**, to **push for his domestic radical programs**, assert his own **ideological supremacy**, and perhaps most importantly, **to check the power and influence of his political rivals** who were pro-Soviet in their ideological inclinations.

Key evidence:

- **Mao’s attempts of garnering support from China through the Taiwan Crisis**

- Taiwan crisis (August 1958) - Bombardment of Kinmen of Mazu. The crisis erupted with Taiwan for the purpose of urging the Chinese people to work harder in the Great Leap Forward drive.❗
- **This became a major issue between USSR and China** as Moscow had advised Mao to behave himself as it was worried that this **crisis would be escalated into full-scale confrontation with the USA**. Despite militarily weak and knowing that China required Soviet military assistance under the Soviet-Sino security obligation, Mao went against Khrushchev's three 'peacefuls', and launched an attack against the heavily US-armed Taiwanese defence. This act of defiance by **Mao severely strained relations** over the Taiwan crisis.
- **Mao's promotion of the Great Leap Forward to strengthen China economically and to assert his ideological supremacy**
 - The Great Economic Leap Forward promoted by Mao in 1958–1959 was to catch up with and surpass the Soviet Union and to demonstrate that **China's economic developmental model was superior to that of the Soviet Union**. These could be seen from Mao's private conversations and talks within the party circle during this period of time. *'We are bolder than [Joseph] Stalin in having the People's Communes develop industry'. On economic construction after 1949, he noted, 'I've always been unsatisfied and unhappy with the way we've basically followed the Soviet Union's approaches' – Mao*
 - The central leadership of the CCP formally suggested changing the 'smaller cooperative to larger cooperative (xiaoshe bian dashe)'. From **Mao's perspective**, China had found a **new and correct path to communism**.
 - **Newly available documents** show that the **USSR** gave **enthusiastic support** to and **extensive praise** for the Great Leap Forward **at the very beginning**, but **cooled down gradually**.
 - For example, the **USSR aided** in the propagation and publicity of the Leap. Almost all Soviet economic districts took production orders from China. Several thousand enterprises took Chinese orders, and more than 100 units assisted China in product design. Soviet-assisted projects during the Leap outnumbered those previously assisted, already on-going and in production.
 - However, though the Soviet people reacted to the Leap with enthusiasm, the **CPSU leadership** adopted a **very cautious stand** toward China's internal development and policies. With regard to the People's Communes, some grass root cadres in the Soviet Union showed great interest, but the **top leaders remained cautious**.
 - For example China's Internal References noted that official newspapers in the Soviet Union never **commented** on the People's Communes and seldom published articles about it. The first mention was in Nov 1958 when Khrushchev held a meeting with the Polish leader, *"The Chinese*

are organizing communes. There were communes in our country 30 years ago. We are tired of it. For the Chinese, let them try. They will gain experience after hurting their heads badly’.

- It was only **after the outbreak of the Sino-Soviet split of 1963** did the Soviet Union **openly oppose** the Great Leap Forward and the People’s Commune Movement.
- From **1964 to 1966, relations with Moscow dramatically deteriorated** again as a result of the Cultural Revolution: Mao suggested that USSR was capitulating to the US while Moscow criticised Mao to be an adventurist and radical.
- **Mao’s political agenda: Checking of power and influence of Mao’s rivals : Socialist Education Movement**
 - In the **early months of 1962**, many of the **moderate Chinese leaders** such as Zhou En Lai and Deng Xiaoping were **opposed to an excessively aggressive policy** towards Moscow and attempted to stabilize and improve ties with Moscow. However, **Mao** realised that he was **increasingly losing political power and influence** and thus began to **stage a political comeback**.
 - Mao used his political authority and power to push for **further radicalisation** of China’s politics and **linked his rivals in Moscow** to his domestic political problems. Countering the **Soviet revisionism** became **part of Mao’s political agenda** to protect China from degenerating into political and ideological revisionism (like the Soviet Union). To curb the tendency of domestic revisionism, Mao decided to launch a **massive political campaign** nationwide, the **Socialist Education Movement** in 1963. The **goal of the movement** was to **cleanse politics, economy, organization, and ideology** (The Four Clean-ups). It was to last until 1966. What this movement entailed was that intellectuals were sent to the countryside to be re-educated by peasants. They still attended school, but also worked in factories and with peasants. This can be seen as a **precursor to the Cultural Revolution**.
 - Whilst some may argue that Mao used this campaign to prevent and oppose revisionism in China, as he regarded the movement as a crucial struggle for the fate of the Party and the state, some has pointed out to his increasingly paranoia over **his loss of political power and influence** due to the **devastating failure of his economic policies**.
- **Easing of tensions, 1961 (after the discontinuation of the Great Leap Forward) – bilateral cooperative ties**
 - From the late 1958 to early 1960s, the relationship **stopped deteriorating** albeit **briefly** because of the extremely **serious economic situation** in China due to the failures of the Great Leap Forward. The Chinese leadership, to some extent including **Mao**, was **willing to put ideological differences** aside temporarily and focus on **domestic readjustment and reconstruction**.

- At the 9th Plenum of the 8th Central Committee in January 1961, the **CCP leadership decided to stop hostilities with the Soviets in favour of a policy of relaxation towards Moscow and to improve relations with neighbouring countries. New initiatives** were taken to **enhance Sino-Soviet cooperation in defence and security.**
- For example, in early 1961, radio communications between the Soviet Pacific fleet and China's East Sea fleet were resumed. In May 1961, the Soviets attempted to invite the Chinese leaders to see many new Soviet military technologies. Moscow also decided to transfer advanced military technology to China, such as equipment for producing the MiG-21 fighter jets.

Further examples:

- A telegraph sent by the Chinese embassy in Moscow on **4 Jan 1961** stated that the **tone in Soviet media** evaluation of China's foreign relations had **never been so positive** compared to the recent past. In **Mao's** words, since the **Soviets were returning to friendship**, *'we should also take some steps'*.
- On **3 Feb 1961**, the CCP instructed that the **11th anniversary of the signing of the Sino-Soviet alliance** treaty should be **celebrated on a larger scale.**
- On **April 1961**, the Soviets voluntarily proposed to **provide China with 1 million tons of grain and 50,000 tons of sugar.**

The strength behind SOT's argument regarding this factor

- The relative strength of this concept is that it presents a **more flexible and nuanced** method of **understanding the relationship between ideology and foreign policy** in comparison to other approaches which view ideology as either a constant and critical factor influencing foreign policy OR absent and irrelevant (realism / neorealism SOT)
- Major strength lies in the **use of newly classified Chinese documents** which furthers one's understanding of Mao's domestic politics and foreign policy towards SU.

Counter argument

- The theory's **exclusive reliance** on Chinese primary sources also constitutes its **major weakness.** Although the SOT correctly points out that **Mao was primarily responsible for destabilising** the alliance between Beijing & Moscow, a **multi-archival research** is necessary for a **more complete picture** of origins and evolution of Sino-Soviet split.
- The SOT is **constrained** by the fact the documents represent only a **partial declassification** of the Foreign Ministry's materials, and the most important ones located at the CCP's central archive, are **inaccessible to the public.**

CAUSE: HISTORICAL ROOTS OF SINO-SOVIET MISTRUST & ITS IMPACT TO MAO

Summary:

- Emphasizes the historical roots of the conflict
- Traditionally, both the Chinese and Russians had viewed each other with mistrust. This was because Imperial Russia had subjected China to unequal treaties in the past.

Key evidence:

- *Unequal treaties imposed by Russia in the 18th & 19th Centuries*
- In a series of treaties signed with Tsarist Russia in the 18th and 19th centuries, China had lost thousands of square miles of territory to Russia. Hence Mao had always wanted to **rectify the injuries** that China had suffered in the past. As early as **1936** he told American journalist Edgar Snow of his **desire to regain** all “lost territories”, including Outer Mongolia.
- On **March 8, 1963**, Beijing published a series of lost territories, including part of Southern Siberia, the Maritime Province, and at least 500 000 square miles of land in Russian Central Asia. It demanded that the Soviets acknowledge, for the record, that the **current Sino-Soviet frontier** was a product of “unequal” and therefore “illegal” treaties.
- **Moscow denied** having territorial problems with any neighbouring state and **refused to admit the illegality** of the **old treaties with China**.
- On **July 10, 1964**, Mao told a visiting Japanese Socialist Party delegation: *“About a hundred years ago, the area to the east of Lake Baikal became Russian territory and since then, Vladivostok, Khabarovsk and Kamchatka, and other areas have become Soviet territory. We have not yet presented our bill for this list.”* **Moscow denounced Mao’s statement** as reminiscent of Hitler’s Lebensraum and Khrushchev retorted publicly that if Tsarist Russia was expansionist, so was Imperial China, as both countries had taken land from other people and their actions should cancel each other out.
- As **a result of the exchange of harsh words**, **local disputes sharpened** between the two sides along their common border throughout the 1960s and 1970s there were **frequent and sometimes violent confrontations**. During this period, the USSR committed nearly 50 Red Army divisions to defend its Asian frontiers.

- ***Mutual Disregard between Stalin & Mao before 1949 (also an aspect of clash of personality)***

Stalin towards Mao

- Mao's unorthodox method of revolution, based on peasant mobilisation in the countryside, was **tolerated** by Stalin only because all other types of Communist insurrection in China had failed. In fact, **Stalin favoured Chinese who had studied in the Soviet Union**, such as Chu Chiu-pai, Li Li-san and the 28 Bolsheviks, putting them in charge of the Chinese Communist Party while **keeping Mao out of the Central Committee**. **Even after Mao** became the de facto leader in **1936**, **Stalin remained reluctant** to accept his leadership. As **late as 1945**, **Stalin continued to regard Wang Ming** as a potential alternative to Mao.

Mao towards Stalin:

- Although respecting Stalin as a builder of socialism, Mao had witnessed the ineptness of the Comintern's China policy in the 1920s and early 1930s. Therefore, he had **no confidence** in Moscow's judgement and **rejected Stalin's** "authority as a political and military strategist for the Chinese revolution." Mao thought that **only a Chinese** who understood the 'Sinification' of Marxism could lead the Chinese revolution to success.
- This led to **Stalin's belief that Mao was defective** in his understanding of Marxism. Soviet references to Chinese Communists as "cabbage Communists" and "radish Communists" - red on the outside but white on the inside – **belittled Chinese Communism and hurt Mao's pride**.

- **Sino-Soviet Treaty 1950 reinforced Mao's distrust of Stalin.**

- The **Chinese realised** soon after the 1950 treaty had been signed that the **Soviet Union was intent on exploiting the agreement** in its own favour. This was in spite of **Mao's initial belief** that the hard-won treaty had **obliged the USSR to provide China with expertise and aid at low cost**. Its wording, which spoke of 'friendship and equality' and 'economic and cultural co-operation', had appeared to promise much.

But Stalin had struck a hard bargain. **Under the terms of the treaty:**

- The \$300 million Soviet advance **was a loan not a gift**; the PRC had to undertake to **repay the full amount plus interest**.
- The **upkeep of the 10000 Soviet economic and military advisers** who went to China had to be **paid fully** by China
- China had to give the **bulk of its bullion (gold) reserves** to the Soviet Union
- Mao had to accept the "independence" of Outer Mongolia
- There would be a joint Sino-Soviet **exploitation of mineral resources** in Sinkiang
- Joint administration of the Changchun Railway

- Joint use of Port Arthur and Dairen
- Even **Khrushchev** considered **Stalin's action as "unwise" and "an insult to the Chinese people."**
- **Mao's bitterness** over Stalin's demand for special interests in China is made manifest in his report to the 8th Central Committee meeting on September 28, 1962:

*"Even after the victory of the Chinese Communists Stalin feared that China would become a Yugoslavia and I become a Tito. Later on, I went to Moscow in December 1949 to conclude the Chinese-Soviet Treaty of Alliance and Mutual Assistance [of February 14, 1950], which also involved a struggle. **Stalin did not want to sign it**, but finally agreed after two months of negotiations. **When did Stalin begin to have confidence in us?** It began in the **winter of 1950**, when our country became involved in the Resist-America Aid Korea Campaign [**the Korean War**]. Stalin then believed that we were not Yugoslavia and not Titoist."*

- The cost of Stalin's "trust" was high: **China sent a million "volunteers" to intervene in the Korean War** and had to **pay the entire \$1.35 billion** for the Soviet equipment and supplies necessary for the venture, and **Mao lost a son** in the war.

ARGUMENT REGARDING THIS CAUSE

- Long-term historical mistrust could not **explain the many years of cooperation** between the CCP and the CPSU despite some differences.
- The split between China and USSR **only occurred sometime after 1959**, and this **had to be attributed to the decisions and actions of the Soviet and Chinese leaders** at that time.

CAUSE: SECURITY CONCERNS - SINO-SOVIET BORDER DISPUTES & CLASHES

- **Sino-Soviet Border clashes (1964-1969): continuation of territorial disputes**
- According to the Chinese claim, from **the breakdown of negotiations in 1964 to March 1969**, the Soviets violated China's border 4189 times.
- **Frontier tension escalated** to such a degree that two large clashes erupted in **March 1969** in the Ussuri River region where a group of Soviet border guards was ambushed by Chinese soldiers while patrolling the Soviet-held islet of Damanskii / Zhenbaodao on the Ussuri River dividing the Soviet Union and China.
- About a **fortnight** later the **Soviets retaliated, shelling the Chinese side**. In August another skirmish erupted at the Sino-Soviet border in Xinjiang.
- The **clashes threatened to develop into full-scale war**: in an extraordinary development **both sides repositioned their nuclear-armed rockets so that they now faced inwards towards each other** rather than outwards towards their Western enemies. This may have been bluff

and counter-bluff, but there was no doubting that Sino-Soviet relations had reached their **lowest point**.

CAUSE: THE ROLE OF US

Summary:

- US nuclear superiority caused **strains in Sino-Soviet** by forcing China to seek nuclear weaponry from Soviet Union and forcing the Soviets to pursue more conciliatory policies with the West.
- In addition, Soviet and Chinese perceptions of the US threat produced **divergent responses within the USSR and China** further straining Sino-Soviet relations.
- US policy towards the CCP during the Chinese Civil War and US sponsoring of CENTO and SEATO and activity in South Asia were also important factors contributing to the Sino-Soviet Split

Key Evidence

- **Mao's distrust with USA from Jan 1945**
- Mao and Chou En-lai looked to the future with the **goal of avoiding complete dependence** on the Soviet Union. In **Jan 1945**, they **secretly proposed a visit to Washington** to confer with Roosevelt as "leaders of a primary Chinese party." They hoped to convince the President that:
 - they, **not the KMT**, represented the future of China.
 - They desired a **coalition government**
 - **access to American aid** following the model of Tito, (the leader of Yugoslavia, who had broken away from Moscow)
 - recognition by the United States as a major party, so as to allow them to participate in the post-war China arrangements and the organisation of the United Nations.
 - Most importantly, if Chiang refused the coalition, they wanted to know the possibilities for American support of the Chinese Communist Party.
- Unfortunately for Mao, the Americans were unresponsive to his suggestion.
- In fact, the **US with its aggressive action** towards the CCP during the **latter years of World War II** and in the Chinese Civil War **did much to make Mao** and other CCP leaders **ardent anti-Americans and anti-capitalists**.

This would **later cause tremendous problems** with **Khrushchev** when he initiated his **peace offensive with the West in the mid-1950s**

- **US nuclear superiority forced China to seek nuclear weaponry**
- **1945 – 1953** Soviet conventional military power facing Western Europe was enough to counter the West's slight edge in atomic bombs and delivery. However, the situation was radically altered in **1953–1954** when the **United States and the Soviet Union developed and tested thermonuclear weapons** (hydrogen bombs)

- The **USA** by this time had **far superior means of delivery** in comparison to the USSR.
- The **Eisenhower administration**, realizing the United States' superiority in nuclear capabilities, attempted to use it for **political gain**. **US Secretary of State Dulles in Jan 1954** announced the **doctrine of massive retaliation**, threatening the Soviet Union with national destruction if the US determined that the Soviets were taking aggressive action, either conventional or nuclear.
- Dulles also initiated a **new confrontational strategy, 'brinkmanship'**, in which the opposing players would threaten each other with thermonuclear weapons until the weaker party would back down. The so-called New Look policy of the Eisenhower administration, with its increased reliance on nuclear weaponry and scaling back of military spending in other areas, **clearly aimed at exploiting** US nuclear superiority for maximum gain.
- This policy was best evidenced in the Korean War and the Taiwan Straits Crisis of 1954–1955.
- After the Eisenhower administration took power, in 1952, it was quickly decided that the Chinese and North Koreans would be threatened with the possible use of nuclear weapons to bring the war to a close.
- **US reliance on nuclear superiority negatively affected Sino-Soviet relationship in two main ways:**
 - **First**, from the **Chinese perspective**, it **increased fears about the possibility of nuclear attacks** on the PRC by the United States. Despite Mao's repeated statements that nuclear weapons were a "paper tiger" and that real battles were determined through conventional warfare, he **realized the importance of nuclear weapons**. This resulted in Mao increasingly pressured US nuclear assurances and more importantly, for the creation of China's own nuclear arsenal.
 - Initially, in **May 1955**, the **USSR agreed to provide China** with aid in atomic research for "peaceful purposes," including the **supply of experimental atomic piles and accelerators, scientific and technical information, Soviet specialists, sufficient quantities of fissile materials, and the training of Chinese in nuclear physics**. Then the Chinese **continued to press the USSR** for an actual prototype or sample atomic bomb as well as the blueprints to make it. In **October**, **Khrushchev reluctantly agreed to do so**.
 - **However, later in 1959**, **Khrushchev** proclaimed that the **USSR would no longer provide** the Chinese with the necessary materials. This **outraged the Chinese** and **greatly set back Sino-Soviet relations**.
 - **Had the Americans not been so aggressive** in implementing their New Look policy it is doubtful whether the Chinese would still have pursued the acquisition of nuclear weaponry. It was this **very desire of the Chinese to achieve nuclear power status** that was one the **major strains** in Sino-Soviet relations in the late 1950s, early 1960s when **Khrushchev withdrew the project**.

- **Secondly**, it led to an **overall USSR foreign policy shift**, with great consequences for the Sino-Soviet relationship. **Stalinist national security policies were inadequate** to meet the **new American nuclear posture**. This was because conventional forces became much less important and holding Western Europe hostage with the Red Army became a far too hazardous policy as it could **provoke the very attack** that it was intended to deter.
- Consequently, the **best strategy for the Soviets became to pacify the United States** while improving strategic nuclear capabilities. **Moscow's policy of 'Peaceful coexistence'** led to **great tensions** between USSR and China. Although initially following Stalin's death, **cooperation China and the USSR peaked** with increased aid, technical assistance, and cooperation on the Indochina issue, **arguments soon developed** over Khrushchev's peaceful coexistence policies with USA and with Yugoslavia.
- In **1955–1956** Khrushchev began a rapprochement with Tito and reiterated the theme of peaceful coexistence to the West. At the **20th Congress of the CPSU in February 1956**, Khrushchev again emphasized the **peaceful coexistence thesis in order to reduce East-West tensions, denounced Stalin** for his crimes against the Soviet Union and **attacked the cult of personality**, calling for collective leadership.
- In **early 1959**, Khrushchev claimed that a **nuclear-free zone could also be created in Southeast Asia, implying that the Chinese would not obtain nuclear power status**. Correspondingly, in **June 1959**, Khrushchev **reneged on promises made to the PRC in 1957** to provide a sample atomic bomb and the necessary technicians to build China's own arsenal in order to entice the US to come to an agreement on the German question. To Khrushchev, national security concerns relating to the United States and Western Europe **outweighed any relative considerations to China** and in the case of nuclear assistance led to a complete reversal in policy in only two years in 1959.
- It thus became increasingly clear to China that international strategic interests of the USSR vis-à-vis the United States were overshadowing the partnership with Beijing and thus overriding the interests of the PRC. The CCP was understandably outraged and **this was one of the major issues which led to the Sino-Soviet dispute**.
- From this point on the CCP became more vocal in its criticism of the USSR.
- Only a **few weeks later Mao publicly shot back at the Soviets** for the **first time in a Central Party meeting**, calling the Soviet leaders "right-deviationist."
- When Khrushchev proposed to the CCP that a **"two Chinas"** approach should be accepted in which claims to conquer Taiwan would be renounced in exchange for a similar declaration from the Nationalists regarding the mainland. For Mao, this was **tantamount to a slap in the face** as **he deemed Taiwan as a domestic issue**. A few months after this incident, **PRC**

prepared to publicly break with the USSR in April 1971 with the *Red Flag* article, “Long Live Leninism,” (alluded to earlier) **blasting the USSR** (thinly hidden by reference to Yugoslav Revisionism) on a number of issues.

- **Thus, US nuclear superiority could be argued to be a root cause** of the Sino-Soviet dispute as the fear of nuclear attack made the USSR seek détente with the West.
- This was **again reaffirmed** in the summer of **1963** with **US-Soviet negotiations on a Nuclear test-ban treaty** and on the regulation of nuclear proliferation. When the Soviets announced their intentions to sign a test-ban treaty with the United States, the **Chinese immediately replied critically**. The Chinese foreign minister Chen Yi claimed that preventing West Germany from acquiring nuclear weapons should not lead to preventing socialist states from acquiring such weapons.

- ***Differing Soviet and Chinese response to US foreign policy***

- The 2nd major way in which the United States contributed to causing the Sino-Soviet split was the **differing responses to perceived US aggression**. This was evident from the following instances:

With regards to US’s increased aggression and intention to invade Eastern Europe in mid 1950s:

Soviet Union:

- One of **Khrushchev’s biggest fears** apart from US nuclear attack was that the **USA** would **militarily intervene in Eastern Europe to overthrow communism**. The USSR was apprehensive that US intervention in even one of the Eastern European bloc countries, in which there was increasing unrest in the early 1950s, could **easily create a domino effect** that would wipe out all Soviet gains in WWII.
- **To Khrushchev, this threat was made more plausible** by the **Yugoslav example** and from the **new US policy calling for a “rollback” of communism** in Europe rather than the containment policy advocated by the Truman administration. Consequently, in an attempt to counter this perceived US desire to intervene in Eastern Europe, Khrushchev launched the de-Stalinization campaign at the 20th CPSU Party Congress.

China

- **To Mao** after the **Polish and Hungarian revolts in 1956**, he was **convinced** that in addition to the effects of the de-Stalinization campaign, the United States played a role in causing the uprisings. Mao came to the **conclusion** that any type of normalization in US-Chinese relations was out of the question and started to **openly attack** the United States. This caused **great concern in the Soviet leadership** as they thought that **Mao was interfering in Soviet-US détente**.

With regards to US's declining power in Europe in late 1950s

- Both the PRC and the USSR were convinced that **US power was on the decline** and that the socialist countries would soon have the upper hand. In this context of perceived US weakness, **Mao initiated the second Taiwan Straits Crisis.**
-
- Soviet Union: Compromise with West
- For Khrushchev, the perceived weakening international position of the United States was seen as an opportunity to **create compromises** with the West in preventing nuclear war and in improving relations in general – i.e. re-regulate Cold War competition from a position of Soviet bloc strength and level the playing field.

China: Attacked Taiwan

- **In August 1958**, the PRC began shelling the islands of Jinmen and Mazu in and continued to do so for a number of months. During the 1958 Taiwan Crisis, **the Soviets, despite warning Washington that an attack on China was equivalent to an attack on the USSR, heavily criticized the CCP leaders** for playing into the hands of the US and of misjudging the international situation. As a result, the **USSR even withdrew** some of its **special military advisors.**
 - This policy divide between the Soviets and the Chinese, arising from different responses to a perceived weakening of US power, had dire consequences for the Sino-Soviet relationship.
 - Resulted in countless number of ideological and political quarrels and conflicts in the early 1960s leading to the split.
- *Consequences from US's quest for military alliances in 3rd world countries on Sino-Soviet relations*
- The US, in its attempts to align various third world states in its camp, **inadvertently increased tensions** between the USSR and China. This was because the **USSR** was in effect **forced to compete** with the US in the Third World, even when such competition **was harmful to Chinese interests.**

Example: US activity in the Indian sub-continent and in Southern Asia.

- **Sep 1954** the United States formed **SEATO** (South East Asia Treaty Organization) which was designed to prevent the spread of communism and to provide defence and economic cooperation for member states. The **US**, also during this period, although not a member, **also sponsored and actively supported the creation of the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO)**, a mutual defence and security organization formed in 1959. These organizations was pro-West and essentially anti-communist.

- Through such activity, the **US exerted great pressure** on the **USSR** in Southern Asia to **seek out countries not already aligned with the West**. This was a part of Khrushchev's overall **economic policy response** to US activity in Third World. As a result, **Khrushchev** advocated the **gradual reduction of aid to the PRC in 1956** and over the next two years **no additional credits** were established.
- This move impacted Sino-Soviet relations negatively as Beijing perceived Khrushchev's strategy too accommodating to the West. More significantly, this move contributing to one of the major immediate causes of the split—the Indian issue.

Sino-Indian conflict

- In **1955 Khrushchev**, on a trip to India, **supported Indian claims in Kashmir** since Pakistan had already aligned itself with **US** in **1954**. For Khrushchev this was important strategically, especially given the continuous US and Pakistani pressure to bring Afghanistan into a pro-Western alliance. For the **Soviets**, **India** was an **important part of their global strategy of peaceful coexistence and competition** with the US in the Third World. Hence, Moscow pledged military assistance to help India defend its border with Pakistan.
- However, the **Chinese could not support such claims**. They felt that it could **jeopardize their Tibetan border** claims with India. China believed that the Aksaiqin region of the disputed Tibetan-Indian territory was **essential** because it provided the **only passage through the Himalayas from Tibet to Xinjiang Province**.

Significance:

- It was this very Tibetan border issue that would **turn friendly Sino-Indian** relations in the early 1950s into **open warfare by 1962**, causing **great Sino-Soviet tensions in the process**. This was because China had thought that in a territorial dispute between India & China, the USSR would lend its support to it.
- However in **1959** and in **1962**, **Khrushchev broke this precedent** and **adopted a neutral stance**. He accused China of **sabotaging Soviet international policy of peaceful coexistence** and **pushing India into the arms of the West**, as the **US** had **provided substantial aid to India during the Sino-Indian conflict** without requiring it to surrender its non-alignment position.
- The neutral position that **USSR took with India**, was thus a **primary result of US pressure in Southern Asia**, which enraged the Chinese who saw Moscow's lack of solidarity as a betrayal.

Argument for this cause that role of US was most significant

- Though the **US** did **pose strategic and ideological threats** to both **China** and the **USSR**, this theory fails to explain why **China and the Soviet Union chose to adopt different courses of actions**.

Khrushchev who chose to adopt ‘peaceful coexistence’ with the West while **Mao** chose to continue his anti-capitalist struggle.

- Furthermore, **US did not exploit the Sino-Soviet split** even though US officials knew, as early as 1961, that China and the Soviet relations were already souring.
- **US** only began to work towards **rapprochement with China in late 1969** when Secretary of State Henry Kissinger introduced the policy of *Realpolitik* to the Nixon administration.
- By that time, the Sino-Soviet split was in full view and China was already engaging in border skirmishes with the USSR.

CAUSE – COMPETITION FOR GLOBAL SUPREMACY, SECURITY CONCERNS: SOVIET REACTION TO THE SINO-VIETNAMESE WAR (1979)

Summary:

The Sino-Vietnamese War was a border war fought between China and Vietnam in early 1979. China launched an offensive in response to Vietnam's actions against the Khmer Rouge in 1978, which ended the rule of the Chinese-backed Khmer Rouge. Chinese forces invaded northern Vietnam and captured several cities near the border. On 6 March 1979, China declared that the gate to Hanoi was open and that their punitive mission had been achieved. Chinese troops then withdrew from Vietnam.

As Vietnamese troops remained in Cambodia until 1989, China was unsuccessful in its goal of dissuading Vietnam from involvement in Cambodia. Although unable to deter Vietnam from ousting Pol Pot from Cambodia, China demonstrated that its Cold War communist adversary, the Soviet Union, was unable to protect its Vietnamese ally.

- **Various arguments given for reasons for Chinese invasion into Vietnam.**

Contemporaneous observers as well as several later studies claimed that **Beijing’s real objectives** were an attempt to **discredit the Soviet Union as a reliable ally**, in response to Vietnamese cooperation with the Soviet encirclement of China from Southeast Asia.

Official Chinese sources have given no satisfactory answer to this question. Beijing’s initial reasons included:

- To repel Hanoi’s hegemonistic “imperial dreams” in Southeast Asia
- In retaliation of violation of China’s borders and the subsequent incursion into Chinese territory
- The mistreatment of ethnic Chinese living in Vietnam

Deng Xiaoping seemed convinced that **Soviet-Vietnamese strategic cooperation** was a **threat to Chinese security**. Not only did he hope that normalized relations with the United States would improve the PRC's strategic position and facilitate economic reform with U.S. support, he also expected that a **Chinese attack on a Soviet ally** would **persuade the U.S. government that U.S. and PRC interests coincided**.

It should be noted that by **December 1978**, **Beijing** had invited **several major U.S. corporations** to help develop natural resources, petroleum, and other heavy industries in China.

The **Chinese** came to **worry about Soviet influence in Indochina** as Hanoi moved ever closer to Moscow for material aid and ideological ties.

Chinese leaders were also irritated by Hanoi's efforts to forge special relations with **Laos and Cambodia**, the latter of which came under mounting military pressure from Vietnam.

Perhaps **most important of all**, **Beijing and Hanoi clashed over territorial issues**. In the past, China had invaded Vietnam several times to achieve regional domination but not to acquire territory. Vietnam, for its part, never challenged Chinese territorial claims.

Soviet Responses

The Russians **did not actively intervene** to deter the Chinese attack on Vietnam, **exposing Soviet assurances of military support to Vietnam as a fraud**. This was in spite of the many divisions deployed by the Russians to the Sino-Russian border.

The **passive Russian response** could be explained by the **unwillingness of the USSR to be drawn into** an all-out war with China that would require it to transfer its troops from Eastern Europe to the East. This weakening of the Soviet's military position in Europe could then possibly lead to American intervention, resulting in the Soviet Union being **caught out in a two front war, in Europe & Southeast Asia**.

Besides, the **possibility of nuclear retaliation by China** further rendered direct Russian intervention remote.

In the **aftermath of the conflict**, **Soviet military role in Vietnam increased** as the Soviets provided arms to Vietnam. Moreover, Soviet ships enjoyed access to the harbours at Danang and Cam Ranh Bay, and Soviet reconnaissance aircraft operated out of Vietnamese airfields.

Also, the **Soviets helped the Vietnamese** to turn their **border districts with China into "iron fortresses"** manned by well-equipped and well-trained paramilitary troops.

Hence, **although the Soviets did not intervene directly** to help Vietnam, it still **strengthened Soviet-Vietnamese relations**. It must also be noted that Vietnam's international isolation during this period meant that it **remained dependent on the Soviets** beyond the 1970s.

Thus, the invasion heightened tensions between China and the Soviet Union, with both sides working to undermine each other's position.

CAUSE: SECURITY CONCERNS TO SOVIET INVASION OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA (1968) & AFGHANISTAN (1979)

Summary of impact of 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia

Leonid Brezhnev followed a 'Stalinist' foreign policy, and in Brezhnev Doctrine, the Soviet Union states that to maintain order in Eastern Europe, the satellite states had to accept Soviet leadership.

In 1968, when **Czechoslovakia attempted to assert some independence**, the Brezhnev Doctrine was realised and **Soviet tanks were sent to crush the period of liberalisation**, known as the Prague Spring. This invasion undermined the USSR'S standing with other Communist states, and correspondingly damaged its attempts to isolate the PRC.

Mao condemned the use of force against Czechoslovakia as the USSR was not behaving in a 'truly socialist' manner. Additionally, he was **worried** that the Soviet military might, and the Brezhnev Doctrine **could be turned against China**, thus **heightening China's concerns of looming Soviet threat** as China was also revolutionist and wanted independence from the control of the USSR.

Summary of impact of 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan

In the wake of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, **Chinese and Pakistan's sovereignty** were **threatened** while the **United States** was worried about the **likelihood of her minimizing influence** in the region and **spread of the Soviet hegemony** which might potentially threaten the **oil wells of the Middle East**.

President Carter organized the world community to boycott the Moscow Olympics of 1980 as a counter move of the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan. This was supported by the Chinese Olympic Committee (COC) when it boycotted Moscow Olympics in 1980.

- The invasion also brought **China and Pakistan** closer together. **China was anxious over the Indo-Soviet cooperation and strategy for its encirclement**. This was revealed by India when it recognized the Marxist regime in Kabul, being among the first countries to do it. It was furthered by another Indian diplomatic move when Indira Gandhi succeeded in election as a Prime Minister in 1980 and gave diplomatic recognition to the Vietnamese-backed Kampuchean regime following the fall of Pol Pot.
- As **Pakistan** had served like a bridge in the normalization of relations between the United States and the People's Republic of China, it became the **key partner in the struggle against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan** in the 1980s.

Chinese Opposition to the Invasion

China “vigorously” **condemned** the hegemonistic action of the Soviet Union” and **firmly demanded** “the cessation of this aggression and intervention in Afghanistan and the withdrawal of all Soviet armed forces”. China **expressed** that the USSR had “long planned for this military invasion of Afghanistan for the purpose to access to the Indian Ocean and sea lanes and also seizing oil-rich areas.”

The common border between China and Pakistan geo-strategically played an important role for a common front against the Soviet invasion.

Pakistan’s security concerns were shared by China, which had very good relations with Pakistan over the last two decades. China was **unlikely to accept a further extension of Soviet influence** along the Chinese border in Pakistan, as indicated by the fact that China has already condemned the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in the strongest possible terms.

Sino-US-Pakistan Triangle Strengthened

The Afghan crisis and the Soviet military intervention, more than anything else, once again brought into sharper focus the **US-China-Pakistan alignment**, as was reflected in the US pronouncements for their military aid policies for this region. The latter took the form of the US proposal for joint US-Chinese military aid to Pakistan, as initially announced by the Carter administration in early 1980.

- Like the US, China provided covertly through Pakistan, military supplies of US \$ 200 million annually to the Afghan resistance. China also agreed to provide the US with listening posts to monitor Soviet Central Asia through secret stations established in the western Chinese Province of Xinjiang.

During this decade, US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), and the Chinese Intelligence services developed a close collaborative relationship based on convergent perceptions of Soviet Union and exchange of information.

From 1979 to 1987 Pakistan received 12.73 billion dollars. Pakistan served as a meeting place of weapons supply to mujahedeen from different countries. The CIA was busy in taking weapons and ammunition from China and flying over sensitive areas of Kashmir. The contributions were being brought to the port of Karachi, from where the ISI was responsible for delivering them to Afghan warriors.

Enhancing Sino-Pakistan Defence and Economic Cooperation

A destabilized and disintegrated Pakistan was not in the interest of the Beijing regime. In order to strengthen Pakistan's ability to withstand Soviet military and political pressure from Afghanistan, **China became second to United States in terms of supplying weapons to Pakistan.** This was to maintain military balance in the region for China's national security concerns.

Economic ties were enhanced with plans mooted for the opening of the Khunjerab Pass along the Karakoram Highway on the Sino-Pakistani border. Pakistan also welcomed the Chinese desire to use it for trade with the Middle East and Africa and also to do investment in Pakistan. Along with the defence infrastructure, Chinese trade with Pakistan was significant in 1970s and 1980s. In fact, Pakistan was the biggest importer of Chinese goods.

Consequences of the Sino-Soviet Rivalry

The Chinese Communist Party **broke off all ties with the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1966**, and their **relationship did not recover until the year 1987**.

The **immediate repercussion** was that **China** was left almost **completely forsaken** in the international policy arena. Apart from a few remaining moral friendships with Egypt, Indonesia, and Albania, it had **no friendly ties**, and it had already been threatened by the Western countries, led by the USA.

Hence, through its refusal to compromise its ideological position with the US and the Soviets, it was condemned to choose the **path of isolation** again. This was seen how the PRC was not represented at the UN until 1971.

The world's communist movement leadership was in question. **China frequently accused the Soviet Union** of colluding with imperialism revolution, while Beijing had tried hard to stay loyal to the previous Marxist ideals. *"The Sino-Soviet split and the ensuing division of the international communist movement that began in 1956 reshaped the global Cold War. Since its beginning in the mid- and late 1940s, the Cold War had been characterized by a fundamental contest between two contending ideologies — liberal capitalism versus communism. **The great Sino-Soviet split buried the shared belief among communists and communist sympathizers all over the world that communism was a viable solution to the problems created by the worldwide process of modernization.**"* ~ Chen Jian, *The Beginning of the End: 1956 as a Turning Point in Chinese & Cold War History* | cf. *link to End of Cold War – 'communism as flawed'*

In the long term, the Sino-Soviet split **drove China more or less into the arms of the United States**.

The US quickly **capitalized on this split**. In **1972**, the **Nixon administration visited Beijing** and together with **Mao** issued the **Shanghai Communiqué**. This eventually led to a **compromise** between the USA and China and paved the way for the **establishment of full diplomatic relations** in 1979.

This **immediately changed** the outlook of the Cold War, as **China's pivot to the US greatly weakened Russia's geo-strategic position**. At that time, trade between China and the US grew around 25% every year.

This **forced the Soviets to pursue a policy of détente with the United States**, yet they feared the complete loss of their international influence. Since then, the US could easily "play the China card" against the USSR.