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COLD WAR INTERNATIONAL HISTORY PROJECT

WORKING PAPER #48

1962: The Eve of the Left Turn in China's Foreign Policy

by Niu Jun



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Working Paper No. 48

Cold War International History Project

**Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars
Washington, D.C.
October 2005**

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WORKING PAPER SERIES**

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This Working Paper is made possible by a generous grant from the Henry Luce Foundation.

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1962: The Eve of the Left Turn in China's Foreign Policy

By Niu Jun

As the study of the history of modern Chinese foreign policy deepens, Chinese scholars have begun to turn their attention to the sharp turn toward extreme leftist policies that occurred in the early 1960s.¹ Emphasizing the severe domestic and international difficulties China faced in 1962, recent studies highlight the combination of international incidents and domestic challenges, concluding that these factors had a significant impact on the change in Chinese foreign relations.² However, the precise relation between domestic and international factors has yet to be established. How did the two interact and which factor was more influential?

This article discusses the interactions between domestic politics in China and the constantly changing international milieu in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Part one examines the profound impact of the turbulence in Chinese foreign policy in the late 1950s; Part two discusses the reasons for the adjustment in foreign policy embarked on in 1960; Part three the characteristics and nature of the changes in Chinese foreign policy in 1962. It argues that the left turn did not result primarily from difficulties in the international environment, but rather from the interaction between domestic politics and the general guidelines the leadership adopted for foreign policy. It was the struggle over how to assess the disastrous Great Leap Forward that led most decisively to the change of course in foreign policy.

¹ Representative studies include Zhang Baijia, “*Biandong zhong de guoji huanjing yu zhongguo duimei zhengce*” (The Changing International Situation and Chinese Policy toward the United States), and Li Jie, “*60 niandai zhongguo guonei jushi de bianhua yu zhongmei guanxi*” (The Change in the Chinese Domestic Situation in the 60s and Sino-American Relations), both in Jiang Changbin and Robert S. Ross eds. *1955-1971 nian de zhongmei guanxi—huanhe zhiqian: lengzhan chongtu yu kezhi de zai tantao* (Sino-American Relations from 1955-1971: Prior to the Rapprochement, a Re-examination of the Cold War Conflicts and Restraints) (Beijing: shijie zhishi, 1998).

² Zhang Baijia, “*Biandong zhong de guoji huanjing yu zhongguo duimei zhengce*” (The Changing International Situation and Chinese Policy toward the United States), pp. 190-91; Li Jie, “*60 niandai zhongguo guonei jushi de bianhua yu zhongmei guanxi*” (The Change in the Chinese Domestic Situation in the 60s and Sino-American Relations), pp. 264-70.

Leftist Foreign Policy Defined

The basic features of a so-called leftist foreign policy need to be clarified, since the conceptions of “left” and “extreme left” had different definitions under different political circumstances. In the Cold War era, some seemingly radical policies may not have shared the same origin, while some so-called moderate policies may not necessarily have stemmed from pragmatic deliberations. In Chinese politics, to put it simply, a leftist policy means one that pursues goals that are ahead of their time or higher than realistically possible. When extended to the domain of foreign policy, left or extreme left policy has four basic characteristics.

First, on the theoretical dimension, leftist policy holds a dogmatic attitude toward the traditional doctrine of time. It refuses to make a concrete analysis of the continuously changing international political situation. It simply asserts that the world is “in a time in which capitalism and imperialism are moving toward destruction, and socialism and communism are striding toward victory,” and therefore denies the existence and meaning of detente in international situations, and does not acknowledge the possibility of maintaining peace over the long term.³

Second, leftist policy exaggerates China’s position and influence in world politics. A manifestation of this is the theory of “China as a center of revolution,” which proclaims China as “the focus of world contradictions and the center of the world revolutionary storm,” and argues that the direction China takes is “an issue that concerns the fate of the world proletarian revolution,” “a matter of paramount importance concerning the fate of the world revolution,” and so on.⁴ The “China as a center of revolution” theory reflected the strategic thinking of Chinese leaders on the important issues of China’s position and influence in world politics. From a deeper perspective, it more or less involved the “China at the Center” view of the history of

³ Lin Biao, “*Renmin zhanzheng shengli wansui*” (Long Live the Victory of the People’s War), *The People’s Daily*, 3 September 1965; Lin Biao, “*Zai shoudu renmin jinian shiyue geming wushi zhounian dahui shang de jianghua*” (The Speech at the Convention of the People of the Capital Commemorating the Fiftieth Anniversary of the October Revolution), 7 November 1967; Lin Biao, “*Zou shehui zhuyi daolu, haishi zou ziben zhuyi daolu?*” (To Take the Road of Socialism, or to Take the Road of Capitalism?), *The People’s Daily*, 15 August 1967.

⁴ “*Renmin zhanzheng shengli wansui*” (Long Live the Victory of the People’s War); “*Zou shehui zhuyi daolu, haishi zou ziben zhuyi daolu?*” (To Take the Road of Socialism, or to Take the Road of Capitalism?); “*Zhongguo gongchandang zhongyang weiyuanhui tongzhi*” (The Notice of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China), *The People’s Daily*, 17 May 1966.

China.

Third, leftist policy places so-called proletarian internationalism in the supreme position, denying the paramount status of national interests in making and implementing foreign policies. For instance, “The Bulletin of the Eleventh Plenary Session of the Eighth Party Congress of the Communist Party of China” (*Zhonggong zhongyang bajie shiyizhong quanhui gongbao*) declared “proletarian internationalism” to be “the highest guiding principle” of Chinese foreign policy.⁵

Fourth, in terms of specifics, leftist policy calls for struggling against imperialism, revisionism, and anti-revolutionists, and adopts strategies such as “striking enemies with two fists,” (*liang ge quan tou da ren*) and “attacking in all directions” (*si mian chu ji*). Since others have studied this aspect of leftist policy, it will not be further discussed in this paper.⁶

Taking these four characteristics as criteria, we can conclude that extreme leftist foreign policy took shape roughly before the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution. To be more specific, the Eleventh Plenary Session of the Eighth Party Congress in September 1956 marked the arrival of this policy.

The Turmoil in Chinese Foreign Policy in the Late 1950s

To understand the significance of the adoption of an extreme leftist policy, we must first examine the basic contours of Chinese foreign policy before 1962. After the People’s Republic of China [PRC] adopted the “Five Peaceful Co-existence Principles” in 1954, Chinese foreign policy entered a period of smooth development. Prior to the Eighth Party Congress, Beijing defined the direction of its foreign policy as “to strive for the enduring peace of the world.” Whatever analysis this policy was based on, Chinese leaders explicitly asserted that “[since] the world situation is moving toward detente, it has become possible to achieve enduring peace in the

⁵ “*Zhongguo gongchandang bajie zhongyang weiyuanhui di shiyi ci quanti huiyi gongbao*” (The Bulletin of the Eleventh Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee of the Communist Party of China), August 14, 1966, *The People’s Daily*.

⁶ See, e.g., Yang Changfu, ed. *Dangdai Zhongguo waijiao* (The Contemporary Diplomacy of China) (Beijing: Zhongguo qingnian, 2002): 224-261.

world.”⁷ However, the momentum fueling this direction did not last long before it was interrupted by two cataclysmic events: the decay of the Sino-Soviet alliance and the unleashing of the Great Leap Forward.

One of the key reasons the Sino-Soviet alliance deteriorated was that the relationship of leading (the Soviet Union) and being-led (China) that had been created during the formation of the alliance could not be sustained after the shock of the revolts in Poland and Hungary in 1956. Capitalizing on the severe crisis the Soviet Union faced as a result of these uprisings, Chinese leaders compelled Soviet leaders to change their approach to inter-state relations within the socialist bloc. Beijing’s *Manifesto Concerning Developing and Further Strengthening the Basis of Friendship and Cooperation between the Soviet Union and Other Socialist Countries* called on the Soviet Union to acknowledge previous mistakes.⁸ Moreover, in the course of resolving the incidents in Poland and Hungary, China achieved, at least temporarily, the position of mediator between the Soviet Union and the fraternal states of Eastern Europe. These developments heightened China’s role and influence within the Socialist bloc, as demonstrated during the Moscow Conference in November 1957, when it became clear that Mao was respected by Khrushchev and by other socialist leaders.⁹

Beijing now believed that there was no longer a relationship of leading and being-led between China and the Soviet Union and Soviet leaders also acknowledged this change, at least on the surface. Earlier analyses of the roots of the Sino-Soviet split by Chinese scholars have emphasized the serious disagreements over the assessment of Stalin and other theoretical issues after the 20th Party Congress of the Soviet

⁷ “Zhongguo gongchandang diba ci quanguo daibiao dahui guanyu zhengzhi baogao de jueyi” (The Resolution Concerning the Political Report of the Eighth National Party Congress of the Communist Party of China), 27 September 1965, in The Document Research Institute of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (the CCCCPC) ed., *Jianguo yilai zhongyao wenxian xuanbian* (A Selected Collection of Important Documents since the Founding of the PRC), Vol. 9 (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1994): 351-52.

⁸ Pei Jianzhang, ed., *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo waijiao shi, 1949-1956* (The Diplomatic History of the People’s Republic of China, 1949-1976), Vol. 2 (Beijing: shijie zhishi chubanshe, 1994): 37-38, 61-62; The Document Research Institute of the CCCCPC ed., *Zhou Enlai nianpu, 1949-1976* (The Chronology of Zhou Enlai, 1949-1976), Vol. 2, 1997, pp. 630-31; Mao Zedong, “Xi qu lishi jiaoxun, fandui daguo shaowen zhuyi” (To Draw the Lessons of History and Oppose the Jingoism of Great Powers), The Foreign Ministry of the PRC and The Document Research Institute of the CCCCPC eds., *Mao Zedong waijiao wenxuan* (Selected Diplomatic Documents of Mao Zedong) (Beijing: zhongyang wenxian and shijiezhishi, 1994): 251-62.

⁹ See Li Yueran, *Waijiao wutai shang de xinzhongguo linxiu* (The Leaders of New China on the Diplomatic Stage) (Beijing: waiyu jiaoxue yu yanjiu chubanshe, 1994).

Communist Party in February 1956.¹⁰ An important factor that has been neglected, however, is that after the de-Stalinization campaign begun at the 20th Party Congress and the uprisings that fall in Poland and Hungary, Chinese leaders came to realize that Moscow's earlier relations with other countries in the Socialist camp, especially with China, characterized as a "cat-mouse relationship" or "father-son relationship," had fundamentally changed.¹¹

As a result, Chinese leaders could no longer tolerate what they perceived as the arrogant attitude of the Soviet leadership and rebuked their Soviet comrades for repeating the mistakes of the Stalin period. Without a belief that the relative positions of China and the Soviet Union had fundamentally changed, Mao Zedong would not have become so irritated about the Soviet proposals to create a "united fleet" and "long-wave radio station" that he complained to Soviet Ambassador Yudin on 22 July, saying that the Soviet demands reminded him that "Stalin's behavior is coming [surfacing] again," and "now again [you are] doing what Stalin did."¹²

The change in the Sino-Soviet relationship indeed reflected the rise of China's position within the Socialist camp. However, it remained for Beijing to discover how far it had risen, to what extent Moscow would tolerate such a change, and, when disagreements arose, whether the Chinese would be able to force the Soviets to change their attitudes and policies in accordance with Beijing's understanding of the degree of change in Sino-Soviet relations. Moreover, since the relationship of leading and being-led had been one of the fundamental factors in establishing and sustaining the Sino-Soviet alliance, when this condition changed, how would the alliance be sustained?

Except for its participation in the international alliance against the axis powers during the last four years of the Anti-Japanese War, China had had no experience with

¹⁰ Yang Kuisong and Chen Jian, "Mao Zedong yu zhongsu tongmeng de xingshuai" (Mao Zedong the Rise and Fall of the Sino-Soviet Alliance), pp. 359-360; Li Jie, "Cong jiemeng dao polie: zhongsu lunzhan de qiying" (From Alliance to Split: the Origins of the Sino-Soviet Polemics), p. 442, in Li Danhui ed., *Beijing yu Mosike: cong lianmeng zouxiang duikang* (Beijing and Moscow: from Alliance to Antagonism), Guangxi: Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe, 2002.

¹¹ On the terms of "Father-Son Party Relationship" and "Cat-Mouse Party Relationship," see Mao Zedong, "Tong sulian zhuhua dashi youjin de tanhua" (Talks with Soviet Ambassador Yudin), 22 July 1958, *Mao Zedong waijiao wenxuan* (Selected Diplomatic Documents of Mao Zedong), p. 324.

¹² "Tong sulian zhuhua dashi youjin de tanhua" (Talks with Soviet Ambassador Yudin), p. 331.

alliances in the modern period, though it had wished to conclude alliances at several points. Consequently, the only basis the PRC leadership had for dealing with the complicated situations that arose in the Sino-Soviet alliance was their experience with inter-party relations in the international communist movement, “fellow traveler” relationships in the international united front, and inter-state relations in a general sense. In contrast, the Soviet Union had a rich experience with alliances, and knew very well that to sustain an alliance it was sometimes necessary to chastise allies. Of course, such chastisement might damage or devastate an alliance if not exercised properly.

The Sino-Soviet alliance, and more broadly the Sino-Soviet relationship, had seen the cornerstone of Chinese foreign relations in the 1950s. As later events demonstrated, once such a cornerstone was shaken, Chinese foreign relations and domestic politics became unstable. However, because the hostility between the two states after the Sino-Soviet split was so intense, scholars within China have long underestimated the importance of the alliance for Chinese foreign policy. Beijing might not have anticipated the extent to which the deterioration of the Sino-Soviet alliance would impact China. The PRC leadership did not clearly define the guidelines for managing the Sino-Soviet relationship after the deterioration of the alliance, and neither did their Soviet counterparts. It is thus not surprising that Beijing’s goals were not accomplished. It is then worthwhile to explore more deeply how Chinese leaders dealt with the deterioration of the Sino-Soviet relationship and how they understood the alliance relationship.

Soon after the alliance began to deteriorate, Chinese domestic policy fundamentally changed, as seen in two important events from the spring of 1957 to 1959. The first event was the so-called “*mizhu zhengfeng*” [the Democratic Consolidation of Spirits] in the spring of 1957. Having drawn lessons from the uprisings in Poland and Hungary, the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) launched a mass movement against bureaucratism, subjectivism, and factionalism. The aim was to resolve the contradictions between the masses and some party cadres through a so-called “democratic consolidation of spirits.” The second

event was the Great Leap Forward launched in 1958, and aimed at accelerating the modernization of China's economy through large-scale mass movements. The goal was to outpace Western powers such as Britain and the US economically and achieve communism in China as quickly as possible. Both the Democratic Consolidation of Spirits and the Great Leap Forward ended in debacles. The former directly caused the anti-rightist campaign, which intensified social contradictions, and the latter led to three years of catastrophic economic recession, significantly aggravating the already tense atmosphere within the Chinese Communist Party.

The repercussions of the failure of these two reforms on Chinese foreign policy were far-reaching. Their most important consequence was the political norm created by the continuous struggles both within and outside the party and the crackdown on divergent opinions. Regardless of its effects of a proposed policy, such policy would be considered “politically corrective” as long as it pushed forward radical transformations and pursued passionate goals. Rational thinking about policy would remain only as a tactic, and would usually soon be submerged by a new, stronger passion. The political value of “would rather go left than right” established through relentless party struggles made any adjustment of Chinese foreign policy in the direction of pragmatism and stability difficult and unsustainable.

By the summer of 1959, it became evident that the Great Leap Forward could not continue. Opinions about how to correct its mistakes had been voiced within the leadership, but Mao Zedong refuted all criticism within the party as “rightist,” and regarded the emergence of different opinions as “the continuance of the life-and-death struggle between two antagonistic classes.”¹³ Thus, Marshall Peng Dehuai, who had fought shoulder-to-shoulder with Mao for more than twenty years, was identified as only a temporary “fellow traveler of the revolution,” and was destroyed politically.

It is worth noting that at the same time that Peng Dehuai was criticized as “a rightist opportunist” at the Lushan Meeting in July 1959, Sino-Soviet relations descended into crisis. Believing that Khrushchev's speech that month criticizing the

¹³ Mao Zedong. “How to Treat the Revolutionary Masses Movements,” August 15, 1959; “The Origins of Machinegun and Trench Mortar and Others,” August 16, 1959, in *Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong wengao* (The Manuscripts of Mao Zedong since the Foundation of the PRC), Vol. 8, pp. 447, 451.

communes in Poland was an indirect attack on China's People's Commune Movement, Mao Zedong made up his mind to break publicly with the Soviet Union. Khrushchev's speech, which was published in the *Neibu cankao* (*Internal References*) for CCP leaders, was in Mao's eyes equivalent to hitting a person when he was down. It also dangerously echoed Peng Dehuai's criticism of Mao's policies. Mao therefore promptly ordered the party to begin a counter-strike against the "opposition and suspicious factions" of the Soviet Union at the earliest in the autumn of 1959 and no later than the spring of 1960. He even considered publishing Khrushchev's "anti-communes" speech in the *People's Daily*.¹⁴ This final step was not implemented, however, after other party leaders disagreed with the idea.¹⁵

Khrushchev probably did not understand Mao's wrath, and therefore played the role of a "fool" in the Sino-Indian border dispute that soon followed. Khrushchev came to Beijing on 30 September 1959, after his trip to the US, in hopes of persuading Mao to act in concert with Soviet foreign policy. At the National Day reception on September 30 the Soviet leader hinted that his Chinese comrades needed to adjust their foreign policy.¹⁶ During his meetings with high-ranking officials, Khrushchev criticized the PRC for adopting an "adventurist" policy regarding Taiwan and the Sino-Indian border conflict, and declared that "all socialist countries should not only unite closely on beliefs and goals, but also in alliance actions."¹⁷ Mao, repelled by Khrushchev's criticism, condemned him as a "rightist opportunist," and claimed that the Soviet Union "is afraid of two things: one is imperialism, and the other is communism in China."¹⁸ This summit was a turning point in the deterioration of the

¹⁴ Mao Zedong, "Guanyu yanjiu renmingongshe wenti de piyu" (Comments Concerning the Study of the Issues of the People's Communes), July 29, August 1, 1959, in *Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong wengao* (The Manuscripts of Mao Zedong since the Foundation of the PRC), Vol. 8, pp. 390-92. Mao Zedong, "Guanyu dui renmingongshe jinxing diaocha yanjiu wenti gei Wu Lengxi, Chen Boda, Hu Qiaomu de xin" (The Letter to Wu Lengxi, Chen Boda, and Hu Qiaomu Concerning the Issue of Conducting Research and Study of the People's Communes), 9 August 1959; "Guaiyu zhuyi fabiao guowai duihua pinglun wenti de piyu" (The Comments Concerning the Issue of Paying Attention to the Publication of Foreign Remarks on China), 4 May 1959, *ibid.*, pp. 462-63, 504.

¹⁵ Wu Lengxi, *Shinian lunzhan* (A Decade of Polemics), Vol. 1 (Beijing: *zhongyang wenxian chubanshe*, 1999): 204.

¹⁶ Alan J. Day, ed., *China and the Soviet Union, 1949-1984* (London: The East Press, 1985): 14-15.

¹⁷ "Qiansulian guojia xin pilu de youguan 1959-1962 nian zhongyin guanxi wenxian" (The Documents Concerning 1959-1962 Sino-Indian relations Recently Disclosed by the Former Soviet Union), *Dangshi yanjiu ziliao* (The Materials of the Study of the Party History), Vol. 8, 1998, pp. 19-20; *Waijiao wutai shang de xinzhongguo linxiu* (The Leaders of the New China on the Diplomatic Stage), pp. 160-64. For a transcript of the conversation between Khrushchev and Mao on 2 October 1959 see *CWIHP Bulletin*, Issue 12/13 (Fall/Winter 2001), pp. 262-270.

¹⁸ Mao Zedong, "Guanyu guoji xingshi de jianghua tigang" (The Outline for the Talk Concerning International

Sino-Soviet alliance.

Meanwhile, the border conflict with India intensified. Following Indian encroachments on Chinese territory, the two countries engaged in a brief military conflict at Langjiu [Longju] and Kongka Shankou [Konga La] in the summer of 1959. The explosive situation at the Sino-Indian border made it more difficult for Chinese troops to put down the rebellion in Tibet and was also a harbinger of further deterioration in relations with other neighboring states. In the summer of 1960, at Soviet instigation, about fifty thousand residents of Xinjiang Province crossed the border into the Soviet Union, causing unrest on the Sino-Soviet border. At the same time, the situation in Indochina deteriorated tense because of increased turmoil in Laos, especially after the US escalated its direct intervention in the region. Thus, just as the Great Leap Forward unfolded in the summer of 1959, relations in China's immediate neighborhood began to deteriorate. Seriously concerned by this situation, Beijing concluded that "the international anti-China tide is rising," and that imperialism, revisionism, and reactionism were all involved.¹⁹

The Foreign Policy Adjustment of 1960

From November 1959 through the first half of 1960 the Chinese leadership spent a lot of energy and time discussing international issues in an effort to comprehend and respond to the deteriorating strategic environment.²⁰ It did not take long, however, for them to decide to adopt a principle of steady response. Wu Lengxi recalled that the Standing Committee Meeting of the CCPC Politburo presided over by Mao Zedong from 7 to 17 January 1960 reached the conclusion that "new initiatives should be adopted vigorously in order to create a new situation in diplomacy."²¹ Subsequently,

Situations), in *Dangshi yanjiu ziliao*, Vol. 8, 1998, pp. 19-20; Yu Zhan, "Yici bufunchang de shiming" (An Unusual Mission), in *Xinzhongguo waijiao fengyun* (The Diplomacy of the New China) (Beijing: *shijie zhishi*, 1994): 18. For a transcript of the conversation between Khrushchev and Mao on 2 October 1959 see *CWIHP Bulletin*, Issue 12/13 (Fall/Winter 2001), pp. 262-270.

¹⁹ *Shinian lunzhan* (A Decade of Polemics), Vol. 1, p. 234.

²⁰ The situations concerning these discussions still cannot be verified by the archives. However, some important publications have disclosed that many discussions of the kind had been carried out as well as major content of these discussions. For instance, the concerning parts in both *Zhou Enlai nianpu* (The Chronology of Zhou Enlai) Vol.2 and *Shinian lunzhan* (A Decade of Polemics) Vol. 1 provide important hints.

²¹ *Shinian lunzhan* (A Decade of Polemics), Vol. 1, p. 248.

Committee members convened several meetings, confirming the spirit of the January Meeting, and discussing concrete forms for its implementation. Guided by this new principle, pragmatism reemerged in Chinese diplomacy.

First, in terms of Sino-Soviet relations, the leadership was determined not only to avoid a split, but also to strive to “reach unity based on new foundations,” even “to make [reach] unity with him [Khrushchev] and not split shamelessly.”²² This is why even after several months of quarrels with the Soviet Union, including the poignant clash at the Romanian Workers Party Congress in Bucharest in June 1960 and the withdrawal of all Soviet experts from China, the Chinese still reached an understanding with their Soviet ally at the Moscow Conference of 81 Communist and Workers’ Parties in December 1960, where they agreed “to confer together on anything that may come up so as to avoid conflict.”²³ Bilateral relations further improved after Chairman Liu Shaoqi made a follow-up state visit to the Soviet Union. By 1961 Moscow had again decided to transfer to China advanced military technology, such as equipment for producing the MiG 21 fighter jets.²⁴

One of the key adjustments in Chinese foreign policy was the effort to defuse tensions along the Sino-Indian border. With the rebellion in Tibet and the rise of border skirmishes, Sino-Indian relations had deteriorated dramatically during 1959. Indian policy, Chinese leaders believed, had severely weakened China’s security and that New Delhi was using the border conflicts to coordinate its policy with the West’s “anti-China tide.” Operating under these assumptions, Beijing decided to strike back firmly. However, after August border clash, the PRC leadership did not want its relations with India to deteriorate further, nor did it allow the Sino-Indian border conflict to become the focal point of the policy agenda. The Politburo decided on 8 September to try to resolve the conflict through negotiation.²⁵

Two days before the 8 September Politburo meeting, Beijing briefed Moscow on

²² *Ibid.*, p. 241.

²³ “*huigu yu sikao—yu zhongsu guanxi qinlizhe de duihua*” (Retrospect and Reflection: A Dialogue with Witnesses of Sino-Soviet Relations), in *Beijing yu mosike: cong lianmeng zouxiang duikang* (Beijing and Moscow: from Alliance to Antagonism), p. 474.

²⁴ *Zhou Enlai nianpu* (A Chronology of Zhou Enlai), Vol. 2, pp. 389-390.

²⁵ *Shinian lunzhan* (A Decade of Polemics), Vol. 1, pp. 210-12.

the Sino-Indian border conflict. However, the day after the Politburo meeting, the Soviet news agency TASS issued a statement declaring that Moscow did not approve of the Beijing's policy. Chinese leaders were startled by this action and concluded that it was an effort by Moscow to "present Eisenhower a gift" and "to please American imperialism."²⁶ As a result, Mao Zedong decided to stop public discussion of the border issues with India, and directed the media to cease any related reports.²⁷

At its meeting in January 1960, the Standing Committee of the Politburo adopted guidelines for the peaceful resolution of the dispute with India and proposed that the PRC reach a compromise through "mutual understanding and mutual concession" (*huliang hurang*). The Politburo also decided that Zhou Enlai would visit New Delhi to negotiate in person.²⁸ Meanwhile, Chinese troops stationed along the Sino-Indian border were ordered to adopt policies designed to avoid armed clashes, such as not opening fire, patrolling, hunting, military exercises, and explosions or chasing rebels within twenty kilometers of the effective line of control on the Chinese side.²⁹

In preparation for the visit to India, Zhou Enlai worked out *The Proposal Concerning the Border Issue Meeting between the Premiers of China and India (Draft)*. Zhou anticipated that the visit to India would not solve the problems completely, but that the negotiations would not break down. The most likely result would be a limited agreement of some kind. Zhou suggested that the PRC try to defuse the tensions while not being afraid of a delayed resolution. China, Zhou continued, should also set as the goal of the visit to further ease bilateral relations and prepare the conditions for continued meetings and a peaceful resolution of the border issues in the future.³⁰ Other party leaders agreed with Zhou Enlai's suggestions. His visit to India 19 to 26 April proved that Beijing's assessments were basically correct. Sino-Indian relations temporarily improved, and the tension along the border eased.

²⁶ "sugong lindao tong women fenqi de youlai yu fazhan" (The Origins and Development of the Differences between the Soviet Leaders and Us), September 6, 1963, in *Guanyu gongchan zhuyi yundong zongluxian de lunzhan* (The Polemics Concerning the General Guidelines of the International Communist Movement), Beijing: *Renmin chubanshe*, 1965, p. 71.

²⁷ *Shinian lunzhan* (A Decade of Polemics), Vol. 1, p. 215.

²⁸ *Inbid.*, p. 248.

²⁹ Lei Yingfu and Chen Xianyi. *Tongshuaibu canmou de zhuihuai* (The Reminiscence of a Staff Member of the Commander Office) (Nanjing: *Jiangsu wenyi chubanshe*, 1994): 219.

³⁰ *Zhou Enlai nianpu* (A Chronology of Zhou Enlai), Vol.2, p. 302.

Resolving the Sino-Indian border issue and improving relations with India were arguably among the government's top priorities,³¹ but Beijing also sought to resolve border issues with other neighboring countries. At the same meeting of the Politburo Standing Committee in January 1960, the leadership thoroughly discussed the border issues with all neighboring countries. Probably influenced by the progress made in the Sino-Burmese and Sino-Indian border negotiations, the Politburo established as a guideline to resolve border issues through step-by-step negotiations, as quickly as possible. The rough order was to try to resolve the Sino-Indian border issues first, then turn to North Korea and Mongolia as quickly as possible, and subsequently accelerate the pace in resolving border issues with Burma, Nepal, and Laos. Because of Vietnam's war with America, the issues regarding its border would temporarily be set aside. China's longest border was with the Soviet Union, and the problems there were very complicated, yet, Beijing was still determined to try to resolve them.³²

Although the border dispute with India was not resolved, China basically accomplished the rest of the plan outlined at the Standing Committee meeting in January 1960. The PRC signed border agreements with Burma, Nepal, Pakistan, Mongolia, and North Korea. One could argue that a smooth conclusion of the the Sino-Soviet border negotiations, which began only after 1964, might have been reached in 1960 had Sino-Soviet polemics not sabotaged the process.

With regard to Indochina, as tensions with Moscow escalated, Beijing faced two problems: whether to support the armed struggle in South Vietnam and how to solve the Laos crisis. By 1959-1960, Chinese leaders were more preoccupied with the Laotian crisis than with the situation in Vietnam. Yet, under the pressure of the dramatic changes in the situation in South Vietnam in 1959 and 1960, the leaders of the Vietnam Worker's Party (the VWP) began to change the strategy of strengthening communist construction in the North and striving for peaceful unification they had adopted after the 1954 Geneva Conference.³³ Instead, a policy of strengthening the

³¹ Because of Zhou's visit to India, Chinese leaders even postponed the border negotiations with Mongolia. *Ibid.*, p. 295.

³² *Shinian lunzhan* (A Decade of Polemics), Vol. 1, p. 248.

³³ Shi Hongyin, *Meiguo zai yuennan de ganshe he zhanzheng* (The American Interventions and Wars in Vietnam,

armed struggle for the liberation of the South was adopted at the Third National Congress of the VWP in September 1960.³⁴

The VWP's change of policy and the development of the liberation war in South Vietnam confronted China with a very complex situation. In 1958 the PRC clearly declared that the VWP should regard as its prime task the consolidation and construction of the North, and adopt in the South "a guideline of long-term lying in wait, accumulation of strength, contacting the masses, and waiting for an opportunity [to strike]."³⁵ By 1960, however, China had to make a choice between the contradictory goals of maintaining peace in Indochina and preventing large-scale American military intervention on the one hand, and supporting a traditional ally on the other. The Chinese reactions to the Vietnam situation unfolded gradually.

First, the situation in South Vietnam was not a top priority of PRC foreign policy. The situation in Laos was a more direct and serious menace to China. Since North Vietnam was a buffer, the limited US intervention in South Vietnam did not constitute a direct threat to China. Second, VWP policy was developing gradually, and at least in 1960 did not cause a dramatic change in the situation in South Vietnam. Third, China had to keep its Indochina policy in line with its overall foreign policy.

The above factors explain Beijing's reserved attitude toward the question of whether North Vietnam should launch an armed struggle. On the one hand, China promptly expressed its support of the VWP's effort to strengthen armed struggle in the South. *The People's Daily* released an editorial during the Third National Congress of the VWP publicly endorsing the VWP's policy of supporting armed struggle in the South.³⁶ China immediately lent recognition and support when the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam (the NLF) was established in December 1960.

On the other hand, the PRC did not want the leaders of the VWP to rule out completely the option of a political resolution. Beijing also did not want to escalate the

(Beijing: shijiezhishi chubanshe, 1993): 66-75.

³⁴ On the changes in the VWP policy, see Shi Hongyin, *ibid.*

³⁵ Guo Ming, ed., *Zhongyue guanxi yanbian shinia* (A Decade of Change in Sino-Vietnamese Policy), *Guangxi renmin chubanshe*, 1992, pp. 66-67.

³⁶ "Yuanan gemin he jianshe de xin lichengbei" (The New Milestone of the Revolution and Development of Vietnam), *The People's Daily*, 12 September 1960.

war in South Vietnam to such an extent as to invite a large-scale American military intervention. Beijing stressed Hanoi, again and again, to that it “must liberate the South,” but must also pay attention to the tactics of its struggle, noting the difference between rural and urban areas. The Vietnamese should adopt a “flexible strategy,” and “combine political struggles with military struggles.”³⁷ Until mid 1961 China continued to declare publicly that it supported Vietnam’s struggle to “strive for the peaceful unification of the motherland” according to the Geneva agreements.³⁸ Those public declarations should not be considered as part of a propaganda campaign. Indeed, they indicated that Beijing did not want the VWP completely to give up efforts to strive for peaceful unification.

China’s persistent effort toward a peaceful resolution of the Laos crisis during this period may better reflect the characteristics of its Indochina policy. Bordering Laos, China was more directly threatened by American military intervention there than in South Vietnam. Moreover, the situation in Laos was more complex and explosive. Therefore, Chinese leaders were more occupied by the Laos crisis and invested much more energy in managing it. As a result, PRC policy toward the Laos issue was much more clear-cut and stable than its policy toward Vietnam. China was active in convening the Geneva Conference to resolve the Laos crisis, and played an important role in the final signing of the *Neutral Statement Concerning Laos* and its related agreements.³⁹

The importance of China’s Laos policy cannot be overstated, not only because it successfully defused the explosive situation in Indochina and postponed the American intervention in the region, but also because it implied continuity in Chinese foreign policy. The PRC leaders almost replicated the thinking, assessments, and strategic choices they had made in the 1954 Geneva Conference. Even when they regarded the

³⁷ Yang Kuisong, *Mao Zedong yu yinduzhina zhanzheng* (Mao Zedong and the Indochina War); Li Danhui, ed., *Zhongguo yu yingduzhina zhanzheng* (China and the Indochina War), (Hongkong: tiandi tushu chubanshe, 2000):.36; *Zhongyue guanxi yanbian sishi nian* (Four Decades of Changes in Sino-Vietnamese Relations), p. 67.

³⁸ “Zhou Enlai zhongli zai huanying yuenan Fang Wentong zongli de guoyan shang de jianghua” (Premier Zhou Enlai’s Speech at the Reception for Welcoming Vietnamese Premier Van Tien Tung), June 12, 1961, in *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo duiwai guanxi wenjianji (1961)* (The Collection of the Documents of the Foreign Relations of the PRC, 1961), Vol. 8 (Beijing: shijie zhishi chubanshe, 1962): 181.

³⁹ *Jiejue laowo wenti de kuoda de rineiwa huiyi wenjian huibian* (The Collection of the Documents for the Enlarged Geneva Conference for the Resolution of the Laos Issues) (Beijing: *shijie zhishi chubanshe*, 1962): .2-11.

United States as escalating its intervention in Indochina, they still made an effort to break the stalemate in Sino-American relations. Although such an effort was a very limited probe, it could, in a sense, demonstrate Beijing's determination to adjust its foreign policy.

At the Standing Committee meeting of the CCP Politburo in January 1960, the leadership also outlined its guideline for handling Sino-American relations as "to talk but not in haste, to talk but not break off." In other words, Beijing wanted to continue to negotiate with the Americans and not to break off the talks, but also not establish a diplomatic relationship with the US too hastily.⁴⁰ Under such a guideline, Chinese policy toward the US showed increased flexibility. Mao Zedong himself showed interest in a report of January 1960 that analyzed a possible change in Washington's China policy. The report concluded that the US might increase contacts with China in the future, and use the Warsaw talks to make further probes.⁴¹ So far no documents have revealed whether and how Mao further pondered these issues, though later events indicate that he might have been doing more than showing some interest. Of course, this policy was connected to the on-going presidential election in the US, which gave Chinese leaders the opportunity to assess the future American policymakers and consider whether a change in US policy toward China was possible.

Zhou Enlai indicated to British Field Marshall Montgomery in May 1960 that the PRC was willing to resolve the Taiwan issue peacefully, and that as long as the US announced that it was willing to withdraw American troops from Taiwan, China and the US could open negotiations.⁴² Zhou proposed to the American journalist Edgar Snow on 30 August a more flexible resolution of the issue of American withdrawal of troops from Taiwan: that the US had first to promise to withdraw its troops, but the questions of when and how to do so could be left for future discussions.⁴³ On 18 October Zhou Enlai again met with Snow, further expounding on Beijing's position on disarmament, PRC representation at the **U.N.**, nuclear tests, and the Taiwan issue, and

⁴⁰ *Shinian lunzhan* (A Decade of Polemics), Vol. 1, p. 247.

⁴¹ *Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong wengao* (The Manuscripts of Mao Zedong since the Foundation of the PRC), Vol. 9, pp. 3-6.

⁴² *Zhou Enlai nianpu* (A Chronology of Zhou Enlai), Vol.2, pp. 321-323.

⁴³ Edgar Snow, *The Other Side of the River: Red China Today* (New York: Random House, 1962): p. 91.

introducing issues regarding the Sino-Soviet split. Since Zhou Enlai showed an in-depth knowledge of the China policy of the Kennedy Administration, it is likely that his conversation with Snow was carefully prepared and purposeful.⁴⁴ Four days later, Mao Zedong again received Snow and discussed with him the Kennedy/Nixon presidential debates. Mao told Snow explicitly that China would leave the Jinmen [Quemoy] and Mazu [Matsu] islands in the hands of Jiang Jieshi, because what China “wanted was the whole Taiwan area.” However, China would assume responsibility for maintaining peace, would not fight Americans on its own initiative, and “wanted to resolve [the Taiwan issue] through negotiation.”⁴⁵

Mao and Zhou’s meetings with Snow during the American presidential election served a particular purpose. It is evident that Chinese leaders were trying to probe for a possibility to contact the new American president. After John F. Kennedy was elected, Chinese Ambassador to Poland Wang Bingnan indicated to his American counterpart in the Warsaw talks, Ambassador Jacob A. Beam, that China hoped the Kennedy Administration “would make some progress in developing Sino-American relations.” This statement had to have been approved by the top leadership.⁴⁶ Chinese Foreign Minister Chen Yi conveyed the same message when visiting Burma.⁴⁷ Considering these acts together with the general guideline of “creating a new situation in diplomacy,” one could argue that the PRC’s efforts to stabilize and even try to ease its relationship with the Americans was an important component of the adjustment in Chinese foreign policy during this period.

The above discussion shows that from the first half of 1960, Chinese leaders seriously hoped to stabilize Sino-Soviet relations, improve relations with neighboring countries, and create a “new situation in diplomacy” through actively promoting a pragmatic and moderate foreign policy. The important question that needs to be

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 159-61.

⁴⁵ Mao Zedong, *Tong Si Nuo tan Taiwan wenti ji qita* (Talks with Snow on Taiwan and Others), 22 October 1960, The Foreign Ministry of the PRC, the Document Research Institute of the CCPCC, ed., *Mao Zedong waijiao wenxua* (Selected Diplomatic Documents of Mao Zedong) (Beijing: *zhongyang wenxian, shijie zhishi chubanshe*, 1994): 448-454.

⁴⁶ Wang Bingnan, *Zhongmei huitan jiunian huigu* (A Retrospect of Nine Years of the Sino-American Talks), (Beijing: *shijie zhishi chubanshe*, 1985): p.83.

⁴⁷ *The People’s Daily*, 3 and 6 April, 1961

explored further is to determine the reasons that caused Chinese leaders, including Mao, to reach a consensus to promote a pragmatic foreign policy even when facing an “anti-China tide,” aside from the temporary unity achieved after the “anti-rightist” movement at the Lushan Conference. Answering this question is of crucial importance to understanding the later “left turn” in Chinese foreign policy.

Many factors that contributed to the adjustment in Chinese foreign policy can be listed, including the lasting influence of the guidelines adopted at the Eighth Party Congress, Chinese leaders’ belief that the general tendency in international relations was toward détente, their belief that Khrushchev was not yet a hundred-percent revisionist, that Nehru was still somewhat progressive, etc.⁴⁸ One crucial factor should be emphasized, however. Mao Zedong himself wished to “create a new situation in diplomacy,” and his suggestion had been, more or less, accepted by the other Chinese leaders. The unfolding of the ensuing events suggests that the thinking of Mao might be the best explanation for the later shift in Chinese policy.

An analysis of the historical materials that have been released thus far reveals that Mao considered an adjustment in foreign policy from two aspects. One is the consideration of its impact on domestic economic and political programs. Mao wanted a peaceful international environment so that China could accomplish the Great Leap Forward. Although by the summer of 1959, there were visible signs that had emerged that the Great Leap Forward was doomed to fail, the leadership, including Mao, did not recognize the severity of the consequences of this failure. The political climate of “rather left than right” after the crack-down on Peng Dehuai at the Lushan Conference had censored any criticism of the Great Leap Forward. The top leaders were buoyant, even blinded, by a supported dazzling “victory” of the Great Leap Forward, based on unsubstantiated reports of economic performance across the nation.⁴⁹ The first sign of recession, a decline in agricultural production, was concealed. A typical New Year Editorial in the *People’s Daily* claimed in 1959 that: “not only did gross industrial

⁴⁸ *Shinian lunzhan* (A Decade of Polemics), Vol. 1, pp. 231-233, 201-202.

⁴⁹ Fang Rongkang’s reminiscence, to some extent, reflects how people were blinded by an unfounded optimism. Fang Rongkang, “*Shelun chuanqilai de lishi*” (The History Connected with Editorials), *Bainianchao* (A Hundred Years of Tide), Vol. 8, 2002, pp. 38-39.

production greatly exceed the state's plan, but also agricultural production, after successfully combating record natural disasters, achieved a harvest larger than that of 1958. The gross agricultural production has markedly exceeded the state's plan." Such an assessment would make Chinese leaders "not only [be] determined and confident in a continuous and better leap in 1960, but also as determined and confident in continuous leaps during the entire 1960s."⁵⁰ Mao Zedong declared at the meeting of the Standing Committee of the Politburo in January 1960 that "the domestic situation is good," and that "[if China was to become] be influential in any way in the world, it would depend mainly on our doing well in our work at home, and getting the business done well."⁵¹ Confident in the prospects of the Great Leap Forward, Mao suggested striving for a peaceful development for about "10 to 15 years."⁵²

Second, however, Mao reached a very serious assessment of the trend in international relations. At a meeting of the SCP in Hangzhou in December 1959, he claimed that "the international anti-China tide is swelling loudly."⁵³ Several months later, Mao again raised the issue of the "so-called great anti-China tide." In a comment made in a telegram concerning a Chinese exhibition in Pakistan, Mao reminded his colleagues that they had to understand "the nature and meaning of the so-called great anti-China issue," and "be thoroughly prepared psychologically."⁵⁴

Mao believed that the reason for the rise of the "international anti-China tide" was that China insisted on the purity of Marxist and Leninist principles. Faced with a possible deterioration of the international environment, Mao stated that in order to fight the anti-China tide, "the centrality of every issue boils down to our doing well in our own unity as well as our own job." Mao called on the country to "strive to catch up and surpass the most advanced Western countries both economically and culturally," claiming that, "if we have 40 years [for peaceful reconstruction], there will be a great change in international situations by then."⁵⁵ Mao believed that although some policy

⁵⁰ Editorial, "Zhanwang liushi niandai" (A Prospect of the 1960s), *the People's Daily*, January 1, 1960.

⁵¹ *Shinian lunzhan* (A Decade of Polemics), Vol. 1, pp. 243.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 271.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 235.

⁵⁴ Mao Zedong, "Guanyu fanhua wenti" (Concerning the Anti-China Issue), 22 March 1960, in *Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong wengao*, Vol. 9, p. 95.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 94. *Shinian lunzhan* (A Decade of Polemics), Vol. 1, pp. 234-35.

adjustments were needed, the Great Leap Forward would prevail. He also believed that it was only through quickly accomplishing the plan of the Great Leap Forward that China could resist the **swelling** “anti-China tide,” as well as other external pressures. Because of this, Mao and other Chinese leaders wished to avoid any disturbance from “outside.”

However, in the first half of 1960, Sino-Soviet relations deteriorated significantly. Moscow’s withdrawal of all its experts from China and suspension of all its contracts with the PRC not only created enormous difficulties in China’s economic development, but also dealt a blow to the morale of Chinese cadres. The leadership had to spend so much energy discussing the situation and dealing with their relations with the Soviet Union that sometimes CCP Politburo meetings could not manage to discuss the scheduled economic issues. Chinese leaders also tried to improve morale. In a talk on Sino-Soviet relations addressed to provincial leaders in July 1960, Zhou Enlai told high-ranking officials from across the nation not to be “frustrated” by the deterioration in China’s relations with the Soviet Union.⁵⁶ Against this backdrop, adjustments in foreign policy were necessitated by the need to overcome this hindrance and guarantee the success of the Great Leap Forward.

It is reasonable to conclude from the above discussion that the direction in Chinese foreign policy in this period was by and large determined by the development of the domestic situation, to be more specific, by Chinese leaders’ concerns about the success or failure of the Great Leap Forward, as well as its consequences. Thus, in order to understand the extent to which Chinese foreign policy was under adjustment, it is not sufficient to restrict oneself to examining the shift in foreign policy.

The 1962 Shift in Foreign Policy: Its Causes and Features

The adjustment in foreign policy from early 1960 was effective, but the pressures on foreign policy from the severe recession in agriculture were beyond the expectations of the Chinese leaders, especially Mao. Compared to the previous year,

⁵⁶ Jin Chongji, ed., *Zhou Enlai zhuan* (A Biography of Zhou Enlai) (Beijing: zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1998): 586-87.

the New Year editorial that appeared in the *People's Daily* in 1961 was low-key, a rare occurrence since 1949. It included more analyses of the domestic situation and was more pragmatic. The editorial admitted “a poor harvest in agriculture in the past two years,” and that “neither the agricultural production plan, nor the production plan for light industry, whose supply of materials depend on agriculture, has been accomplished” in 1960.⁵⁷ One of the consequences of the serious recession in the domestic economy was that foreign policy was placed under more pressure for further adjustment.

First, the economic recession had at a deeper level changed the dynamics of the adjustment in Chinese foreign policy. The adjustment in foreign policy in the early 1960s, as shown above, was based on the leadership's confidence in achieving the goals of the Great Leap Forward, and was aimed at creating a favorable international condition for this domestic policy. The economic recession after 1960, however, proved that the initial impetus for the adjustment in foreign policy was unfounded. Consequently, the adjustment was altered to create conditions for solving economic difficulties and helping overcome the catastrophic consequences of the Great Leap Forward.

Second, the difficulties brought by the economic recession created more pressure to pursue a more pragmatic foreign policy. China's foreign trade was harmed by the shortcomings in the production plans for agriculture and light industry. The PRC had to ask the Soviet Union and some East European countries to postpone loan payments due in 1960. It also had to reduce the scale of imports and exports with those countries, and receive economic aid from the Soviet Union.⁵⁸ Under such conditions, China had to try to stabilize rather than exacerbate Sino-Soviet relations, and therefore had to make compromises.

In addition, two years of poor harvests forced the Chinese government to import foodstuffs from non-Soviet bloc countries. In August 1960 Beijing proposed “Three

⁵⁷ Editorial, “*Tuanjie zhiyi, yikao qunzhong, zhengqu shijie heping he guonei shehuizhuyi jianshe de xin shengli*” (To Unite Together, Rely on the Masses, and Strive for a New Victory of World Peace and Domestic Socialist Development), *the People's Daily*, 1 January 1961.

⁵⁸ Liu Xiao, *Chushi sulian banian* (Eight Years of Diplomatic Mission in the Soviet Union) (Beijing: *zhonggong dangshi chubanshe*, 1986: 105; *Zhou Enlai nianpu*, Vol. 2. p. 394.

Principles for Trade” gradually to resume Sino-Japanese trade, which had been interrupted in 1958. A civil trade agreement was signed in November and trade between China and Japan was gradually resumed in 1961.⁵⁹ Chinese leaders were even considering signing an agreement to import foodstuffs from the United States.⁶⁰ These developments inescapably impacted PRC foreign policy. For instance, when the economy sank into recession, and Beijing’s ability to pay off foreign debts was impaired, the PRC had to reduce its foreign aid, which was mostly aimed at supporting world revolution. This curtailment of support for revolution then had an indirect impact on policy toward the West.

The economic situation became grim at the end of 1961. Output from heavy industry plummeted, following the pattern in agriculture and light industry. The economic recession limited the extent to which foreign policy could be adjusted in 1960. Moreover, although Beijing still aimed to “create a new situation in diplomacy,” and adopted a series of important innovations in early 1960, the deep problems that caused the upheaval in foreign policy outlined in the first part of this article had not been solved, and perhaps had not even been clearly comprehended.

The changes in the external environment created pressure for a further adjustment in China’s foreign policy. First, although the Sino-Soviet relationship was eased somewhat, it remained very fragile. After the conflicts in the summer of 1959 and the first half of 1960, China and the Soviet Union came to a compromise at the Moscow Conference in December 1960. In the first half of 1961, trade, technological cooperation, and military cooperation with the Soviet Union all resumed. The PRC signed a new trade agreement with the Soviet Union in April 1961. Although the stipulated amount of trade was lower than the previous year, mostly due to China’s economic recession, the trade relationship between the two states was nonetheless resumed.⁶¹ The two sides attempted to coordinate with each other in international

⁵⁹ Zhou Enlai, “*Guanyu cujin zhongri guanxi de zhengzhi sanyuanze he maoyi sanyuanze*” (Three Political Principles and Three Economic Principles Concerning the Improvement of the Sino-Japanese Relationship), 27 August 1960, in The Foreign Ministry of the PRC and The Central Document Research Office of the CCP eds., *Zhou Enlai waijiao wenxuan* (The Diplomatic Collections of Zhou Enlai) (Beijing: *zhongyang wenxian chubanshe*, 1990):289-291.

⁶⁰ *Zhou Enlai nianpu*, Vol.2, p. 385.

⁶¹ *Zhou Enlai nianpu*, Vol. 2, p. 385.

affairs and brief each other regularly. Some high-level visits between the two were planned.⁶² Both China and the Soviet Union gave a positive appraisal of the situation. The Soviet side believed that the two states had restored “a friendly, trusted and brotherly relationship,” and China indicated that the Sino-Soviet disagreement was an “internal issue” for the big socialist family, and could be settled properly through consultation.⁶³

The temporary easing of the relationship between China and the Soviet Union was one of the important achievements of Beijing’s foreign policy adjustment. However, such an adjustment did not solve the deep-rooted problems in policy toward the Soviet Union. Although Chinese leaders had justified their easing of tensions with the Soviet Union from various perspectives, it is evident from their discussions in early 1960 that their decisions stemmed foremost from considerations of national interests. Much of their argument regarding the new direction of policy toward the Soviet Union was based on a cost-benefit analysis.⁶⁴ Indeed, it showed that after the initial ideological disputes, the Sino-Soviet relationship was undergoing some subtle changes. A pragmatic pursuit of concrete common interests could exert a positive influence on maintaining and improving the Sino-Soviet relationship.

It was impossible, however, for the Sino-Soviet relationship to develop as long as the ideological disputes continued. Relations could continue to ease only if the ideological disputes ended or were diluted. It is true that the easing of Sino-Soviet relations after the Romanian Communist Party Congress in Bucharest demonstrated that it was possible for the relationship to maintain stability and even develop on the basis of common interests rather than agreement on Marxist and Leninist theories. Mao Zedong believed that the Soviet Communist Party had not completely betrayed Marxism and therefore could be rescued, and that Sino-Soviet solidarity could only be achieved through struggle and through clarifying what was right and wrong in

⁶² Li Sheng, *Xinjiang duisu (e) maoyishi, 1600-1990* (The Trade History between China and the Soviet Union (Russia), 1600-1990) (Xinjiang: *Xinjiang renmin chubanshe*, 1994): 635.

⁶³ *Chushi sulian banian*, p. 107; “Record of Conversation, Chervonenko and Zhou Enlai,” 25 June 1961, in Odd Arne Westad, ed., *Brothers in Arms: The Rise and Fall of the Sino-Soviet Alliance, 1945-1963* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998): 369, 374.

⁶⁴ *Shinian lunzhan*, Vol. 1, pp. 240-48, 271-73.

Marxist-Leninist theory. To achieve such a victory, Mao argued that the CCP leaders should also understand what was Marxism, and what was revisionism.⁶⁵ China's restraint in its ideological disputes with the Soviet Union was manifested only either in not specifically mentioning the Soviet Communist Party (e.g. in the three articles commemorating the 100th anniversary of the birth of Lenin in the spring of 1960) or through indirect criticism (e.g., the assessment of the 20th Soviet Communist Party Congress in the *Moscow Declaration* in 1960). Given these constraints, China could not possibly end the ideological dispute with the Soviet Union.

Beijing and Moscow also disagreed over the Soviet dispute with Albania in the spring of 1961. Some suggested that China be cautious in the Soviet-Albanian dispute so as to avoid severely damaging the Sino-Soviet relationship.⁶⁶ The issue nevertheless sparked a further deterioration of relations with Moscow. Chinese leaders sharply criticized the way the Soviet Union treated Albania, asserting that it did not display “a sober attitude of Marxism and Leninism.”⁶⁷ The Sino-Soviet controversy over Albania quickly intensified during the 22nd Soviet Communist Party Congress in mid-October 1960, when Chinese leaders disagreed with Khrushchev's policies over issues such as Stalin and peaceful co-existence, and believed that the attacks on Albania by the Soviet leaders were actually aimed at a denunciation of China.⁶⁸

More seriously, about sixty thousand Chinese residents in the Yili region of Xinjiang Province crossed the border and fled into Soviet territory in the spring and summer of 1962. No evidence has emerged that Soviet leaders directly orchestrated this incident. It is possible that the incident was related to the deterioration of Sino/Soviet relations after the 22nd Soviet Communist Party Congress.⁶⁹ Regardless of the origins of the incident, one of its consequences was increased tension across the

⁶⁵ *Shinian lunzhan*, Vol.1, pp. 241-43.

⁶⁶ *Chushi sulian banian*, pp. 115-16.

⁶⁷ “Zhou Enlai tongzhi zai sugong ershierda daibiao dahui shang de jianghua” (Comrade Zhou Enlai's Talk at the 22nd Soviet Union Communist Party Congress), *the People's Daily*, 20 October 1960.

⁶⁸ “Mao Zedong huijian yindunixiyagongchandang zongshuji yaidi tongzhi de tanhua,” (Mao Zedong's talk with General Secretary of the Indonesian Communist Party Comrade Aidy), 1 January 1961.

⁶⁹ The most detailed examination of the “Yi-Ta incident” in recent years in China is Li Danhui, “Dui 1962 nian xinjiang yita shijian qiyan de lishi kaocha—laizi zhongguo xinjiang de dangan cailiao,” (A Historical Examination of the Origins of the Yi-Ta Incident in Xinjiang in 1962: the archives from Xinjiang China) in *Beijing yu mosik, e* (Beijing and Moscow), pp. 480-509.

Sino-Soviet border. China thus again faced pressure to adjust its policy toward the Soviet Union.

Another important factor was the deteriorating situation in Vietnam. China's primary strategic goal was to prevent large-scale military intervention by the Americans and to maintain regional stability. Support for revolutionary movements in the region would be constrained by this goal. Nevertheless, China began to assume more and more responsibility for aid and assistance to Vietnam. Two major factors determined the policy choices. First, the principles the Chinese leaders took a stand on in their ideological dispute with the Soviets, forced them to support the military struggle in South Vietnam. It is unimaginable that Chinese leaders would not have proclaimed support for a people's war on their doorstep while they insisted that military struggle was the only way toward the victory of the "national democratic revolutionary movement." Second, Chinese leaders planned to construct an alliance system with neighboring socialist countries, including Mongolia, North Korea, and North Vietnam. For this purpose, Mao Zedong suggested that the proposed agreement include an article about Chinese military aid.⁷⁰ In light of such considerations, it was reasonable for China to provide support and aid when North Vietnam requested it.

Although Beijing was inclined to assist Hanoi with its struggle to unify the country by force, the scale and nature of its assistance were greatly influenced by the escalation of US intervention. Further escalation of the Laotian civil war at the end of 1960 made the situation worse. The Kennedy Administration saw the situation in Laos as a priority, and decided action must be taken in order to contain China.⁷¹ In March, the U.S. Seventh Fleet sailed into the South China Sea, and U.S. troops stationed in Japan and Thailand were ordered to get ready for combat. Shortly afterward, the U.S. increased the number of military advisors in South Vietnam and allowed their involvement in combat operations.

⁷⁰ Mao Zedong, "Dui dijie zhongmeng hezuo youhao tiaoyue wenti de piyu," (Comments on the Issue of Signing Sino-Mongolian Treaty on Friendship and Cooperation) 21 March 1960, in *Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong wengao*, Vol. 9, p. 88.

⁷¹ The U.S. Department of State, ed., *Foreign Relations of the United States*, Vol. 24, p. 154; *The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: John F. Kennedy, 1961* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1962): 214.

The intensification of the US military intervention made the Chinese leaders feel severely threatened on their southern border. The PRC publicly stated in early 1962 that the American military operations in South Vietnam constituted a threat to Chinese security, and that the American intervention was “directly targeted against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, and indirectly targeted against China.”⁷² Chinese leaders believed that only through increasing assistance to North Vietnam could the American military intervention be defeated.⁷³ In May 1962, the Kennedy Administration announced that ground troops and air forces would be stationed in Thailand. Upon seeing U.S. troops enter a neighboring country, the Chinese government immediately responded with a tough statement publicly calling on other countries to “evict the American aggressors out of Southeast Asia.”⁷⁴ Shortly afterwards, China decided to offer North Vietnam, at no charge, military equipment for 230 infantry battalions.

It stands to reason that American intervention in the region made China’s strengthening of its aid to Vietnam an irreversible tendency, and the deeper the U.S. intervened, the more China would aid North Vietnam. Chinese foreign aid at the time was following the principle of “to do according to one’s abilities.” However, it became more and more difficult to apply this principle to Vietnam.⁷⁵

PRC strategy was to cooperate with the Soviet Union in order to solve the Laos issue by political means, prevent direct American military intervention in the regions bordering on China, increase support of the military struggles in South Vietnam, and to defeat the Americans’ “special war.” While these efforts were gradually strengthened, the leadership had to face two questions. First, would the military struggle in South Vietnam elicit larger scale American military intervention, and even lead to a situation

⁷² “Waijiabu guanyu meiguo dui yuenan nanfang jiajin wuzhuangganshe de shengmin,” (The Statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Concerning the Intensifying American Military Intervention in South Vietnam) 24 February 1962, in *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo duiwai guanxi wenjianji (1962)* (The Collection of Documents of the Foreign Relations of the People’s Republic of China), Vol. 9, p. 263.

⁷³ Han Nianlong, ed., *Dangdai zhongguo waijiao* (Modern Chinese Diplomacy) (Beijing: Chinese Social Sciences Press, 1987): 159.

⁷⁴ Editorial, “Ba meiguo qinlue zhe cong dongnanya ganchuqu!” (To Evict the American Aggressors out of Southeast Asia!), 19 May 1962, *The People’s Daily*.

⁷⁵ For example, Zhou Enlai, in a remark concerning the negotiations on aid to Mongolia, stated explicitly that, “(we) have to do according to our ability, and do not bear the burden if we are not sure.” See *Zhou Enlai nianpu*, Vol.2, p. 478.

similar to the Korean War? In other words, would American troops cross the 17th parallel and force China to enter the war directly? Second, at a time when China's economy was experiencing a severe recession, could or should it bear such a heavy burden of foreign aid, which was growing heavier every day?

Another factor was the ongoing crisis on the Sino-Indian border. The border had been quiet after Zhou Enlai's visit to India in April 1960. Since April 1961, however, the Indian government had launched a so-called forward policy, initiating large-scale military encroachments on Chinese border territories at the end of the year. In response, the PRC sharpened its denunciation of India. Chinese media charged that the purpose of India's provoking the border disputes was to act in concert with the "anti-China tide" raised by the U.S. *The People's Daily* even publicly criticized the top leader of the Indian Communist Party for not holding the line of right and wrong over the Sino-Indian border issue.⁷⁶

Because of the continuing border problems, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) resumed patrols along the border and strengthened military deployment in the border regions in early 1962 to defend against any Indian encroachments. Meanwhile, Beijing officially warned Delhi that if Indian troops refused to withdraw from their footholds and continued military provocation, "the Chinese frontier defense troops would have no choice but to defend themselves."⁷⁷ Yet the PRC leadership tried to avoid military conflict. They contemplated almost all possible methods of doing so, as evident in the direction issued by the Central Military Committee on February 1 and the decree on the "Principle Concerning the Concrete Methods of Resuming Border Patrol and Handling of the Frontier Defense Posts" issued by the General Staff Department of the PLA on 6 May.⁷⁸

In the summer of 1959, Indian troops had provoked military clashes along the border, inflicting death and injury on PLA troops and arousing outrage among Chinese

⁷⁶ Editorial, "Nihelu cedong de yindu fanhua yundong de zhenxiang" (The Truth of the Indian Anti-China Movement Instigated by Nehru), 7 December 1961, *The People's Daily*.

⁷⁷ *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo duiwai guanxi ji*, Vol. 9, p. 38.

⁷⁸ *Zhongyin bianjie ziwei fanji zuozhan shi bianxiezu* (The Editing Team of the Sino-Indian Border Self-defense Combat History), ed., *Zhongyin bianjie ziwei fanji zuozhan shi* (The Self-defense Combat History of the Sino-Indian Border) (Beijing: Military Science Press, 1994): 122.

soldiers. Mao Zedong suggested in September 1959 that Indian and Chinese troops should each retreat 20 kilometers so as to disengage the troops of the other side. The unilateral retreat of Chinese troops took place to some extent because Chinese leaders believed that military conflicts would be difficult to avoid if the troops of both sides were not quarantined.⁷⁹ So long as India would not give up its demand for Chinese territory and tried to resort to force, the Chinese military, especially the border troops, would certainly request a military counterstrike. Chinese decision-makers had to face pressure from within to launch military operations, and had to decide whether or not to resort to force.

Besides the tension along the borders with the Soviet Union, Indochina, and India, problems were also mounting on China's southeast coast. The CCP leadership believed that the Jiang Jieshi regime in Taiwan will attempt to take advantage of the economic recession on the mainland to launch military attacks. Because the Kuomintang (KMT) regime was allied with the U.S., Jiang Jieshi's military preparations put great pressure on the southeast coast. The PLA began combat mobilization, concentrated troops in the region, and started conscription earlier than scheduled in May, so as to defeat the probable "landing of two to three hundred thousand forces" of Jiang Jieshi troops.⁸⁰ The war preparations on the southeast coast, along with the anti-encroachment combat at the Sino-Indian border, had elevated the morale of the PLA to a new height, and the Chinese military quickly completed its preparations for combat.⁸¹

The pressures brought by the economic recession and the severe situation in Chinese foreign relations finally led to the emergence of a voice within the leadership demanding a comprehensive, critical, and systematic review of PRC foreign policy. The CCP Central Committee convened an enlarged working meeting in January 1961, during which the party conducted a broad review of party policies of the past few years. The meeting did not directly discuss foreign policy issues, but the report by Liu Shaoqi

⁷⁹ *Tongshuaibu canmou de zuiyi*, pp. 218-19.

⁸⁰ "Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu zhunbei fensui jiangfeibang jinfan dongnan yanhai diqu de zhishi" (The Direction by the Central Committee of the CCP Concerning the Preparations for Smashing the Aggression on the Southeast Coast by the Bandit Gang of Jiang), 10 June 1962, in *Jianguo yilai zhongyao wenxian xuanbian* (Selected Collections of Important Documents since the Founding of the PRC), Vol.15, pp. 481-84.

⁸¹ *Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong wengao*, Vol.10, p. 156.

on behalf of the Central Committee set the tone for foreign policy. Liu suggested, as usual, that the CCP, after having come to power, should “aid the revolutionary movements of the peoples of all states in the world, until the realization of a communist world.”⁸² However, in the supplementary talk that followed the report, Liu Shaoqi clearly stated, “Comrade Mao Zedong said that to fulfill our international obligations, first of all we had to do our work well at home... the majority of our attention should be directed to domestic issues.”⁸³ The speech suggested that the PRC leadership, including Mao Zedong himself, agreed that solving domestic economic problems was equivalent to fulfilling “international obligations.”

Shortly after the talk by Liu Shaoqi, on February 27 Wang Jiaxiang wrote a letter to Zhou Enlai, Deng Xiaoping, and Chen Yi expressing his opinions regarding China’s foreign policy. This letter has not yet been publicly disclosed, but its contents have been widely used in many studies. Wang Jiaxiang subsequently wrote additional reports raising ideas on important issues concerning Chinese foreign policy. Wang Jiaxiang’s letter and reports give the only comprehensive and systematic review of Chinese foreign policy available to date.

Wang Jiaxiang’s recommendations can be divided into two parts. First, he attempted a full-scale, systematic review of some deeper issues in the previous foreign policy, including its fundamental goal, a basic judgment about the probability of a world war, an understanding of the relationship between war, peace, and revolution, an understanding of the plausibility of peaceful co-existence, etc. Second, he offered suggestions about further adjustments.⁸⁴

In the first part, the questions Wang Jiaxiang raised to some extent challenged a

⁸² Liu Shaoqi, “Zai kuodade zhongyang gongzuo huiyi shang de jianghua,” (The Talk at the Enlarged Working Meeting of the Central Committee) January 27, 1962, in *Jianguo yilai zhongyao wenxian xuanbian*, Vol.15, p. 61.

⁸³ Liu Shaoqi, “Zai kuodade zhongyang gongzuo huiyi shang de jianghua,” January 27, 1962, p. 86.

⁸⁴ On the content of the letter by Wang Jiaxiang, see Li Chen ed., *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo shilu* (A Real Record of the History of the People’s Republic of China) Vol. 2, Jilin renmin, 1994, pp. 656-57; Zhang Tuosheng, “Nanneng de tansuo, kegui de nuli: shilun Wang Jiangxiang dui dang de guoji zhanlue sixiang de gongxian” (A Rare Exploration and Commendable Effort: on Wang Jiangxiang’s Contributions to the Party’s International Strategic Thoughts), in the International Strategic Foundation ed., *Huanqiu tongci liangre: yidai linxiu men de zhanlue sixiang* (The Same Warmth and Coolness across the Globe: the International Strategic Thoughts of a Generation of Leaders) (Beijing: zhongyang wenxian, 1993): 170-83; On other reports by Wang Jiangxiang such as “Shishi qiushi, liangli erxing” (Seek Truth from the Reality, and Do According to One’s Abilities) and “Luetan dui mouxie guoji wenti de kanfa” (A Brief Discussion about Thoughts on Some International Issues), etc., see *Wang Jiaxiang xuanji* (A Selected Collection of Wang Jiaxiang’s Work) (Beijing: Remin Press, 1989).

certain “foreign policy route,” which was probably the main reason why Mao Zedong later sharply criticized his views. To Mao, a concrete policy may be discussed, but the fundamental theoretical concept should never be questioned. The second part included issues at two levels. At the first were the fundamental principles of foreign policy strategy, and at the second were the principles dealing with some concrete issues. In hindsight, it is evident that the policies the Chinese leaders adopted before the summer of 1962 were in accordance with the strategic principles laid out by Wang Jiaxiang. Some of his suggestions for dealing with certain concrete issues, however, became impractical as the situation changed. For example, Wang Jiaxiang suggested that new methods be employed to break through the impasse over the Sino-Indian border conflict. However, Chinese leaders were forced to dispel the Indian troops by force. Other suggestions were never discarded, such as Wang’s argument that a “Korean style war” should be avoided in the Indochina region. Indeed Chinese leaders tried their best in that respect.⁸⁵

Both the talks by Liu Shaoqi and the suggestions of Wang Jiaxiang stemmed from common domestic and international backgrounds. They shared the same principle, which is to argue for a more pragmatic and stable foreign policy, creating a favorable international environment for solving China’s economic difficulties. The deteriorating international situation hindered the ability of Chinese leaders to implement some of those policies and even forced them to adopt decisive methods, including the use of force.

The situation along China’s periphery was deteriorating at the time, creating unfavorable conditions for an adjustment in the direction of pragmatism and stability. In addition, although some of Wang’s suggestions were reasonable, they proved impractical in the dramatically changed domestic and international environments. The deterioration of the situation along the borders was not severe enough to compel the Chinese leadership to fundamentally change the foreign policy that they had first implemented in early 1960, and that Wang Jiaxiang had further advocated and

⁸⁵ On Wang Jiaxiang’s suggestions on the concrete issues, see *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo shilu* (The Real Record of the History of the People’s Republic of China), Vol. 2 (Beijing: *shijie zhishi chubanshe*, 1998): 247-48.

developed in early 1962. Those border incidents were not the main causes that forced Mao Zedong to shift foreign policy.

In June 1962, the Kennedy Administration, through the ambassadorial talks in Warsaw, indicated to the Chinese side that the U.S. did not intend to support the Taiwan government in attempting to invade the mainland.⁸⁶ Without support from the U.S., Taipei's military actions could only be very limited. The Yili Incident in Xinjiang was mainly resolved through diplomatic channels, and at least before November of that year, did not lead to a dramatic deterioration of the situation along the border with the Soviet Union, nor was it a major factor for the later deterioration in relations between the two countries.⁸⁷

Chinese leaders came to acknowledge that besides the provocations from the Soviet side, certain policies of China should be reviewed and improved.⁸⁸ Generally speaking, the American military intervention in Indochina was seen as an indirect threat to Chinese security, though it became much more severe later. In July 1962 China and the U.S. even reached an agreement to peacefully resolve the Laotian issue. Even the border dispute with the Indians, which escalated into a large-scale military conflict in October 1962, was in the eyes of the Chinese leaders limited and manageable. "The Propaganda Outline Concerning The End of the Sino-Indian Border Conflict and the Issue of Sino-Indian Relations" (*Guanyu jiesu zhongyin bianjie chongtu he zhongyin guanxi wenti de xuanchuan tigang*), which was distributed by the CCP Central Committee when the military conflict with India ended, showed that Chinese decision-makers believed that the crisis had passed and they could seek opportunities to reopen peace talks with the Indians, as well as continue to push forward various kinds of domestic efforts.⁸⁹

If the incidents that happened during this period had any impact on Chinese foreign policy, it was mainly to create a political atmosphere in China that made the

⁸⁶ Kenneth T. Young, *Negotiating with the Chinese Communists* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968): 250-51.

⁸⁷ For a detailed introduction to the negotiations concerning the incident, see Wang Taiping, ed., *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo waijiaoshi* (The Diplomatic History of the People's Republic of China), Vol. 2 (Beijing: Shijie zhishi, 1998): 247-48.

⁸⁸ *Zhou Enlai nianpu*, Vol.2, p. 475.

⁸⁹ *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo shilu*, Vol.2, pp. 770-71.

argument for a change in the relatively pragmatic foreign policy since 1960 more easily supportable. Of course, the deteriorating international environment might have also influenced Mao Zedong's psychological state. In the poems he published in 1961, we can still see a self-confidence, as manifested in well-known verses such as "There are infinite sceneries on the perilous peak" (*wuxian fengguang zai xianfeng*), and "As the time comes when the azaleas are blossoming on the mountain, she smiles in the flowering shrubs" (*daidao shanhua lanlan shi, ta zai congzhong xiao*).⁹⁰ The poems from the end of 1962, on the other hand, perhaps reflected his rage at the pressures caused by the deteriorating international environment, as shown in famous works such as "Seven-Tone—The Winter Cloud" (*qily—dongyun*) and "The Redness All over the River—A Reply to Comrade Guo Moruo" (*manjianghong—he Guo Moruo tongzhi*).⁹¹ In sum, the main factors that caused Mao Zedong to criticize the so-called three kindnesses and one fewness (*san he yi shao*) at the Tenth Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee and that led to the change in China's foreign policy need to be sought among the main events in the PRC's domestic politics, i.e. the struggle within the CCP concerning the assessment of the Great Leap Forward.

The so-called Seven-Thousand-Man Meeting was convened in the grim economic situation of January 1962. The meeting criticized the mistakes made by the Central Committee and resolved to change policies completely, leading directly to suspicion and even criticism of the Great Leap Forward.⁹² At the Enlarged Meeting of the Standing Committee of the CCP Politburo in February (also called the West Pavilion Meeting) and the Working Meeting of the Central Committee in May, the mainstream opinion within the Chinese leadership was that the severity of the economic recession must be acknowledged and a strategic decision must be made to change economic policies and make a large scale adjustment in the national economy.⁹³ It is worth noting

⁹⁰ *Mao Zedong shici xuan* (A Selected Collection of Mao Zedong's Poems) (Beijing: *renmin wenxue*, 1986): 113.

⁹¹ *Mao Zedong shici xuan*, pp. 116, 118-19.

⁹² Zhang Tianrong, "1961 nian zhaokai de qi-qian ren dahui" (The Seven-Thousand-Men Meeting Convened in 1962), in Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun guofang daxue dangshi dangjian zhenggong jiaoyanshi, ed., *Zhonggong dangshi jiaoxue cankao ziliao* (The Reference Materials for the Teaching of the Party History of the CCP), Vol.24, pp. 20-21.

⁹³ *Zhou Enlai zhuan, 1949-1976* (A Biography of Zhou Enlai, 1949-1976), Vol.2, p. 683; Xie Chuntao, *Dayuejing kuangchao* (The Tide of the Great Leap Forward) (*Zhenzhou, Henan: Henan remin chubanshe*, 1990): 236-37.

that the policy adjustments after the Seven-Thousand-Man Meeting were intended to solve the problem of economic recession. However, their scope was not limited to the economic arena, but extended into some sensitive political arenas such as the democratic system within the party, the policy with regard to cadres, the policy with regard to intellectuals, and the policy of culture and education. The implementation of new policies in those arenas clearly improved the political atmosphere in the whole society. In such an atmosphere, it is not surprising that recognition and criticism of previous mistakes would become much deeper and sharper. Wang Jiexiang's suggestions on foreign policy were part of this criticism. Some officials, especially high-ranking ones such as Marshall Peng Dehuai, who had suffered blows in party struggles because they voiced different opinions, surely wished to make an appeal on their own behalf.

The Great Leap Forward originated with economic issues and then impacted a variety of arenas. As the Great Leap Forward waned due to the economic crisis it had created, it likewise had a political impact. Just as the Great Leap Forward caused a sharp struggle within the party, the denunciation of the Great Leap Forward brought a similar effect. Different opinions were voiced at the Seven-Thousand-Man Meeting, including both in favor of and opposing the Great Leap Forward. The key to the issue was how to treat those differences within the party, especially how Mao Zedong would view opinions denouncing the Great Leap Forward.

Mao's attitude was revealed in his speeches at the Seven-Thousand-Man Meeting. On the one hand, he set "to carry forward democracy" as the theme of his talks; on the other hand, he reminded the participants of the severity of the class struggle, and of the "fundamental stance issue," i.e. which side one was to take. In particular, in response to the current international environment, Mao pointed out that *di xiu fan* (imperialists, revisionists, and anti-revolutionary elements), Jiang Jieshi, together with *di fu fan huai you* (landlords, rich peasants, bad and anti-revolutionary elements, and rightists) were all hoping China would fail.⁹⁴ This reminder in a sense demarcated an implicit bottom

⁹⁴ Mao Zedong, "zai kuoda de zhongyang gongzuo huiyi shang de jianghua" (The Talk on the Enlarged Working Meeting of the Central Committee), 30 January 1962, in *Zhonggong dangshi jiaoxue cankao ziliao*, Vol. 24, pp. 5,

line for criticism of the Great Leap Forward. Mao made clear that no criticism was allowed to cross that bottom line; in this context, the political counterstrikes Mao launched after August 1962 are better explained. It is evident that Mao believed that criticism of the Great Leap Forward within the party had already crossed the line and must therefore be thoroughly corrected.

The CCP Central Committee convened a working meeting in Beidaihe on 6 August 1962 in preparation for further discussion of economic issues. However, Mao overthrew the scheduled agenda, suggested that the class struggle issue during the socialist period be discussed, and vehemently attacked those opinions that denounced the Great Leap Forward. At the Tenth Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee, Mao further developed his argument, describing renunciation of the Great Leap Forward as *san feng* (Three Winds): “*hei’an feng*” (the dark wind), “*dan gan feng*” (the work-alone wind), and “*fan’an feng*” (the reverse-the-verdict wind). He accused so-called rightist leaders like Liu Shaoqi of being “Chinese revisionists.”⁹⁵ The severest consequence was the publication of the bulletin of the meeting that included Mao’s famous statement concerning the class struggle issue in the socialist period.⁹⁶

There were two crucial arguments in Mao’s criticism of the so-called “Three Winds.” The first argument was that criticism of the Great Leap Forward and its consequences was a reflection of class struggle within the party, and was “Chinese revisionism.” The second was that “there was a connection between revisionism at home and abroad,” that is, they colluded.⁹⁷ Such reasoning led Mao easily to link the so-called “revisionism” issue with the difference of opinions expressed during this period, especially those at a theoretical level.

It was in these two meetings that Mao criticized the views of Wang Jiaxiang. There is thus far insufficient evidence to prove that Mao himself read the letters and

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⁹⁵ “60 niandai de zhongguo guonei jushi de bianhua yu zhongmei guanxi” (The Changing Domestic Context of China in the 1960s and the Sino-American Relationship), pp. 267-70; *Zhou Enlai zhuan*, Vol.2, pp. 990-994.

⁹⁶ “Zhongguo gongchandang dibajie zhongyang weiyuanhui dishici quanti huiyi de gongbao” (The Bulletin of the Tenth Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee of the Communist Party of China), 27 September 1962, in *Zhonggong dangshi jiaoxue cankao ziliao*, Vol. 24, p. 166.

⁹⁷ *Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong wengao*, Vol.10, p. 199.

reports of Wang Jiaxiang. We must ask, therefore, what were the concrete factors that led Mao to criticise the views of Wang Jiaxiang.⁹⁸ The historical documents that have been disclosed thus far show that what caused Mao to link the suggestions by Wang Jiaxiang with the so-called “three winds” was the remark by Foreign Minister Chen Yi at the Southeast China Group meeting on September 14. Chen Yi commented that now there was a puff of wind that could be called “*sanmian he yimian shao*” (three-side kindness and one-side fewness). This comment was probably the earliest version of the later phrase “three kindnesses and one fewness.” Chen Yi argued that it was inevitable to have struggles with the U.S., the Soviet Union, and India; “political cost/benefit calculation” must be done, and more support must be given to the national liberation movement. It was evident that Mao Zedong liked Chen Yi’s remarks; he commented that the briefing was “worth reading, very good.”⁹⁹ Afterwards the “three kindnesses and one fewness,” like the “three winds,” began to be listed as an object for criticism. It was quite probable, however, that Chen Yi, like many other Chinese leaders, might not have understood the ultimate purpose of Mao’s criticizing the “three winds” and the possible consequences it might bring. In his remarks, Chen Yi still approved the foreign policy followed since 1960 in general, arguing, “It was very necessary” to have struggles, on the one hand, and that “the struggles be well-managed and restrained,” on the other.¹⁰⁰ The key, however, was the phrase “a puff of wind.” The phrase might have been dropped by the speaker unintentionally, but picked up by the listener carefully. Mao Zedong’s praise of the opposition to the so-called “three kindnesses and one fewness” was linked to the opposition to the “three winds,” which to Mao was not an issue concerning merely a concrete policy, but rather of fundamental thought, that is, what purpose foreign policy should serve. In that lay the crucial point and the severity of the problem.

⁹⁸ On the descriptions and remarks on this incident, see Zhu Zhongli, “*suwei de ‘san he yi shao,’ ‘san xiang yi xmie’ wenti de zhenxiang*” (The Truth of the So-called “Three Kindnesses and One Fewness” and “Three Capitulations and One Extinction”), in *Dang de wenxian* (The Documents of the Party), No. 5, 1993; *Mao Zedong yu Mosike de enenyuanyuan*, p. 474; “*Nanneng de tansuo, kegui de nuli*,” p. 181; “*Biangong zhong de zuoji guanxi yu zhongguo duimwi zhengce*,” p. 191; “*60 niandai zhongguo guonei jushi de bianhua yu zhongmei guanxi*,” pp. 274-76.

⁹⁹ *Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong wengao*, Vol. 10, pp. 188-89.

¹⁰⁰ *Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong wengao*, Vol.10, p. 188.

Mao Zedong's criticism of the "three kindnesses and one fewness" was linked to his criticism of the "three winds," both of which were logical products of these two views. It therefore can be argued that the Tenth Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee in fact changed the principle that had guided foreign policy since 1960. Of course, it took some time for the changes in the guiding principle to be implemented, as it did for the final implementation of Mao's class struggle theory. Indeed, implementation of the changes in the guiding principle of foreign policy went in tandem with that of the class struggle theory. This point is worth noting because the Sino-Indian border conflict soon after the Tenth Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee and other decisions on foreign affairs could not be attributed simply to the changes in the guiding principles of Chinese foreign policy.

Conclusion

Chinese foreign policy in 1962 was influenced by structural contradictions at two levels. First, while the domestic economic recession demanded an adjustment of foreign policy in the direction of more pragmatism and stability, the deterioration of the environment along the borders forced the PRC leadership to act harshly in some instances, such as the Sino-Indian border conflict. Second, the Chinese leadership differed over how to assess the Great Leap Forward and how to deal with the economic recession, which then influenced the direction in which foreign policy was adjusted. Moreover, the contradictions at these two levels did not suddenly emerge in 1962. They could be traced to different origins, and were interconnected and mutually influenced. This article demonstrates that the contradiction at the second level clearly had a major impact on Chinese foreign policy and was, in fact, the main reason for its change of course.

In conclusion, the change in Chinese foreign policy was caused neither by severe changes in the external environment (such as world war, large-scale invasion by foreign enemies, or other events threatening fundamental national security), nor by a complete re-examination of various aspects of foreign policy (i.e., the situations prior to the Eighth Party Congress and around early 1960s). Rather, it was propelled by

changes in domestic politics and began as a change in the guiding principles of Chinese foreign policy.

For this reason, several issues are worth noting for their impact on Beijing's subsequent foreign policy. First, it was probable that the changes in the guiding principle were implemented gradually, which, logically closely linked them with changes in the domestic political situation. It was thus quite probable that the domestic situation played a major role in the final outcome of the changes. Second, the change in the guiding principle might manifest itself differently in different aspects of foreign relations, and in some aspects it might even be constrained by previous policies. Third, in certain policy issue areas, the change in the guiding principle might not be carried out at all. Therefore, it can be argued in this sense that 1962 was the eve of the "left" turn in PRC foreign policy, though further careful examinations of the evolution of Chinese foreign policy after 1962 are needed.

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