5 Foreign policy, 1949–76

Introduction

China's – and Mao's – foreign policy during the period 1949–76, at least during the early years, was mainly influenced by four closely-related factors:

- making China independent and strong
- modernising and greatly developing China's industry and agriculture
- moving rapidly towards the goal of creating a socialist economy and society
- helping bring about worldwide revolution.

During the 19th century and the early years of the 20th. century, China's military weakness in the face of stronger and more economically developed countries had been made painfully clear. The massively destructive Japanese invasion of 1937 had just been the latest example of China's vulnerability. By 1945, many Chinese people had come to see Mao and the CCP, rather than Jiang and the GMD, as China's best bet for establishing a strong and independent nation.

Mao, as well as being a communist, was also a nationalist and thus wanted China to be strong: for him, only a modernised and developed China could maintain its independence in the modern Cold War world. Mao was also attracted by the idea that a strong and independent China could replace the Soviet Union as the leader of the world communist movement – and might even be accepted as an important world power.

Yet, despite resoundingly winning the Civil War in 1949, the Communist government of the newly proclaimed People's Republic of China was faced with the fact that Jiang still claimed to be the real leader of China. Having retreated to Taiwan, Jiang established the 'Republic of China', and threatened to invade and overthrow the Communists in the near future.

This threat was made more serious by the fact that Jiang was backed by the might of the USA, which used its veto in the UN Security Council to block recognition of the PRC and, instead, to back Jiang's regime as the true representative of China.

While the primary concern of the new Communist government was to restore China's industry and agriculture after the tremendous disruption

of the Civil War and the destruction during the Japanese invasion, the early years were always marked by the fear that Jiang might invade the mainland with US support.

Thus it was not surprising that Mao 'leaned to one side' during the Cold War, or that China's new leaders quickly turned to the Soviet Union for support – especially when the Korean War broke out in 1950. However, tensions soon emerged between these two Communist states and, in just over ten years, a deep division had erupted.

During the 1970s, Communist China established diplomatic relations with the US which, up to then, had been attacked by China as an evil warmongering 'reactionary imperialist' power.

These shifts in foreign policy were often closely related to political and economic developments within China, with foreign and domestic policies reflecting genuine ideological and policy differences and divisions within the leadership of the CCP.

TIMELINE

1950 Jan: US Defensive Perimeter speech
Feb: Sino-Soviet Treaty signed
Jun: Start of Korean War
Oct: China sends troops to help North Korea
1951 May: 17-Point Agreement between China and Tibet
1953 Mar: Death of Stalin
Jul: Armistice ends Korean War
1954 Sep: US forms SEATO; First Taiwan Strait Crisis begins
1956 Feb: Khrushchev's 'secret speech'
1957 Nov: Conference of Communist Parties, Moscow
1958 Jul: Khrushchev visits China
Aug: Start of the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis
1959 Mar: Dalai Lama flees to India; Tibetan uprising begins
1960 Jun: Conference of Communist and Workers' Parties, Romania
Jul: Soviet Union withdraws technicians from China
1964 Oct: China explodes its first atomic bomb
1967 Jun: China explodes its first hydrogen bomb
1969 Mar: Start of Sino-Soviet border clashes
Apr: Clashes between Mao and Lin Biao over foreign policy

1970 Nov: Majority support in UN for China to join Security Council
1971 Oct: US allows China to join UN Security Council
1972 Feb: Nixon visits China
Sep: Japan's prime minister visits China
1973 Aug: Congress of CCP approves new foreign policy

KEY QUESTIONS

- What were the main features of Communist China's early foreign policy?
- Why did a serious rift develop between China and the Soviet Union in the 1960s?
- What was the significance of Communist China's rapprochement with the USA in the 1970s?

Overview

- Despite various differences with the Soviet Union, Mao decided that Communist China should 'lean to one side' in the Cold War. In February 1950, the two countries signed the Sino-Soviet Treaty.
- In June 1950, with China still in the throws of land reform and re-establishing central control, the Korean War began.
- In October 1950, after US troops crossed into North Korea and approached the Chinese border, Mao sent in Chinese troops to push them back. In July 1953, an armistice ended the fighting.
- China had been unhappy about the amount of aid the Soviet Union had supplied during the war and, after Stalin died, began to have serious differences with the Soviet Union's foreign policy of 'peaceful coexistence'. China particularly resented the fact that the Soviet Union did not support it during the two Taiwan Crises in the 1950s.
- In 1960, these differences led the Soviet Union to withdraw its technicians from China, and the Sino-Soviet split in 1961 divided the world communist movement into pro-Moscow and pro-Beijing parties.

- In 1969, following several clashes along the Sino-Soviet border, China decided the USSR was the main enemy, and began to change its attitude to the US. In 1971, the US allowed China to join the UN's Security Council and, in 1972, US president Nixon visited China.
- After 1972, diplomatic and trade relations were established with the US and Japan, and Chinese foreign policy followed a strongly anti-Soviet direction.

5.1 What were the main features of Communist China's early foreign policy?

Mao and the CCP – and most Chinese people – wanted China to become a strong and independent nation, able to withstand interference from any foreign powers. As well as trying to achieve this by modernising and developing China's economy, a speech made by Mao in June 1949 made it clear that foreign policy was also clearly going to be important (see Source 5.1).

SOURCE 5.1

Only thus can our great motherland free herself from a semi-colonial and semi-feudal fate and take the road of independence, freedom, peace, unity, wealth and power... We are willing to discuss with any foreign government the establishment of diplomatic relations on the basis of the principles of equality, mutual benefit, and mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty, providing it is willing to sever relations with the Chinese reactionaries, stops conspiring with them or helping them, and adopts an attitude of genuine, and not hypocritical, friendship towards People's China. The Chinese people wish to have friendly cooperation with the people of all countries and to resume and expand international trade in order to develop production and promote economic prosperity.

Extracts from a speech made by Mao in June 1949. Quoted in: Schram, S. 1966. **Mao Tse-tung.** *Harmondsworth. Penguin Books. pp.249–50*

'Leaning to one side'

In the context of the Cold War, the Soviet Union seemed the natural ally of Communist China and, at first, these two countries tried to construct a solid united front towards the capitalist West. Yet the relations between Mao and Stalin – who disliked each other from their very first meeting – were already quite cool. After Stalin's death in 1953, deep ideological differences over both economic and foreign policies began to emerge between these two Communist countries.

QUESTION

What, in the context of the Cold War, is meant by the phrase 'leaning to one side'?

Early relations with the Soviet Union

Before Lenin's death in 1924, Communist Russia had given help to both the GMD and the small Chinese Communist Party. This aid continued under Stalin, even though he believed China was too backward – economically and culturally – to have its own socialist revolution for decades to come. Even after the GMD had massacred their former Chinese Communist allies in 1927, Stalin had continued to give aid to Jiang Jieshi.

These tensions between the Soviet Union and China's Communist leaders were further increased after 1945 by Stalin's view of what should happen in China following the end of the Second World War. Although Stalin did hand over to the PLA the weapons surrendered by Japanese forces in China after August 1945, he was initially opposed to the CCP taking power. Instead, fearful that a Communist victory in China would result in the US withdrawing its approval of a Soviet 'sphere of influence' in Eastern Europe, he put pressure on the Communists not to renew the civil war after 1945 and, instead, to enter a coalition government with the GMD. Mao, however, had rejected this advice and, following the Communists' victory in the Civil War, the PRC had been proclaimed in October 1949.

The Sino-Soviet Treaty 1950

As it was obvious that Communist China would not receive financial or technical help from the West, Stalin – seeing China as a potential useful ally in the Cold War – decided to assist the new PRC government. At first, in 1948, Liu Shaoqi had discussions with Anastas Mikoyan of the Soviet Union who, in January 1949, visited China and had further meetings with Mao. Then, during July–August 1949, Liu Shaoqi headed a delegation to Moscow to prepare the way for Mao, who stayed in Moscow during the winter of 1949–50.

Mao met Stalin for the first time on 16 December 1949. However, the face-to-face meetings were difficult – in large part because Stalin made it clear that he felt all Communists states should subordinate their own interests to those of the Soviet Union. Mao also resented what he felt was Soviet arrogance, especially the assumption that Communist China would naturally look to the Soviet Union for advice and guidance. As there appeared to be deadlock, Zhou Enlai came to Moscow on 20 January 1950 to help move the discussions along. Mao later claimed Stalin had not wanted to sign the Treaty because he feared that China might become too independent of the USSR.

Eventually, on 14 February 1950, China signed the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance with the Soviet Union, which agreed to provide China with Soviet financial and technical assistance over the next fifteen years. This mainly consisted of a $300 million loan (repayable, at a 1% rate of interest), the provision of over 20 000 Soviet and East European engineers and experts (whose upkeep was to be paid by China), and sending machinery for 300 modern industrial plants. At the same time, over 80 000 Chinese went to the USSR to study science and technology.

Although the Treaty effectively ended all the USSR's special privileges in China, Stalin insisted on being given the rights to explore and develop natural resources in the Xinjiang region, directly across the Soviet Union's far-eastern border, and to maintain the use of Dairen and Lüshun (Port Arthur) on China's Liaodong peninsula. Finally, most of China's bullion reserves were handed over to the Soviet Union.

Mao and the Chinese delegation finally returned to Beijing in March 1950. Mao in particular felt that the aid provided by the Soviet Union in the 1950 Treaty was insufficient – though, given the Soviet Union's mammoth task of rebuilding after the destruction of World War II, this

was a rather harsh judgement. However, Mao was also angry that the USSR refused to help China develop its own atomic bomb.

QUESTION

In what ways did the Sino-Soviet Treaty of 1950 disappoint Communist China?

Further Sino-Soviet agreements were made in 1953, 1954 and 1956. It was advice from Soviet experts that led the PRC to set up a State Planning Commission to design a Five-Year Plan to expand and modernise China's economy. However, as has been seen in Chapters 2 and 3 – especially in relation to the Great Leap Forward – Mao's growing suspicion of the political impact of experts led, eventually, to conflict with those CCP leaders who wished to continue to follow the Soviet model of economic development.

The Korean War

Within six months of the signing of the Treaty with the Soviet Union, the PRC faced what it saw as a serious threat to its existence; this was the Korean War, which broke out in June 1950. With Korea on China's northeast borders, and US troops being quickly deployed there, this war created a sense of great tension and isolation in China – and, as has been seen, increased the tendency to purge 'hidden traitors' within the Party and the country at large. It also prevented an attempt to invade Taiwan and thus end the Civil War, as the US took the opportunity to send the Seventh Fleet to 'neutralise' the Taiwan Strait – and so protect Jiang's rule of Taiwan – even though, at this early stage, China was not involved in the war. This US policy in the Taiwan Strait continued even after the Korean War ended in 1953.

Korea before 1950

Korea had been controlled by Japan since its annexation in 1910. At the end of the Second World War, the Allies had agreed that Korea should be temporarily divided along the 38th parallel (or northern line of latitude), into North and South Korea, with the intention of creating a unified and independent state. However, this agreement broke down as a result of the developing Cold War. Instead, the US established an authoritarian capitalist regime in the South, under the leadership of

Syngman Rhee, which was recognised by the UN; in the North, the USSR established an authoritarian Communist regime, led by **Kim Il-Sung**.

Syngman Rhee (1875–1965):

Rhee was a nationalist – but his politics were right-wing and strongly anti-communist. He was opposed to Japanese rule of Korea but, unlike Kim Il-Sung, spent the 1930s and 1940s in exile – mostly in the US or in the US territory of Hawaii. After 1945, he campaigned for the reunification of Korea, and at times used violent methods to secure his domination of South Korea. His rule was, like Kim Il-Sung's, authoritarian and, towards the end of the Korean War, he tried unsuccessfully to sabotage the peace negotiations as he hoped the US would then bring about reunification of Korea and put him in charge of the whole country.

Kim Il-Sung (1912–94):

Kim Il-Sung's real name was Kim Song-Ju, and he had grown up in Manchuria, where his parents had fled to avoid Japanese rule in Korea. He was both left-wing and a nationalist, and joined a communist youth movement in Manchuria. In 1930, he returned to Korea to join the communist-led guerrilla resistance to Japanese occupation. He later also fought the Japanese in north China and then, once the Soviet Union had been invaded by Nazi Germany, he led a Korean contingent in the Soviet Union's Red Army. Once he took control of North Korea after 1945, he campaigned for reunification of the country. His government was authoritarian, and a big personality cult grew up around him, which referred to him as 'The Great Leader'. When he died in 1994, he was succeeded by his son, Kim Jong-Il.

Both Korean leaders were intensely nationalistic, and both wanted to reunite their country – but each wanted to be the sole ruler of a reunified Korea. As a result, there had been various military clashes between the two states after 1945; these had increased after 1948–49 when the Soviet Union and the US withdrew their troops from North and South Korea respectively. With most Koreans wanting reunification, and both countries threatening each other, it seemed a nationalist civil war might break out in the near future – which it did, in June 1953.

In fact, several historians – in opposition to explanations for the war that claim Stalin had instigated it – have argued that the 1950 invasion was in many ways a continuation of a much longer civil war between North and South Korea.

US historian Bruce Cummings, for example, has suggested that the North Korean invasion was the result of Kim's strong nationalist and revolutionary ideals, and had very little to do with Soviet wishes. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, access to previously restricted Soviet documents has revealed that it was Kim – not Stalin or Mao – who was the main driving force behind the North's decision to invade the South in order to reunite the country.

In January 1950, US Secretary of State Dean Acheson made a speech in which he outlined US Cold War strategy in the Pacific area. In particular, he referred to a Defensive Perimeter: all countries to the east of that line were seen as countries that the US would, in the context of the Cold War, 'defend' from any communist aggression.

This Defensive Perimeter did not include South Korea – nor, for that matter, either Taiwan or Vietnam. This led Kim Il-Sung to assume he could invade South Korea without fear of any US military intervention.

KEY CONCEPTS QUESTION

Causation: How did the US announcement of its 'Defensive Perimeter' in Asia contribute to the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950?

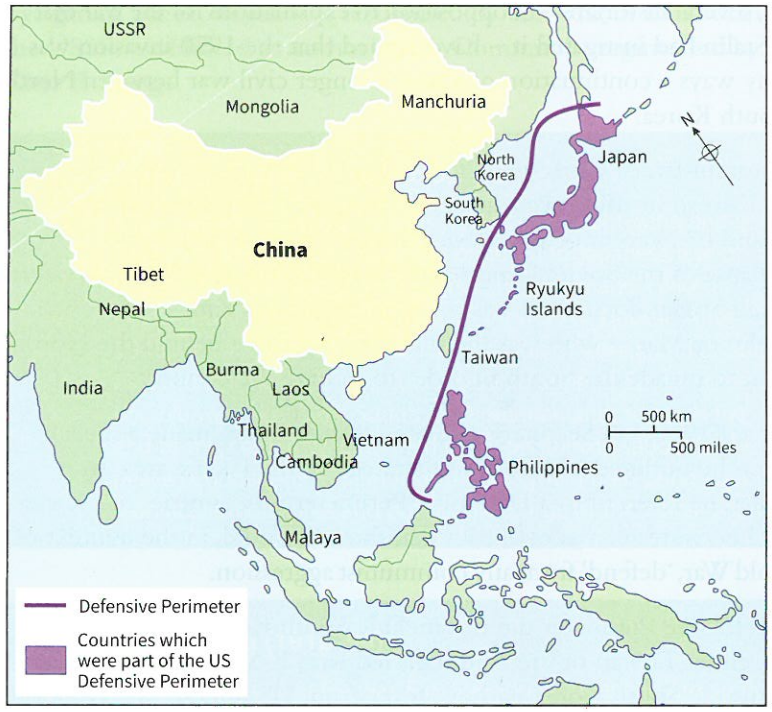

Figure 5.1: The US Defensive Perimeter of 1950 in the Pacific region.

China's involvement

Consequently, encouraged by the recent Communist victory in China, and believing that the US would not get involved, North Korea invaded the South on 25 June 1950. At first, China's reaction was muted. However, this began to change when South Korea appealed to the United Nations (UN) for help. Taking advantage of the Soviet Union's boycott of the Security Council (as a protest against the USA's refusal to recognise Communist China), the US persuaded the UN to intervene. Although fifteen nations eventually provided troops, the vast bulk were US troops, and US General Douglas MacArthur – who was answerable to the US president, not the UN – was in overall command.

Communist China had not been involved with the post-1945 developments in Korea and, after their victory in 1949, the CCP had concentrated on consolidating its rule, land reform and an alliance with the Soviet Union. The evidence would suggest that the timing of this war came largely as a surprise to Communist China, as it appears that Stalin – who did know something about North Korea's plans – did not share this information with Mao. However, during May 1950, Kim Il-Sung did visit China to ask for general approval of any future invasion of South Korea. Mao apparently offered to supply several Chinese units, but this was rejected.

As far as Mao and the CCP were concerned, a war – coming so soon after the establishment of their regime in 1949 – was something to be avoided. This was because funds vital for China's modernisation programmes would have to be diverted into military expenditure. In addition, with the US backing Jiang in Taiwan, there was the fear that Jiang might launch an invasion while Communist China was distracted by the Korean War. Thus, even after fighting began, China seemed more concerned with the US decision to deploy its Seventh Fleet in the Taiwan Strait.

However, from September 1950, US/UN forces began to push the North Korean forces back over the 38th parallel. Then, on the first anniversary of the foundation of the PRC, US forces – in defiance of the UN mandate – crossed into North Korea and began to move towards the Yalu River, which was the border between North Korea and China. This – and General MacArthur's hints about the possibility of using nuclear bombs – made the PRC feel particularly threatened. Given US support for Jiang, Mao and other CCP leaders felt that the PRC was now particularly vulnerable. In addition, Stalin began pressing China to help North Korea.

During the first two weeks of October, the CCP leadership debated what to do, finally deciding to set up the Chinese People's Volunteers (CPV), under the command of General Peng Dehuai, who took charge of several units of the PLA. In fact, as Source 5.2 suggests, Peng may have played a decisive role in helping Mao get the support of those CCP leaders who were at first doubtful of the wisdom in getting involved in a war so soon after gaining power. For China, the Korean War now became the 'War to Resist America and Aid Korea'. On 18 October, Peng's forces crossed the Yalu River, and were soon involved in battles against US forces – inflicting on MacArthur's forces the greatest defeat in US military history.

SOURCE 5.2

Peng Dehuai was later to claim that a majority of the CCP leadership had been opposed to involvement in Korea but that Mao had overruled them and that he, Peng, had supported Mao or at the very least had not opposed him. Mao was concerned that the very existence of the PRC would be endangered if North Korea was defeated, and he realised that his support for Kim was important in the power play within the Communist bloc.

Dillon, M. 2012. **China: A Modern History,** *London, I. B. Tauris. pp.277–8.*

KEY CONCEPTS ACTIVITY

Perspectives: Consider the events leading up to China's involvement in the Korean War. In pairs, discuss how and why perspectives on the causes and importance of the war would have differed in China and the USA in 1950. How has hindsight and the end of the Cold War affected our understanding of the causes of the Korean War?

Despite heavy losses, Peng's 400 000-strong CPV army, in five major campaigns between October 1950 and July 1951, pushed the invaders out of North Korea. MacArthur, who wanted to escalate the war, was dismissed by President Truman, and the war soon became a stalemate. However, China's heavy losses had a big impact on China's troops, and Mao and Zhou informed Kim Il-Sung of their desire to withdraw their forces. Hence both North Korea and China welcomed the UN's attempt in July 1951 to bring about an armistice. However, it was not until July 1953 that an armistice was agreed that ended the fighting and confirmed the 38th parallel as the border between the two parts of Korea.

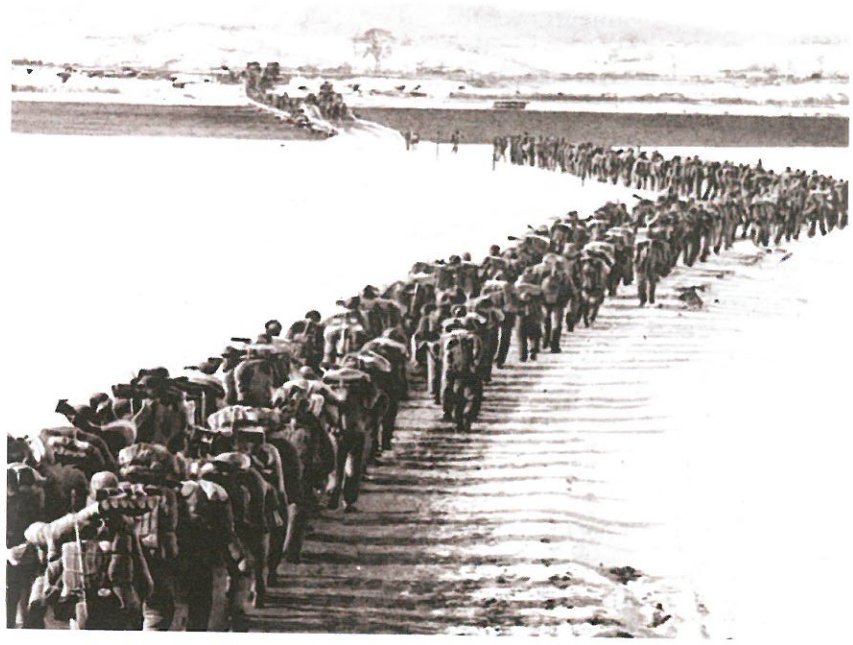

Figure 5.2: Some of the CPV troops who were sent to help North Korea and to keep US/UN troops from the Chinese border.

Political impact of the war

During the fighting, China lost approximately 1 million men who were killed or wounded, including Mao's oldest son. China also lost massive amounts of resources – as well as having to repay the Soviet Union over $1 billion for the military aid it had received during the war. There was also some Chinese resentment that the Soviet Union decided not to get involved in the fighting, leaving it to China to bear the heavy costs. There was only limited cooperation between Communist China and the Soviet Union during the war, and Mao also felt that Soviet military aid was not sufficiently extensive or prompt.

ACTIVITY

Make a list of the main ways in which the start and the course of the Korean War impacted on China's relations with the Soviet Union.

In addition to resentments over the Soviet Union's limited help during the war, China's leaders were concerned by the increased support the US now gave to Jiang. This merely confirmed CCP leaders in their belief that the US was determined to overthrow Mao and the PRC at the first opportunity. As a result, the government – and the people – of China saw the US as the main enemy threatening their independence. However, the success of the PLA in pushing the US/UN troops from North Korea, and then fighting them to a standstill, increased Mao's prestige within China, along with China's international reputation.

As seen in Chapter 2, the outbreak of war in 1950 impacted on political developments within China. The war enabled the government of the newly established PRC to use the potential threat from Jiang and the US to unite the Chinese people against foreign interference. As part of this, Mao and the CCP launched a series of 'Rectification Campaigns' during 1951–52 against 'reactionaries' and 'counter-revolutionaries' (see Section 2.1). The war gave these campaigns – especially the 'Five-Anti' campaign, launched in January 1952 when a stalemate had developed in Korea – a very bitter aspect, as there were increased fears of an imminent US invasion. The fears arising from this situation thus allowed Mao to eliminate potential opponents and to strengthen the Party's central control. The war also led to the intensification of the Campaign for the Suppression of Counter-Revolutionaries.

The 'Resist America' campaign

In 1950, one mass mobilisation campaign that was clearly linked to the Korean War was the 'Resist America and Aid Korea' campaign. Rallies were held to increase Chinese suspicion of foreigners, particularly those from the West. People from the US were singled out because of their involvement in Korea. Many foreigners, including missionaries, were arrested. Christian churches were closed and priests and nuns were expelled. By the end of 1950, China was closed to all foreigners, except Russians, and institutions with links to the West were monitored or closed down. However, once the war developed into a stalemate, the internal terror against opponents declined.

Because of its involvement in the war, China remained excluded from the UN, and generally isolated from the wider international community. This sense of isolation contributed to an atmosphere of distrust and fear within China that lasted into the 1960s, and also increased ideological divisions within the CCP which, eventually, culminated in the Cultural Revolution.

Tibet

Despite the Korean War, the PRC pushed ahead with the re-incorporation of Tibet, which was seen by the Chinese government and Chinese nationalists as part of China. In May 1951, the Tibetan authorities signed the Seventeen Point Agreement with the PRC, which gave Tibet limited autonomy within China – including the continuation of its traditional government and politico-religious feudal structures. Thus the feudal landowners and the monasteries retained their landholdings within central Tibet. The Agreement also re-drew the borders of Tibet, with the result that many Tibetans now became residents of the Chinese provinces of Sichuan, Gansu and Qinghai.

ACTIVITY

Try to find out more about the landholding system that existed in Tibet before 1949. Then draw a table with two columns, headed 'Preserve' and 'Reform', and write down the main arguments for and against changing the socio-economic structures in Tibet.

When government authorities then began to implement land reform programmes (which they'd agree not to implement within the new Tibetan borders) in these areas, there was strong resistance and fighting broke out in 1955, which took six months to suppress. Afterwards, Tibetan language and culture were targeted, and many Tibetans were moved to other areas of China, while Han Chinese were brought in to replace them.

Tensions continued as the central government in Beijing began to press ahead with radical land reform and, in 1957, some Tibetan factions, armed by the US – as Source 5.3 states – planned a rebellion. In March 1959, the Dalai Lama fled to India (where he was granted asylum), and a bloody uprising broke out against Communist rule. This was quickly suppressed by the PLA – in part because the CIA did not keep its promises of providing further military aid. Beijing – following the earlier lead of the Dalai Lama – then announced that the Seventeen Point Agreement no longer applied, and the lands of the theocratic and landed élites were re-distributed to Tibet's peasants. In 1965, Tibet officially became an Autonomous Region of the PRC.

SOURCE 5.3

The situation [in Tibet] remained tense, continuing into 1957. Mao himself assured the Dalai Lama that he would delay land reform in China for another six years and possibly longer. Unimpressed with Chinese assurances, however, factions within Tibet began arming themselves, some with assistance from the United States (Goldstein, 1997). The situation was brought to a head in March 1959 when Tibetan leaders decided that the Dalai Lama would only be safe outside Tibet. He and his top advisers fled to India under cover of darkness. A bloody uprising against Chinese rule erupted but was quickly suppressed. From exile in India, the Dalai Lama declared the 17-point Agreement invalid, as did the Chinese government.

Benson, L. 2002. **China Since 1949.** *Harlow, Longman. pp.35–6.*

China and the Non-Aligned Movement

After the Korean War, Communist China was briefly involved in the Non-Aligned Movement – partly as a result of the role played by Nehru, India's prime minister, in ending that war. This Non-Aligned Movement was an international organisation of developing countries – mainly Asian and African – which, in the context of the Cold War, tried to avoid formally allying with either the US or the Soviet Union. This was despite Mao's assertion in 1950 that there was no 'Third Way', and despite the Treaty of Friendship between China and the Soviet Union that had been signed that year.

However, for a brief time during the early 1950s, the foreign policy of the PRC seemed to moderate, and began evolving towards the Soviet line of 'peaceful coexistence'. Thus, in 1955, China was represented at the Bandung Conference (in Indonesia) – which brought together 29 developing states – by Zhou Enlai. There was at first close cooperation between India and China, with the CCP arguing (like the Soviet Union) that the national bourgeoisies of developing countries – provided they remained neutral in the Cold War – could bring about genuine independence and progressive economic and social changes in their respective countries.

Thus, for a time, Communist China was seen by many developing states as representing a way of achieving independent economic growth and political independence. Yet, from 1957, when China's foreign (as well as domestic) policy took a more radical direction, China's role within the Non-Aligned Movement rapidly declined.

The Taiwan Strait Crises

In early 1950, Mao had been planning to invade Taiwan and so end the Civil War by taking the one-remaining Nationalist stronghold. However, these plans had to be postponed at the end of 1950 because of the Korean War. Apart from Taiwan, China was also pre-occupied with taking control of various smaller Chinese offshore islands that had remained in the hands of the GMD after 1949. These concerns increased in September 1954, when the US created the South East Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO) – a NATO-type organisation intended to 'contain' the spread of communism in Asia. Mao was convinced that this meant the US was determined to separate Taiwan permanently from mainland China.

In September 1954, the First Taiwan Strait Crisis broke out, when China began shelling the offshore islands of Jinmen (Quemoy) and Mazu (Matsu), in order to force the GMD to withdraw. These islands were very close to mainland China – and Jiang, after announcing an imminent attack on China as part of a new 'holy war' against communism, had increased the number of GMD troops placed on them. The Chinese government thus tried to repossess them; in addition, in 1955, the PRC began shelling the Tachen islands, which were also occupied by GMD troops.

With both sides carrying out artillery attacks, the US (after eventually deciding against using nuclear weapons) backed Taiwan. It signed a firm mutual defence pact with Taiwan, and threatened to invade China. Without any corresponding help from the Soviet Union, the PRC – after seizing the Tachen islands, was forced to back down and promise not to use force to re-take Taiwan.

Tensions over these islands flared up again into a Second Taiwan Strait Crisis. In 1957, the US had agreed to supply Taiwan with missiles capable of carrying nuclear warheads. This worried Communist China, which asked the Soviet Union for its support in re-taking the islands. But, despite clear US threats against Communist China, the USSR

initially refused, saying it would only provide assistance if the US invaded mainland China. Khrushchev even accused Mao and the CCP of 'dangerous adventurism', and of being 'Trotskyists', because of their confrontational foreign policy. Both sides began shelling each other in August 1958 – and the US then supplied Taiwan with air-to-air missiles, which enabled it to establish air superiority over the Taiwan Strait. With the US, once again, threatening Communist China with a nuclear strike, Mao was eventually forced to back down and abandon the plan in January 1959.

Internally, the crisis over these islands in August 1958 became linked to the revival of the people's militias and the arming of the peasantry, which was part of the move towards Communes. In the event of any US-backed invasion by the GMD, these militias could conduct guerrilla warfare across the country. Thus the internal 'war against nature' in Mao's Great Leap Forward became linked to the threat of external aggression.

5.2 Why did a serious rift develop between China and the Soviet Union in the 1960s?

Mao did not see Marxism simply as a political theory and movement – it was also the way that China could be modernised and developed. He and his supporters often had a very 'Sino-centric' view of Marxism – this argued that China needed to adapt it to the specific circumstances that existed in post-war China. In particular, this meant that the Soviet Union – despite its revolutionary prestige as the world's first workers' state – was not necessarily able to tell Communist China what policies it should follow. This soon resulted in political differences between these two post-capitalist states, both of which came to see themselves as representing 'true' Communism.

China and the Soviet Union

As noted earlier, Stalin had believed that Mao's peasant-based movement could not possibly result in a socialist revolution, and had advised Mao not to push ahead for an all-out victory after 1945. Such differences had been increased by the Korean War, which had severely tested the relationship between the PRC and the Soviet Union. Especially as Mao believed he had not been properly consulted in relation to North Korea's decision to invade the South.

Thus, after Stalin's death in 1953, it seemed that relations between China and the Soviet Union might improve. The new Soviet leadership, for instance, was more willing to supply aid and technicians to Communist China, and later admitted that the 1950 Treaty was an 'insult to the Chinese people'. However, the relationship between the USSR and Communist China began to cool after Khrushchev emerged as the dominant Soviet leader in 1956.

Khrushchev's 'secret speech', 1956

From 1953, Mao had become increasingly concerned by developments within the Soviet Union and its satellites in Eastern Europe. The first worrying sign was an uprising in East Germany in 1953; then came Khrushchev's 'secret speech' attacking Stalin in February 1956. Among other things, Khrushchev's speech attacked the 'cult of personality' that had grown up around Stalin.

Many Communist parties – including the Chinese – resented the fact that they'd not been consulted about the speech in advance. For the CCP, the speech raised the problem of how to tell the Party and the Chinese people why, for decades, they had praised Stalin as a great 'Marxist-Leninist' revolutionary leader. In particular, this speech could be seen as a specific criticism of Mao's own style of leadership, as Mao had consciously modelled his political style on Stalin's, and a 'cult of Mao' was already beginning to emerge in China. Consequently, the speech was at first not published in China. Instead, in April 1956, China's *People's Daily* newspaper published an editorial that stressed the importance of the role of leaders in helping to bring about fundamental changes.

QUESTION

Why did Khrushchev's 'secret speech' of 1956 disturb Mao and other CCP leaders?

Then, in June 1956 came serious protests in Poland and then, in October, the Hungarian Uprising. Although Mao had had several significant criticisms of the way Stalin had treated Communist China, he saw these East European protests as evidence that Khrushchev's more liberal 'de-Stalinisation' policies were dangerous. He also feared the new economic policies being pursued by Khrushchev were likely to lead to the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union. This made China feel increasingly vulnerable as regards US hostility.

World revolution

Mao thus began to suspect that Khrushchev was moving the Soviet Union away from communist ideology and a truly revolutionary foreign policy. At the same time, Mao resented the fact that the Soviet Union did not support his increasingly radical policies – in particular, his Great Leap Forward (see below and Section 3.2). All this confirmed Mao and his supporters in their growing belief that the Soviet model was not necessarily the best one for China's future development. Finally, the role of intellectuals in these East European protests led the CCP to try to keep China's intellectuals on the side of communist transformation – one result was the Hundred Flowers campaign.

China and 'peaceful coexistence'

In particular, Mao strongly opposed Khrushchev's new foreign policy of 'peaceful coexistence' with the USA and its Western bloc. Mao saw this as a revisionist 'heresy' that was abandoning communist commitment to help bring about world revolution as soon as possible. For Mao, this 'reactionary' foreign policy explained the refusal of the Soviet Union to support China's attempts to take possession of the off shore islands that were still under GMD control. Mao believed that 'peaceful coexistence' with a hostile capitalism was impossible – especially given the USA's determination to 'roll back' communism and to establish what Mao saw as a global US capitalist empire.

As Khrushchev persisted with attempts to reduce Cold War tensions between the Soviet Union and the US, Mao became increasingly suspicious of Khrushchev's motives. In November 1957, Khrushchev convened a Conference of Communist Parties in Moscow, in order to heal the growing rift. The range of issues that were increasingly causing conflict between Khrushchev and Mao are set out in Source 5.4.

However, Deng Xiaoping attacked the Soviet Union over its attempt to achieve better relations (known as *détente*) with the US and the West. In opposition to Khrushchev's views, China's Communist leaders argued that the proletarian world revolution could only be achieved by armed struggle. Mao tried to get Khrushchev to abandon his 'revisionist' foreign policy, but was ignored. For Mao, the USSR should be supporting liberation movements around the world – not making overtures to imperialist Western nations that were 'class enemies'. Although the Chinese delegation failed to change Soviet policy, their speeches won some limited support from other delegations, such as the Albanians – this acutely embarrassed the Soviet leaders.

SOURCE 5.4

The issues and arguments [within the international communist movement] are clear enough. The Left [represented by Mao] sticks to what it regards as the orthodox Leninist view about imperialism and communism. It does not believe in the possibility of any genuine détente and considers all talk about ending the Cold War as a 'dangerous illusion'. It suspects Khrushchev of taking his disarmament proposals quite seriously and endangering thereby the security of the communist bloc. It sees the chances of new communist revolutions, especially in the underdeveloped countries, as being far greater than Khrushchev cares to admit; and it thinks that Khrushchev compromises these chances in the interest of his diplomacy. Mao holds that there is 'too much diplomacy and too little communism' in all Khrushchev does. Finally, there are the differences over domestic policies, the Chinese communes, the treatment of consumer interests, and political 'liberalization'. On the other hand, the right-wing communists or revisionists discarded the Leninist view on imperialism as obsolete long before Khrushchev did so; and they reproach Khrushchev with not being consistent and persistent enough in striving for détente and disarmament.

Deutscher, I., (ed. Halliday, F.), 1970. **Russia, China and the West 1953–1966.** *Harmondsworth. Penguin Books. p.206*

Although relations between the two non-capitalist states seemed fine during Khrushchev's official visit to Beijing during July and August 1958, there were growing problems behind the scenes, and tensions between the states remained high. Once again, Deng attacked the Soviet

Union – this time for its 'great nation, great party chauvinism' – and accused it of betraying the international communist movement.

Figure 5.3: Mao and Khrushchev during Khrushchev's visit to China in August 1958.

The Great Leap Forward

Sino-Soviet relations deteriorated further when the Soviet Union began to criticise Mao's Great Leap Forward – in July 1959, Khrushchev made a speech in Poland attacking the very idea of the communes. In fact, Mao believed Peng Dehuai's criticisms of the Great Leap Forward (see Section 3.2) had been encouraged by the Soviet Union. In addition, Khrushchev began to ask for concessions from China, such as guaranteeing facilities for the re-fuelling of Soviet ships, and the granting right to build a radio station in China.

The Sino-Soviet split, 1960–61

The growing tensions between these two Communist countries finally came into the open at the Conference of Communist and Workers' Parties held in Romania in June 1960. The Soviet delegation began to criticise aspects of Mao's domestic policies; in reply, the Chinese delegate bitterly attacked Soviet policy. Shortly after that, in July, Khrushchev abruptly ended all Soviet aid to China and ordered the Soviet technicians back to the USSR. As we have seen (see Section 3.2),

this came at the time of internal criticisms of Mao's Great Leap Forward and its failures, and when China needed such help more than ever.

Figure 5.4: A cartoon, published in the *Washington Post*, 24 June 1960, commenting on the growing Sino-Soviet split within the world Communist movement.

QUESTION

What is the message of the cartoon in Figure 5.4?

In November 1960, at the Conference of Communist and Workers' Parties in Moscow, the focus shifted to the Soviet Union's policy of 'peaceful coexistence' with the capitalist world. This was bitterly attacked by the Chinese delegation – headed by Liu and Deng – which, in part, saw this policy as an attack on Mao's position. Although these disagreements were not made public, the press in the respective countries turned on minor countries associated with the two big

players: China's press attacked Yugoslavia, while the Soviet press turned on Albania, which was defying Moscow.

The worldwide communist movement soon split into pro-Moscow and pro-Beijing parties – with, from 1961, Albania siding with China which had stepped in after the USSR had ended its aid. At the Congress of the CPSU in Moscow in October 1961, which China attended as an observer, Khrushchev attacked both Stalin and Albania, and Zhou Enlai, the Chinese representative, walked out of the meeting. The Sino-Soviet split was now clear.

Developments, 1961–64

After the public split in 1961, Sino-Soviet relations continued to worsen. The Soviet Union's apparent climb-down over the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, and the nuclear Test Ban Treaty that followed in 1963, were both seen by China as evidence of Soviet 'revisionism'. A bitter Sino-Soviet propaganda war ensued over the correct revolutionary path to socialism – made worse by China's anger over the USSR's refusal to support it when a short-lived war broke out with India (which had granted sanctuary to the Dalai Lama) in 1962, along the border with Tibet. For China, there should be no peaceful coexistence between oppressed and oppressor nations. In 1963, the Soviet Union responded by accusing Communist China of following the Trotskyist policy of 'permanent revolution', which it condemned as a 'deviation' from Marxism – and even of being prepared to risk a nuclear war.

The Third Front

Chinese fears about the loss of its Soviet ally, and the international situation in general, led to a secret attempt to construct, between 1964 and 1971, a self-reliant economy in China's remote interior. This military-industrial complex – known as the Third Front (or the Third Line) – was first mooted by Lin Biao in early 1962, as a way of negating any US-backed attack by Jiang and the GMD on the PRC.

The project was to a large extent supervised by Deng who, in particular, ensured an adequate communications network was established that would allow the Chinese government to continue to function, economically and militarily, in the case of war with the US or any of its neighbours. The idea was that, in the event of war, the people and industries of the vulnerable eastern and southern provinces could be moved to the remoter regions of central China. Some observers have

claimed that the Cultural Revolution was, in part, an attempt to conceal this massive investment and construction programme.

This 'bunker mentality' was in large part the result of China's growing sense of isolation. Ever since the Korean War, Mao had seemed convinced that the US was planning to invade China at some point. Support for this Third Front policy was increased by the escalating US intervention in Vietnam – its long-range bombers, which began attacking North Vietnam in 1964, were within easy striking distance of China.

Figure 5.5: Map of China showing the Third Front.

China and nuclear weapons

In addition, growing tensions with the USSR also added to Chinese anxieties about impending war. In 1957, during the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis, the Soviet Union eventually made an agreement to provide China with modern military technology, including blueprints and a sample atomic device. However, the Soviet Union had insisted that this be under joint-control. This was unacceptable to Mao and, in June 1959, shortly after Peng had returned from a military mission in the Soviet Union, Khrushchev had ended the agreement and withdrawn its nuclear physicists from China. Tensions between the two countries increased in October 1964, when China – without Soviet help – was able to explode its first atomic bomb, codenamed '59/6'. In June 1967, China exploded its first hydrogen bomb.

Foreign policy and the Cultural Revolution

Although Khrushchev fell from power in 1964, relations between the USSR and China did not improve, as the collective leadership – increasingly dominated by Brezhnev – which replaced him continued to support détente. During the early years of the Cultural Revolution, the PRC – preoccupied with internal problems – seemed to lose interest in foreign policy. At the time, the US was massively escalating the war in Vietnam, it was dropping bombs very near the Chinese border, but Mao and his supporters saw their internal struggle as more important to the world revolution than helping North Vietnam. In fact, it was Liu Shaoqi who issued the strongest warnings to the US about the extent of China's willingness to support the Vietnamese. Mao later said in 1970 that one of the reasons he had purged Liu was because he favoured reviving the old Sino-Soviet alliance, which had broken down in the early 1960s. Liu hoped the prospect of Chinese intervention on the side of North Vietnam would limit US aggression in Vietnam, and thus help the Vietnamese. For Mao, however, this would have distracted the Party from the internal political struggle of the Cultural Revolution.

At first, the Sino-Soviet dispute simmered in the background as Red Guard contingents regularly demonstrated outside the US embassy and those of its main capitalist allies – especially Britain. However, after the main aspects of the Cultural Revolution had begun to settle down, one of the questions that remained was China's place in an international arena dominated by two hostile powers: the US and the USSR. Soon, the greatest political attacks began to be directed against the 'revisionist' and 'social imperialist' USSR.

The invasion of Czechoslovakia by Soviet-led Warsaw Pact troops in 1968 had worried the Chinese Communists as it – and the later Brezhnev Doctrine issued to justify it – clearly showed that the USSR was prepared to override the national sovereignty of states in the 'Communist camp'. The invasion weakened Soviet prestige, with the result that when Brezhnev convened a Communist Conference in Moscow in June 1969, with the aim of getting it to condemn China, the Conference did not unanimously condemn China.

Border disputes

Sino-Soviet relations worsened in 1969 as a result of clashes along the Sino-Soviet border, which covered several thousand miles. Disagreements over disputed land had led to increased tensions, with both states increasing the number of troops deployed along it. Then, between March and August 1969, there were a series of border clashes: along the Ussuri River, which ran along the border between Manchuria and the Soviet Union; along the Amur River; along the Xinjiang-Soviet border; and in Yumin County.

Several of these border incidents led to deaths on both sides and, during September-October, Zhou Enlai, China's foreign minister, began to have talks with Alexei Kosygin, the Soviet prime minister. This resulted in an agreement to replace aspects of earlier 'unequal treaties', and tensions lessened. However, normal relations between the two countries were not fully restored, and both sides maintained large numbers of divisions along the border – this remained the case for the rest of the existence of the Soviet Union.

5.3 What was the significance of Communist China's rapprochement with the USA in the 1970s?

Since 1949, the USA – unlike several European countries – had refused to allow Communist China representation at the UN. Instead, the US insisted that the true representative of China was Jiang's tiny state of Taiwan. In addition, as has been seen, the US deliberately took a hard line with Communist China over the offshore islands – partly in the hope that, if they could discourage the Soviet Union from helping the PRC in this dispute, the lack of Soviet support would anger Mao and so cause a split between the USSR and China – and thus destroy the alliance established by the 1950 Treaty.

Thus, it was not surprising that, in China, the US was for decades portrayed as 'the number one enemy nation', and the great enemy of China and socialism. US 'imperialists' were attacked as 'paper tigers', and 'Death to the American imperialists and all their running dogs' was a chant frequently heard in China during the 1950s and 1960s. The various anti-US campaigns reached a peak during the Vietnam War: although China was not officially involved in the war, it gave limited support to North Vietnam in its struggle against the US-backed South. As the massive US presence in Vietnam – on China's southern borders – recalled the Korean War of ten years before, fear of a possible US invasion of China helped consolidate support for Mao and the CCP.

Figure 5.6: A Chinese poster of 1965 – the text reads: 'Imperialism and all reactionaries are all paper tigers!'

QUESTION

What, according to the cartoon in Figure 5.6, were the three main 'imperialist' and 'reactionary states'?

Changing views of the USA

By 1969, China was increasingly concerned about tensions on its borders with the Soviet Union, and by the fact that both North Vietnam and North Korea, each with borders with China, were Soviet allies. The decision by the USSR to use Warsaw Pact troops to invade Czechoslovakia in 1968 had been taken by China's leaders as evidence of the Soviet Union's preparedness to act outside its borders in defence of its interests. Finally, relations with India – which also had a border with China – remained strained.

Consequently, Mao commissioned four of the most senior Marshals of the PLA to write a report on China's foreign policy priorities. The report concluded that China should abandon its ties with the Soviet Union, and its ideological claim to lead the world communist movement. Instead, it should adopt a more pragmatic approach which placed China's interests and national security at the top, and should thus deal with other states on this basis.

These suggestions particularly angered Lin Biao whose stance was essentially 'neither Moscow nor Washington' and who thus was opposed to any alliance with either of these two Cold War nations. Thus, he was angered by Mao's acceptance of these suggestions – and especially by his surprising decision that Communist China should ally itself with the US in order to counter the perceived threat from the Soviet Union. Mao, on the other hand, saw an improvement in relations with the US as a way of undermining the Soviet Union and so limiting Soviet opportunities.

QUESTION

How did China's foreign policy towards the US after 1969 cause tensions between Mao and Lin Biao?

The US and China

By 1969, the US – realising that it was losing the Vietnam War – was also reappraising its foreign policy, including towards the PRC. In part, this was because as more and more member states of the UN supported China's admittance to the Security Council, it was clear that the US would soon lose this vote. In November 1970, for the first time, there was a simple majority vote in the UN in favour of the PRC taking the

Chinese seat – although a two-thirds majority was necessary to bring this about. The US also saw closer relations with China as a way of putting pressure on the Soviet Union. In particular, the US thought this might persuade the USSR to push North Vietnam into signing an agreement.

The turn to the US

Within China, Mao came to see an agreement with the US as a way to undermine the Soviet Union's position as a powerful nation. Consequently, negotiations – spear-headed by Zhou, who had become aware of the shift in US attitudes – began between China and the US. In December 1970, the world – and the Chinese people – were staggered by Mao's decision to invite the US president to China. In March 1971, the US lifted restrictions on US citizens travelling to Communist China – these had been in place ever since the Korean War. The US then relaxed the embargo on Sino-US trade and the use of US dollars by the PRC. The US also agreed to give China access to top secret satellite intelligence regarding Soviet troop and nuclear weapons deployments.

The US – which had been portrayed for years as China's main imperialist enemy – was now spoken of as a friend of China. In July 1971, Henry Kissinger, who was US president Nixon's National Security Adviser, visited China, and held discussions with Zhou Enlai, preparing the ground for this volte-face. The agreement over the visit was preceded by a series of table-tennis tournaments and what became known as 'ping pong diplomacy'. These developments – given Lin Biao's strong opposition to any deal with the US – undoubtedly played a part in what became known as 'Project 571', which resulted in the death of Lin Biao in September 1971, two months after Kissinger's visit to China (see Section 4.3).

In October 1971, the US – backed by its ally, Japan – finally allowed Communist China to join the UN, and agreed to exclude Jiang's Taiwan. In February 1972, Nixon became the first US president to visit Communist China. After the meetings between Mao and Nixon, the 'Shanghai Communiqué' mainly endorsed the positions the Chinese had been setting forth since 1949: it called for the progressive withdrawal of US military forces from Taiwan, and accepted that the future of Taiwan was an internal Chinese matter. The 'Shanghai Communiqué' also called for continued talks and the complete normalisation of Sino-American

relations – though the latter didn't happen until 1979, three years after Mao's death, with the establishment of full diplomatic relations.

Figure 5.7: The historic meeting between Mao and Nixon in Beijing, during Nixon's visit to China in February 1972.

QUESTION

What is the value and limitations of Figure 5.7 for historians studying Communist China's foreign policy in the early 1970s?

The anti-Soviet aspects of the new foreign policy were later underlined in a speech by Ronald Reagan in 1972. Reagan (a Republican and staunch anti-communist, who became president in 1981) stated that one aim of this new foreign policy was to ensure that the Soviet Union would have to permanently keep 40 divisions of troops on the Chinese border.

China and the world after 1972

One dramatic result of China's accommodation with the US was to change the nature of the Cold War – before 1972, the Cold War had led to an essentially bi-polar world, in which most states often aligned with one of the two Cold War antagonists. After 1972, the Cold War became a tri-polar affair. With the Soviet Union seeming now to face two major opponents, it arguably prevented the USSR from shifting spending from military to civilian spending, and so contributed to the eventual collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

The US decision to allow China to take up its position in the UN Security Council also led to improved relations with Japan. In September 1972, **Kakuei Tanaka**, the prime minister of Japan visited China and began the first attempts at the normalisation of Sino-Japanese relations since the end of the Second World War. This process continued and, in 1978, two years after Mao's death, a friendship and trading treaty was signed between the two countries. This was to prove vitally important to the Chinese economic reforms of the 1980s. As a result, by 1976, China was recognised as a powerful state in the world, and the way was paved for China to become increasingly important within the global capitalist market.

Kakuei Tanaka (1918–93):

Kakuei was conscripted into the Japanese army in 1939, but invalided out in 1941. He then went into the construction industry, eventually marrying into a family which ran a large civil engineering company. His early involvement in politics was marked by corruption scandals; nonetheless, in 1957, he became Minister of Posts and Telecommunications in the Liberal Democratic Party's newly elected government.

In 1971, as a result of important political connections and public popularity, he became prime minister. Apart from normalising relations with China, he also improved Japan's welfare system. However, fresh corruption scandals led to his resignation in 1974; in 1976, he was arrested for taking bribes from the US aviation firm, Lockheed. He was found guilty in 1983 and, despite appealing against the verdict, it was confirmed in 1987. He appealed again, but died in 1993, while the court case was still taking place.

Proletarian internationalism

Although the new foreign policy designed by Zhou began to pay great nationalist dividends, it did so at an enormous cost to China's previously proclaimed principles of 'proletarian internationalism.' The new Chinese policy of *'peaceful coexistence between countries with different social systems'* was then gradually put into operation. Thus China, maintained entirely peaceful relations with both Pakistan and Sri Lanka, even as they crushed popular rebellions in their respective countries. Various feudal monarchs and military dictators – previously denounced as 'fascists' – were welcomed in Beijing. This included establishing diplomatic and trade relations with the Francoist dictatorship in Spain, and the military junta in Greece.

The justification for all these foreign policy U-turns was that they were in the interests of 'socialist' China as they weakened the Soviet Union which was a 'social imperialist' threat to China. These foreign policies were endorsed at the Tenth National Congress of the CCP in August 1973. China then emerged as a great friend of the US-dominated NATO, and even maintained formal diplomatic and trade relations with Pinochet's military dictatorship in Chile after its brutal overthrow of Allende's government in September 1973.

Theory of Knowledge

Politics and ethics:

Did China's political, economic and military support of repressive and 'reactionary' governments and movements – provided they were hostile to the Soviet Union – mean the CCP had abandoned all its earlier commitments to world revolution? How similar was China's new foreign policy to that of the US which, during the Cold War, often claimed to be 'defending the free world' and upholding 'democratic values' – but supported brutal dictatorships and terrorist organisations because they were anti-communist?

In the spring of 1974, Deng headed the Chinese delegation to a special session of the UN, where he announced that the post-war 'socialist bloc' no longer existed, and that China should now be seen as part of the Third World. In early 1976 – the year in which both Zhou and Mao died – China participated in the Angolan civil war on the same side as the US and apartheid South Africa.

The impact on CCP

This new Chinese foreign policy of 'peaceful coexistence', endorsed by the CC of the CCP, was precisely the policy for which Mao, in the early 1960s, had condemned Khrushchev and the Soviet Union as being 'revisionist' – i.e. attempting to move away from orthodox Marxism and proletarian solidarity by advocating the possibility of peace between countries with different social systems. Not surprisingly, such a major foreign policy shift had repercussions within the CCP – in particular, as Source 5.5 states, it was one of the factors behind the growing rift between Mao and Lin Biao.

SOURCE 5.5

Zhou, undoubtedly with the strong support of Mao, was advocating a new global diplomatic strategy.... It was a strategy which defined the Soviet Union as the principal enemy, and correspondingly, dictated a tactical accommodation with the United States.... This new diplomacy was of course wholly inconsistent with the proclaimed principle of 'proletarian internationalism'... that briefly had held sway. To Lin Biao [the new diplomacy] seemed, if not necessarily so much a betrayal of principle, then certainly a politically damaging repudiation of the vision of a worldwide 'people's war' with which he had been so intimately identified. On the question of China's foreign policy, particularly the policy of rapprochement with the United States, one of the battle lines between Mao and his designated 'successor' was drawn.

Meisner, M., 1999, **Mao's China and After: A History of the People's Republic.** *New York, The Free Press, p.379.*

During the April 1969 Congress, Lin Biao's main report had equally attacked Soviet and US imperialisms. However, Zhou – with the support of Mao – had argued that the USSR was the main threat, and that therefore it was necessary to come to some understanding with the US to counter this. Nonetheless, Lin still saw the US as the *'most ferocious enemy of the people's of the world'*, and saw this suggested accommodation with US imperialism as a betrayal of 'proletarian internationalism' This issue led to a clear division within the leadership of the CCP – and played a large part in the increasingly strained relations between Mao and Lin.

DISCUSSION POINT

How important do you think ideals and principles should be in politics? Should Lin Biao have taken the pragmatic approach over foreign policy in the period 1969–71? Or is it sometimes necessary to defend certain values, regardless of the consequences for you or other people?

However, from the mid 1970s – with Mao's health continuing to deteriorate – Party leaders increasingly turned their attention away from foreign policy towards other, more pressing, domestic concerns. As the following chapters will show, these were about the leadership of the Party after Mao's death, and the economic policies China should pursue in the future. In the decades that followed, China's foreign policy moved increasingly away from alliances towards obtaining trade and investment agreements with the West.

Paper 3 exam practice

Question

'The Sino-Soviet split of the 1960s was largely the fault of Mao's obstinance and refusal to compromise.' To what extent do you agree with this statement? **[15 marks]**

Skill

Avoiding irrelevance

Examiner's tips

Do not waste valuable writing time on irrelevant material – by definition, if it's irrelevant, it won't gain you any marks. Writing irrelevant information can happen because

- the candidate does not look carefully enough at the wording of the question (see Skill at end of Chapter 2).
- the candidate ignores the fact that the questions require selection of facts, an analytical approach and a final judgement; instead the candidate just writes down all that she or he knows about a topic (relevant or not), and hopes that the examiner will do the analysis and make the judgement.
- the candidate has unwisely restricted his or her revision. So, for example, if a question crops up on China's role in the Korean War, rather than the expected one on Mao's foreign policy towards the US – the candidate tries to turn it into the question he or she wanted! Whatever the reason, such responses rarely address any of the demands of the question asked.

For this question, you will need to:

- cover the events during the 1960s that led to the split
- outline the actions and policy decisions of both the Soviet Union and Communist China
- provide a judgement about the extent to which you agree with the statement – for instance, were both countries equally to blame, or was one country more responsible than the other?

Common mistakes

One common error with questions like this is for candidates to write about material they know well, rather than material directly related to the question.

Another mistake is to present too much general information, instead of material specific to the person, period and command terms.

Finally, candidates often elaborate too much on events outside the dates given in the question (see the guidance in Chapter 3).

Sample paragraphs of irrelevant focus/ material

Before trying to decide whether Mao was mainly responsible for the Sino-Soviet split, it will be necessary to explain the Soviet Union's foreign policy towards China in the period before 1949. In particular, the ways in which Stalin belittled and ignored Mao and the CCP is relevant to answering this question.

Before the Communist victory in China in 1949, earlier Soviet foreign policy towards the Chinese Communists played a big part in the eventual Sino-Soviet split of the 1960s. One aspect which particularly annoyed the CCP was Stalin's insistence, from the late 1920s right through to the end of the Second World War, that China was not ready for a socialist revolution. As a result, he insisted that the CCP join in a coalition with the Nationalist GMD. Even after Jiang had launched a massacre of Chinese Communists in Shanghai and elsewhere in 1927, Stalin still continued to send aid to the GMD.

[There then follow several more-detailed paragraphs about Stalin's advice and instructions to the CCP during the 1930s.]

In 1945, with Japan defeated and Jiang's forces demoralised, Mao and the CCP believed they were close to bringing the civil war to a victorious end. Yet, once again, Stalin decided to put Soviet interests above those of the Chinese Communists.

In fact, Stalin did nothing to stop the US from organising a massive airlift to fly 80 000 GMD troops to areas which they could seize before the Communists' Red Army could get there. Stalin did this because he had obtained US approval of a Soviet 'sphere of influence' in Eastern Europe. As China had been agreed to be a US 'sphere', he did not want a Communist victory putting this agreement at risk. He also urged the CCP to accept the US proposal for a GMD-CCP coalition government in 1945. However, most of the time – even when making

formal agreements with Stalin – Mao and the other CCP leaders generally ignored what they were told to do and, instead, carried out their own policies.

[There then follow several detailed paragraphs about the renewal of the civil war in 1946, and the limited aid sent by Stalin to the Communists.]

Thus, by the time the Communists were able to proclaim the birth of the new People's Republic of China in October 1949, Stalin and the Soviet Union had done much to create suspicion and anger among the leaders of the CCP. While it is true that Mao's ego meant he was often over-sensitive to what he saw as Soviet arrogance, the main responsibility for the Sino-Soviet split was not his – the blame rests almost entirely with Stalin and the Soviet Union. This was because they put Soviet interests first, and often treated their Chinese allies with typical Western arrogance.

EXAMINER COMMENTS

This is an example of a weak answer. Although a brief comment on the state of Sino-Soviet relations before 1949 would be relevant and helpful, there is certainly no need to go into detail about the period 1927–49. Thus the material marked in blue is irrelevant, and will not score any marks. In addition, the candidate is using up valuable writing time, which should have been spent on providing ***relevant*** points and supporting knowledge.

Activity

In this chapter, the focus is on avoiding writing answers that contain irrelevant material. So, using the information from this chapter, and any other sources of information available to you, write an answer to one of the following Practice Paper 3 questions, keeping your answer fully focused on the question asked. Remember – doing a plan *first* can help you maintain this focus.

Remember to refer to the simplified Paper 3 mark scheme in Chapter 10.

Paper 3 Practice questions

1 Examine the reasons for China's alliance with the Soviet Union during the 1950s.

2 Discuss the reasons for, and the consequences for China of, the Sino-Soviet split in the period, 1956–62.

3 'If Peng Dehuai had been in charge of Chinese foreign policy, the Sino-Soviet split could have been avoided.' To what extent do you agree with this statement?

4 To what extent were the agreements with the US in the 1970s an abandonment of all of Mao's earlier principles.

5 Evaluate the success of Mao's foreign policy during the period 1962–76.