

The Cultural Element of Sino-Vietnamese Relations in Policies of Direct Foreign Aid

From 1950-1975

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List of Abbreviations

Chinese Communist Party - CCP

Chinese Military Advisory Group - CMAG

Chinese Nationalist Party - GMD

Democratic People's Republic of Korea - DPRK

Democratic Republic of Vietnam - DRV

People's Republic of China - PRC

United Soviet Socialist Republic - USSR

United States of America - US, USA

Chapter 1. Introduction

The relationship between China and Vietnam is a complex set of interactions, positive and negative, dating back centuries. In his lengthy study on Sino-Vietnamese conflict Eugene Lawson stated that “of all the countries in the world, China is the only nation which has continuously and pervasively influenced Vietnam for almost 2,000 years. China over-shadows Vietnam geographically, demographically, linguistically, culturally, and politically.”¹ A longstanding relationship between the two is undeniable, and the different iterations of this association have proven to vacillate between harmony and conflict. Contemporary thoughts on Chinese use of “soft power” politically claim this tactic as a new development, but as this thesis will explain China has been utilizing soft power tactics with its neighbors for decades, if not centuries, particularly with their neighbors to the south in Vietnam. The soft power used by China is particularly relevant in Vietnam given cultural and political closeness of the Sino-Vietnamese relationship. In order to further explain the impact of Chinese soft power in the 20th century this study draws upon various cultural and mass media projects from both China and Vietnam to demonstrate the interplay between cultural narratives and political policies.

The modern relationship between the People’s Republic of China (PRC) and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) often invokes strong rhetoric as related to the memory of the past. Since the 1940s the Vietnamese have represented a potential revolutionary partner for China under which Beijing seeks to promote its own interest through the support of rebel movements, whereas Vietnamese attitudes towards China are

¹ Lawson, Eugene. *The Sino-Vietnamese Conflict*. New York: Praeger, 1984. 17.

more ambivalent.² When ties between the two nations are strong a sense of shared ancestry and cultural history is often paired with the new roles of socialism to create a sense of community and brotherhood. Yet, when relations become strained the Vietnamese point to a history of Chinese aggression and occupation along with a long tradition of Vietnamese resistance. While the majority of this “tradition” of aggression and resistance has been invented to serve political purposes they work well to highlight more contemporary political priorities and modes of discourse.

As new socialist regimes took power in the second half of the twentieth century in both China, the People’s Republic of China (PRC), and in North Vietnam, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV), relations between these two powers took on these familiar tones. In the early stages of the relationship from roughly 1950 until 1965 the two shared a mutually beneficial relationship that fostered a great deal of good will and good-natured rhetoric within each state. This period was marked by close collaboration and huge amounts of economic and military aid given by the PRC to the DRV’s war efforts against the French and later the United States. Tropes of friendship and brotherhood were the norm in describing the relationship between the two emerging socialist nations. The emerging Sino-Vietnamese alliance was critical in the establishment of Ho Chi Minh’s government in North Vietnam and the early recognition by China granted some quick international legitimacy to the DRV.³

However, following a turning point around 1966, particularly with the events of the Cultural Revolution in China, the relationship took on a markedly different tone, one

² Lawson, 18-19.

³ Zhai, Qiang. *China & The Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975*. University of North Carolina Press, 2000. 13.

of rivalry and competition and first, followed by outright power struggles and open hostilities between the neighboring states. The chauvinism that the DRV felt China was exhibiting in their increasing regional and global ambitions led to rising fears of China as an aggressor rather than an ally.⁴ Additionally, as part of an attempt to internationalize the Cultural Revolution, Red Guards were stationed in Chinese embassies and consulates and instructed to spread revolution.⁵ While this order was later rescinded by Zhou Enlai, the damage to political relations was already done as relationships with 30 of the countries that recognized the PRC government had become strained as a result of the behavior of these Red Guards.⁶ As the DRV struggled to contain the behaviors of the Chinese citizens in Vietnam, PRC policies continued to move in a direction that further strained the Sino-Vietnamese relationship.

One of the final breaking points for the Sino-Vietnamese relationship came from the Chinese attempt at rapprochement with the United States beginning in 1969. As Beijing sought to begin the normalization of relations with the United States, in the face of a growing threat from the Soviet Union, Hanoi felt betrayed in their struggle for re-unification against the United States.⁷ In the face of growing distrust of China, Hanoi's rhetoric swung away from China as a key ally to becoming a new threat from the north.⁸

Growing fears and tense rhetoric combined with regional territorial issues to exacerbate problems between the PRC and the DRV. Additionally, as the common

⁴ Barbara Barnouin and Yu Changgen. *Chinese Foreign Policy During the Cultural Revolution*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1998. 82-83.

⁵ Barnouin and Changgen, 57.

⁶ Barnouin and Changgen, 66.

⁷ Chun-Tu Hsueh and Robert North. "China and the Superpowers: Perception and Policy" in Hsueh, Chun Tu. *China's Foreign Relations: New Perspectives*. New York, Praeger Publishers: 1982. 10.

⁸ O'Neil, Robert. "Peking-Hanoi Relations in 1970". *Contemporary China Papers*. (2) 1971, 5.

enemy of the United States was removed from the geo-political situation, the Sino-Vietnamese alliance reduced in the importance of the strategic calculations of both states. Territorial disputes of the Spratly and Paracel islands as well as China's perception of Vietnam's ambition at regional power, especially in regard to Cambodia, led to heightened tensions and eventually open conflict.

Thus, within the period of roughly 1950 to 1975 the relationship between the PRC and the DRV went from friendship and close collaboration to open hostility and conflict. This overview by no means provides an exhaustive survey of the development of the Sino-Vietnamese relationship, but rather serves as an introduction to the events that the remainder of the study will build on. This introduction will be built upon by new themes drawn from popular media sources from the PRC and the DRV. Popular media, as the next section shows, proves to be an integral piece in understanding the complexities of the ever evolving relationship between China and Vietnam and what information was available to the citizens of each nation.

Media and the Masses

The typical historiography of the Sino-Vietnamese relationship rests heavily on high level political figures and global geo-political struggles. Narratives centered on Mao Zedong and Ho Chi Minh's influence on the actions of their states dominate scholarship from the Cold War era. More recent scholarship has focused on other elements of the Sino-Vietnamese relationship, such as policies of foreign aid or the impact of the fluid identities of ethnic Chinese people living in Vietnam. Taken together these histories provide a strong sense of the political and economic realities for the DRV

and the PRC in the mid-20th century. Yet, these models are largely a top down model of understanding historical processes that rest firmly along the perspectives of the elites in society.

In order to provide a more holistic narrative of how people in Vietnam and China experienced the developments of the Sino-Vietnamese relationship a broader inclusion of the population, and particularly the peasantry, should be included. It is important to note here, however, that a greater inclusion of the population does not mean the reduction of the masses to a homogeneous group wholly lacking of individual identity. As Trinh Minh-ha notes in her study *Woman, Native, Other*:

Like all stereotypical notions, the notion of the masses has both an upgrading connotation and a degrading one. One often speaks of the masses as one speaks of the people, magnifying thereby their number, their strength, their mission. One invokes them and pretends to write on their behalf when one wishes to give weight to one's undertaking or to justify it.⁹

The masses therefore are not to be homogenized or overly aggrandized simply for the purposes of this study or to craft a new narrative intent on completely rearranging their place in history. Rather this study turns to the incorporation of the consumption of popular forms of media; newspapers, magazines, comic books, and films in order to incorporate the public into the narrative of Sino-Vietnamese relations.

These patterns of consumption can be very important for trying to make sense of the ways in which the masses, at least in part, understood their place in the political world.

⁹ Minh-ha, Trinh. *Woman, Native, Other*. Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1989. 12-13.

Yet, this study focuses very heavily on the role of popular media as a sort of intermediary between the populace and the Party. Here it is useful to draw upon frameworks by authors such as Benedict Anderson in his seminal work *Imagined Communities*. Anderson's study on the development of national consciousness and the roles of memory and language prove to be an indispensable foundation for understanding the importance of popular media in the PRC and DRV. Anderson's focus on the notion of simultaneity of identity created by the power of print media is particularly relevant for this study.¹⁰ Media then can serve as the intermediary in the creation of a shared ideological identity and sense of self across space and time, a particularly useful notion for the states of China and Vietnam as they attempted to craft a new self-perception after a century of colonialism and domination. The continuous campaigns to build a national consciousness in the early PRC and DRV emphasize the role of popular media as an intermediary to develop this created sense of nationhood and community.

Yet, utilizing media analysis to incorporate groups who have traditionally been marginalized from political narratives can be a daunting prospect fraught with intellectual pitfalls. Ill-defined social science jargon terms are often used to describe the interaction of people with various forms of media. One term in particular that I call upon in this study that is too often left ill-defined is the concept of interplay. Interplay here refers to the notion that the various forms of media and mass media that are consumed by the public have been influenced by the publisher, in many cases the PRC government, then in turn influence the public, whose reactions to the media in turn re-shape the message produced by the next round of media productions. This simultaneously simple and

¹⁰ Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. New York: Verso. 2006. 39.

convoluted web of interaction between media, government, and citizens leaves a very tangible impact upon how the people experience changing political dynamics.

In order to incorporate multiple groups within the broader populations of the PRC and the DRV this study draws on popular forms of media that range into many different categories. To compensate for the limited literacy rates in many areas of the nation the PRC produced many different forms of media to disseminate their message for the public consumption. This study draws heavily upon the state-run newspaper, and largely the party mouthpiece, *Renmin ribao* (People's Daily) as a meeting point for identifying broader level governmental policies and reactions with public consumption and reactions in the form of editorials.

While *Renmin ribao* provides an excellent resource it is somewhat limited by the requirement for a relative level of literacy in order to effectively interact with the public. Thus, there were several other key forms of popular media that can represent the interplay between the public, the government and the media. Film and magazines provided excellent ways to convey political messages and cultural themes to the population as the images and spectacles provided by this form of media removed literacy restrictions while providing often compelling and entertaining versions of the Party themes.

The purpose of this study is not to completely deconstruct old narratives of the past, but rather to utilize the various forms of popular media produced and consumed in mid-20th century China to effectively incorporate the broader population into the narrative of Sino-Vietnamese relations. This media analysis does not attempt to stand

alone because without the anchoring of larger pre-established narratives the study runs the risk of eschewing all sense of historical continuity. As David Harvey notes when discussing the removal of historical context “the breakdown of the temporal order of things also gives rise to a peculiar treatment of the past...while simultaneously developing an incredible ability to plunder history and absorb whatever it finds there as some aspect of the present.”¹¹

Thus, this thesis does not propose to situate the narrative solely on popular media of the time, but rather to utilize these forms of popular media and their consumption to complement and expand the understanding of the Sino-Vietnamese relationship in the 20th century. Ultimately, an examination of the role of popular media in the foreign relations between the People’s Republic of China and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam creates new avenues for study. By analyzing the interplay of popular media between the populations and governments of the PRC and DRV this thesis highlights the roles and reactions of the masses as an important reflection of the overall Sino-Vietnamese relationship. This analysis allows for the examination of foreign policy initiatives, policies of foreign aid and global geo-political relations to be set in more local cultural terms creating a more inclusive narrative than the typical top down model of political history.

Literature Review

There is certainly no shortage of secondary materials available to discuss the Cold War era relationship between the CCP and the DRV. Perhaps this is due to the

¹¹ Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1990. 54.

overwhelming U.S. interest in the region at that time and an attempt to provide some greater policy focus and understanding in a time of great conflict and hostility. Thus, much of the corpus of materials produced in the U.S. was created during or shortly after the United States' Vietnam War, primarily the 1960s through the 1980s. Many of these older documents and books are based on a limited access to information and tend to follow standard Cold War binary lines of thinking. Additionally, many books and articles were created for an audience that was attempting to process this information in a way to help understand CCP or DRV policies so as to more effectively shape United States foreign policy issues.

Authors like John Kuan, Chun Tu Hsueh, R.S. Chavan and many others produced informative works at the tail end of the 1970s, shortly after open hostilities had ended. These books possess a detailed analysis of several important CCP policy issues as they applied around the world and within China itself. Each work has value and merit in its own right adding to the overall tapestry of scholarship on the topic of Chinese foreign policy in the PRC era. Chavan's work is a particularly unique and interesting piece as his project presents an Indian perspective on Chinese foreign policy rather than the much more common U.S. and Chinese perspectives on the issues. Chavan's work focusing on the impact of Sino-American relations is a particularly salient point in understanding the indirect impacts of Chinese foreign policy.¹²

Yet, nearly all of these works readily fall into the typical "big state" narratives of the Cold War, in effect minimizing the importance of many key actors. These works tend

¹² Chavan, R.S. *Chinese Foreign Policy in the Chou En-Lai Era*. New Delhi, Sterling Publishers: 1979. 40.

to be focused on a traditional top down model of understanding the historical process with a key focus on United States, Chinese and Soviet actions, treating all other powers involved as secondary or reactionary. As many projects from the era tended to, these works provide a solid overview of the political situation, but do so in a very limited frame of reference. The works lack a holistic incorporation of cultural issues or individual agency acting as though many of these policies or events occurred in a vacuum that was uninterrupted by events occurring within the respective societies.

There are a few notable exceptions to this trend, namely works from the 1980s and 1990s that focused on the impact of the Cultural Revolution within China. In this particular case there are several notable works such as Barbara Barnouin and Yu Changgen's project examining the substantive impact that the Cultural Revolution had on foreign policy as well as China's overall relationship with other nations.¹³ The Cultural Revolution proves to be an outlier as far as domestic and cultural events making their way into historical studies of foreign policy; rather in many cases the exact opposite track has been taken by scholars, who posit that various foreign policy issues impacted domestic life and daily cultural activities. This view of the Cultural Revolution has largely been created due to the paucity of available sources, which has led to a view of the Cultural Revolution as the pinnacle of an "irrational" China. While there is certainly validity to those claims in several instances, authors of this era often failed to recognize the impact that a variety of cultural issues made on foreign policy initiatives. In essence many of these studies remained somewhat one dimensional, focusing on Cold War

¹³ Barnouin and Changgen, vii.

binaries and the big state politics involved while failing to account for a variety of other factors that were involved in Chinese foreign relations.

Also, works by Eugene Lawson, Robert Ross, Anne Gilks and others provide a firm contextualization of the overall growth of the conflict between China and Vietnam. These secondary source materials discuss at length the issues which became breaking points in the Sino-Vietnamese alliance and ultimately led to open hostilities between the two. This narrative of conflict, while often presented in a slightly oversimplified one dimensional manner of conflict, as this project will discuss at length, provides a useful understanding of how the evolutions in the relationship between China and Vietnam ultimately played out.

At the end of the 1980s the narrative of scholarship on both China and Vietnam began to change rather dramatically with a new focus given to documents within China and Vietnam, and an overall trend to attempt to remove the pro-West bias that many scholars felt existed in the study of Asia. As restrictions have eased slightly in both China and Vietnam, researchers have been able to gain access to a bevy of new documents pertaining to the Cold War era. In Vietnam starting in 1989 the Ministry of Finance, State Planning Commission, and the Ministry of Education began the lengthy process of declassifying materials for research purposes, additionally official journals from members of the DRVN had become increasingly available.¹⁴

The PRC has made similar moves to declassify certain Cold War era documents pertaining to international relations. In the mid-1990s new memorandums sent by the

¹⁴ Mark Bradley and Robert Brigham. “Vietnamese Archive and Scholarship on the Cold War Period: Two Reports”. Washington D.C., Woodrow Wilson International Center For Scholars Press: 1993. 23.

CCP Central Committee in Beijing to provincial leaders explaining China's position on a wide range of international issues between 1958 and 1966 became declassified. Yet it is important to note, as Qiang Zhai has, "that these documents were selected by party editors, often for political purposes, and that they may not constitute the complete documents."¹⁵ This critical attitude is important to keep in mind, but these new additions, along with the increasing access to huge amounts of Chinese popular media, newspapers, magazines and films, definitely increase the scope for understanding the overall nature of the Sino-Vietnamese relationship.

Qiang Zhai's recent study *China & The Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975*, published in 2000, created one of the most comprehensive political studies of the relationship between China and Vietnam in that critical twenty-five year window. Zhai has been one of the most effective scholars at making use of newly available documents, released in the late 1990s, from various CCP party arms, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Office and the Commission on Overseas Chinese Affairs.¹⁶ Zhai's rich study combines these newly available documents with the old corpus of studies on the complex web of political relations involved in the Cold War.

While Zhai is able to effectively bring to light new issues that show how Chinese foreign policy decisions came to be made, he still relies a bit too heavily on the old narratives driven by strong individual action and marginalizing dissenting opinion. As Zhai notes, "Mao completely dominated the decision making. In the authoritarian

¹⁵ Zhai, Qiang. *China & The Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975*. University of North Carolina Press, 2000. 9.

¹⁶ Zhai, 7.

Chinese political culture, Mao's power was absolute.”¹⁷ While Mao may have possessed the final word in crucial decision making processes he was certainly not the only voice in the room, as this study will show there were always a multitude of individuals and organizations at play that greatly influenced the direction of CCP policy before Mao became involved in decisions.

Other authors such as Chen Jian, Kosal Path, and Thomas Englebert provide a wide range of scholarship on the direct conflicts that China and Vietnam engaged in during the 20th century and the resulting impact. Path in particular provides a useful addition to the corpus of study on Sino-Vietnamese relations in the mid-20th century as he also incorporates newly available documents to provide a more detailed account of policies of foreign aid given by the CCP.

Additionally, Shawn McHale's work *Print and Power: Confucianism, Communism, and Buddhism in the Making of Modern Vietnam* helps to establish a structure in which the understanding of the processes of dissemination of information into society is accounted for. McHale posits a framework that re-thinks the overall dissemination of information into the Vietnamese peasantry, showing that in many cases the inculcation of information has been much more restricted than scholars have traditionally argued.¹⁸ This framework is crucial for re-evaluating the impact of cultural policies and media that targeted these groups of people who were difficult to disseminate information to. Combining this framework with primary sources from the era will help to shed light on the value of including cultural media into narratives of foreign policy.

¹⁷ Zhai, 145

¹⁸ McHale, Shawn Frederick. *Print and Power: Confucianism, Communism, and Buddhism in the Making of Modern Vietnam* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004). 94.

For the Chinese perspective from this sort of framework, my study draws upon works by Julia Andrews. Andrews, an art historian of PRC era China, has skillfully re-defined the importance of artistic works in the time of the PRC. As she noted art is often patronized by the rich, and therefore have no love for much in the way of communist art, sadly this has minimized the attention given to productions created during the PRC.¹⁹ The primary objective for much of Andrews's work is to convey the importance of the aesthetic quality involved in the so called *guohua*, national paintings. Yet, her project also very significantly details the production process and the relationship between Party officials and the commissions of artistic productions. Ultimately, her study reveals the connections between art, culture, politics, and the people, much in the same way this thesis attempts to highlight the role of popular media.

Additionally, Philip Kuhn and Ghislaine Loyre and others help to provide the perspective on ethnic Chinese people living abroad, whether in Vietnam, Korea, or elsewhere. These perspectives become uniquely important in Vietnam as the conflict between China and Vietnam occasionally escalated as a result of actions taken by Chinese nationals or ethnically Chinese citizens in Vietnam or conversely the treatment of these people by the Vietnamese government(s). Shifts in PRC regional policy objectives were at times strengthened and solidified by the experiences of ethnically Chinese people living abroad. These actions and reactions become a critical part of the story and the secondary source materials provided by these authors are invaluable in helping to contextualize these events within the greater narrative.

¹⁹ Andrews, Julia. Painters and Politics in the People's Republic of China, 1949-1979. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995. 119.

Finally, by utilizing frameworks and notions from authors such as Gail Hershatter, Susan Brownell, Emily Honig, and Tani Barlow help to establish a clear way in which to link an understanding of changing gender norms and ideals to the overall Sino-Vietnamese relationship and in particular to help underscore the shifting policy dynamics of China. Brownell and Honig's work provide excellent examples for how to create a more holistic narrative that weaves together the existing scholarship and adds in their new frameworks for understanding with their gender analysis. These authors' works help not only to deepen an understanding of shifting female gender identity, but also draw out in some cases the crucial understanding of the variety of male shifts in identity.

Primary Source Review

My thesis will primarily examine the extensive collection of the Chinese national newspaper *Renmin ribao* 人民日报. This database, available at UH Manoa, contains a full run of the newspaper collection from 1946 to the present editions. *Renmin ribao* provides a wealth of information from coverage of daily events, to public opinion or government response, which I will utilize to help draw out discussions on policy and regional interactions through both my own examination and the analysis of writers at the time. The *Renmin ribao* articles provide a dual resource as the paper was largely a mouthpiece for the CCP in its coverage of events and ideas, but *Renmin ribao* also provided sets of editorials and in-depth features on political and cultural issues. This dualistic nature of the paper allows for more detailed reflections on policy initiatives undertaken by the CCP and also allows for a window into the public's understanding and reactions to the events of the day.

In order to obtain as wide of a perspective as possible I will seek to use a solid variety of primary source materials. To provide alternative visual representations I will utilize the magazine collections at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, *Renmin haubao* 人民日报. This collection of magazines produced in Beijing from 1959 until 1989 provide a huge variety of photographic materials collected from across China and compiled by a government sponsored publishing house. This widely distributed, within China, collection of images contain an interesting mixture of information. The ability to view government sponsored idealized images of China and its citizens provides then a double window, the government perspective as well as clear views of the people interacting within a society over time.

Additionally, the Chinese government produced the Lianhuanhua 连环画 propaganda comics, housed at University of Hawaii at Manoa's archive; these provide even further idealized governmental images of both Chinese and Vietnamese identities in the collections produced on the topic of Vietnam. Lianhuanhua comics were first produced as serialized comics in the 1920s, but experienced a revival and boom in production during the Cultural Revolution. Many of the comics produced on the topic of Vietnam were printed in the early 1970s. These comics were designed for the youth of the nation, or for adults with a lower level of literacy to disseminate cultural or political ideas more effectively. Lianhuanhua help to draw out the perspectives of identity and identity formation in China but also in the Chinese perception of Vietnam. Two comics in particular help to draw out the connections in the Sino-Vietnamese relationship.

First, the story by Baozhu Huang, *A Fu* 阿福, was produced in 1972 as part of the second wave of Cultural Revolution productions of Lianhuanhua comics. *A Fu* weaves a parable on the importance of duty and service in working with the Vietnamese to resist United States hegemony. The story follows the title character A Fu, a young man who bravely risks his life to sabotage the efforts of the United States and to support the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.²⁰ This Lianhuanhua comic highlights the identity production involved through international intervention within Chinese politics, but also provides a sense for what the expectations were for the population in their efforts to contribute to the PRC's stand against international hegemony.

The second Lianhuanhua comic that highlights the Sino-Vietnamese relationship is *Qionghu* 琼虎 by Xihong, also produced in 1972. *Qionghu* is a comic largely geared towards explaining the need to reassert the importance of the alliance with the DRV in the early 1970s. *Qionghu* follows the story of a courageous soldier fighting to re-unify his homeland in Vietnam and resist the forces of oppression. *Qionghu* provided a related story to many in the Chinese peasantry as he struggled greatly against the oppression of a brutal landlord.²¹ These stories works to highlight the key foreign policy issues at the time for the PRC and provides a way to inculcate this information into the young and lower literate peasants in the countryside. By focusing on these types of stories this study will draw on the messages being pushed by the CCP, and in particular how these issues were framed in a cultural intelligible way to the widest possible audience, and how they reflect the development of the Sino-Vietnamese relationship.

²⁰ Huang, Baozhu. 黃寶柱 *A Fu* 阿福 (Beijing: Ren min mei shu chu ban she, 1972), 111.

²¹ Xihong 西虹, *Qionghu* 琼虎 (Beijing: Ren min mei shu chu ban she, 1972)

Finally, a collection of films from both the PRC and the DRV help to reveal the interplay between cultural dissemination and policy initiatives undertaken by these new socialist governments. The Chinese film *The White Hair Girl* provides a unique window into the impact of cultural productions had on politics. The 1950 film version of *The White Hair Girl* is an adaptation of an opera based around the horrific treatment of a young woman and her family by a greedy and vicious landlord who kills the protagonist's father and forces her into concubinage.²² Chinese and Vietnamese political groups utilized this film to help disseminate the policies of land reform to the masses, building an understanding among the peasantry of why they wanted to affect change and also to build support for their movements. Understanding the impact of cultural productions such as these on political movements helps to provide a more inclusive narrative for Sino-Vietnamese relations and provides a window for a more inclusive study by bringing in the motivations and perspectives of the overall population.

From the Vietnamese perspective films such as *Vo Chong A Phu* provided first hand examples of this shifting identity and the interplay with nationalism. *Vo Chong A Phu* was produced in 1961, written by To Hoai, and directed by Mai Loc. This production helps to establish the Vietnamese response to many of the shifting identity dynamics of the time in a similar way to that of the Chinese film and comic sources from above.

²² *Bai Mao Nu* 白毛女 [The White Hair Girl], directed by Wang Bin 王濱 and Shui Hua 水華, Changchun 長春: Changchun dianying zhipianchang 長春電影製片廠 [The Changchun Film Studio], 1950.

Methods

Chapter Two will continue to provide background material to place the thesis in proper historical context. A historical overview drawn from secondary sources on China's Cold War relations with neighboring nations will help to underscore the distinctions in the Sino-Vietnamese relationship that will be examined extensively in the remaining chapters. This chapter will cover the Sino-Soviet, Sino-Korean, and Sino-Vietnamese relationships in their Cold War context, roughly focused on the period from 1949 to the first half of the 1970s. By providing this context I will be able to lay out for the reader the key historical events, themes and people that were in place and explain how this context will continue to play out throughout the remainder of the thesis.

The primary focus of Chapter Three will be to examine the impact in which aid policies had on the Sino-Vietnamese relationship. Continuing with an analysis of Kosal Path's work detailing the aid policies of China and the Soviet Union towards Vietnam this chapter will also include an analysis of U.S. aid policies as well as, to a lesser degree, other regional powers such as Japan or Korea. This section will combine these secondary source studies with primary source accounts from *Renmin ribao*, both news and opinion pieces. By combining these perspectives an examination of the aid policies impact on the relationship between China and Vietnam will become clearer. Additionally, this chapter will draw on a Lianhuanhua comic to show the propagandistic perspective on the need for aid in Vietnam and tie in the government and public opinions on aid to Vietnam within China. This chapter will also include the Vietnamese perspective on the necessity of aid and whether or not to accept the aid, as becomes a crucial element of the story.

Chapter Four will focus primarily on foreign policy objectives of both China and Vietnam, but also weave in the other influential actors such as the USSR, the U.S. and other regional powers as necessary. By combining the background information provided by scholars such as Ross and Gilks with primary source materials such as *Renmin ribao*, this section will detail how the objectives and goals of each party compared with the reality of the situation. This comparison will allow for a solid examination of the impact of party policies on the relationship between China and Vietnam and the ways in which these developments pushed the relationship. Additionally, this chapter will seek to fold in the variety of tropes presented on each side of the relationship to their populace to describe one another, for instance an examination of a Lianhuanhua comic, *AFu*, will provide for a varied analysis that examines the ways in which Chinese children were socialized to view the Vietnamese. These sorts of policy objectives will be examined and combined with actual policies and actions on the ground through a combination of secondary and primary sources to help establish the links between these objectives and the way in which the relationship dynamic evolved over time.

Chapter Five will provide a more targeted interpretation of *Renmin ribao* and in particular an examination of many of the editorials in the paper. The chapter will examine what, if any role, this newspaper possessed as a voice in policy creation or direction. Additionally, the chapter will also seek to examine how the articles on Vietnam varied in tone or content from other regional neighbors or allies such as North Korea or Cambodia.

The chapter will also attempt to provide a bit more balance to the perspective of media reactions by providing other examples from different sources. Source material that

will be drawn on from this section will include Lianhuanhua comics, *Renmin huabao*, a series of Vietnamese films, the *Saigon Post*, the Vietnamese *People's Daily*, as well as a variety of other international reactions, such as that of the United States.

The final chapter will be a conclusion chapter that will highlight the ways in which the study has confirmed or in some cases possibly rejected the thesis. The synthesis in this chapter will review the main points of the essay and contrast the findings with the narratives that were questioned in the introduction. This section will draw out the final conclusions of the paper by combining the newly established discourse of the Sino-Vietnamese relationship through an examination of the evolution of the relationship with a focus on aid policies, foreign policy and media reactions along with the other narratives discussed in the literature review of the introductory chapter.

Chapter 2. A Historical Overview of Chinese Foreign Relations in the Cold War

In order to highlight the unique importance of China's relationship with Vietnam in the 20th century, this study first turns to an overview of PRC foreign relations with the rest of the world. Beginning with an examination of neighboring Asian states, particularly Korea, this chapter will seek out the similar processes and goals that the PRC put into place for neighboring states. Second, this chapter will explore the changing relationship between China and the “big states” of the Soviet Union and the United States. Finally, the study will turn to other “non-aligned” areas, particularly the PRC’s relationship with certain African nations. By taking this broad overview of foreign relations together the broad patterns and processes of Chinese foreign relations will become more evident, and will help to put into context the unique importance that the DRV played for Chinese foreign, and even domestic, policy. Chinese foreign policy played a uniquely significant role in the PRC domestic policy structure as the PRC attempted to reconcile the old Qing Dynasty conquest borders with the management of a modern nation-state.

As 1949 drew to a close there existed, in the view of the CCP’s leadership, three choices for the foreign policy of a socialist China: withdraw from the international economy and attempt to create an alternative socialist model, withdraw and move toward autarky, with considerably less cooperation with other socialist states, or participate in the current global order as constituted around the United Nations.¹ Throughout the second half of the twentieth century Chinese foreign policy has actually represented a move

¹ Garver, John. *Foreign Relations of the People’s Republic of China*. New Jersey, Prentice Hall: 1993, 180.

toward each of these three options, at different points. Yet, for the period of 1950 – 1975 PRC foreign policy was largely represented by either the desire to create a new alternative socialist model or withdraw towards autarky given the status of China’s relationship with its allies or even its enemies at any given time. The continual shifts in Chinese foreign policy reflect both the influence of domestic affairs on foreign policy as well as the general lack of clarity or consensus from PRC leadership on foreign policy.² The lack of consensus on foreign policy was often exacerbated by elements of domestic chaos such as the Great Leap Forward or the Cultural Revolution. Despite this inconsistency across years, several key patterns emerge and help to provide a cohesive image of Chinese foreign policy both regionally and globally.

The bulk of PRC foreign policy for the middle portion of the 20th century centered around the desire to create an alternative socialist model of the world by promoting revolution in as many places as possible and strengthening itself to become a leader in this new world order. Nearly at all times the foreign policy remained with a focus on opposing hegemony, either by the United States and its capitalist allies or later against the encroachment of the Soviet Union. This meant that a principle goal for the PRC was to maintain itself as a bastion against the current global system and always present itself as a second or third option in the global geo-political structure. The means to achieve these goals varied at different times ranging from direct intervention, to personal diplomatic operations or to policies of foreign aid or investment. In the 1950s China’s foreign policy became increasingly militant, with both involvement in the Korean War as well as the

² Kuan, John. *Notes on Communist China’s Foreign Policy*. Asia and World Institute, 1980. 25.

deployment of volunteer soldiers in other neighboring countries.³ By the 1960s this policy had shifted largely to using economic aid to develop relations, particularly in the third world as a means of showing PRC commitment to peaceful coexistence while remaining largely anti-hegemonic in global relations.⁴

However, one of the largest shifts came in the early portion of the 1960s when Chinese foreign policy took a significant turn toward autarky. One large reason for China's turn toward autarky in 1961 was the further deterioration of relations with the Soviet Union, but this doesn't tell the whole story as Japan, France and Britain all tried to resume normal trade relations by 1964.⁵ Thus, while the relations with its principle ally, Soviet Union, continued to deteriorate shows a potential cause of the shift in policy towards a temporary move to autarky in foreign relations, but this doesn't explain the rebuff of major overtures from leading countries in the global economy.

Instead, this period of greater self reliance should be viewed as a combination of both domestic and foreign affairs. The economic breakdown caused by the policies of the Great Leap Forward pushed new policy initiatives to focus purely on internal development and restructuring in an attempt to revive the PRC's economy. Additionally, after the failures of the Great Leap Forward had become evident the monolithic influence of Mao had significantly waned, at least for a time, allowing more moderate military and economic experts to have greater input and influence.⁶ This shifting domestic policy, combined with the timing of the early breakdown in the Sino-Soviet relationship and the

³ Garver, 147.

⁴ Kuan, 8.

⁵ Garver, 187.

⁶ Barbara Barnoui and Yu Changgen, *Chinese Foreign Policy during the Cultural Revolution*, New York: Kagan Paul International, 1998.

limited involvement in foreign wars in 1961 led to a short-lived push toward autarky. Within five years foreign policy had swung back completely toward the attempt to create a new socialist international community by promoting revolution in as many countries as possible.

PRC relations with major powers

USSR

The Sino-Soviet alliance stands out as one of the most important and dynamic foreign relationship for the PRC. As 1949 came to a close the Sino-Soviet alliance was the cornerstone of PRC policy setting the precedent for many of China's future foreign policy decisions. Initially following the CCP's conquest of China in 1949 the relationship between China and the Soviet Union was so close as to have daily communication between leadership to exchange information and consult on all important decisions.⁷ Additionally, in the first decade of PRC rule the Soviet Union provided substantial economic assistance of over three billion dollars and provided nearly 51 percent of all capital investment during China's first Five Year Plan.⁸ The Soviet effort to assist China's industrialization efforts in the 1950s was massive, constituting one of the largest international transfers of technology in history, not coincidentally, rivaling the U.S. assistance to Western Europe under the Marshall plan.⁹ Overall then, in this early period of PRC history the Sino-Soviet alliance provided enormous benefits for China economically, politically, and militarily. This alliance would prove to be the most substantial alliance throughout the first decade of PRC rule.

⁷ Chen, 5.

⁸ Garver, 182.

⁹ Garver, 184.

Despite being a substantial and effective alliance throughout the 1950s it was not without problems. While the Sino-Soviet split is generally dated as beginning around 1959, issues had arisen even earlier and caused a long term weakness in the alliance that continued to build up until the major split in 1969. In-fact, the split between the CCP and the Soviet Union can be traced back before the success of the CCP in taking power in 1949. Mao felt betrayed by a general Soviet lack of support for a communist revolution in China. According to Vladimir Dedjer, Stalin admitted in 1948 that he had advised the CCP to make peace with Chiang Kai-shek and bring an end to the military struggle in China.¹⁰ The Soviet Union had direct relations with the KMT and Chiang Kai Shek and sought a potential partition of China as a political solution to the ending of the Chinese Civil War, believing that there was a limited chance of CCP success.¹¹

By the mid-1950s the relationship between China and the Soviet Union had grown increasingly complex. An entry from the journal of V.V. Vaskov, who served as the ambassador to China from 1953-1955, dated August 27th 1954 reveals that relations between the Soviet Union and China had become increasingly tense as the Soviet Union prioritized relations with France over Vietnam in an attempt to pave the way for a greater Communist agenda in Europe.¹² Mao and the CCP felt that despite the adherence to the spheres of influence model that this move signified a greater interest in Soviet national concerns rather than a commitment to a global communist agenda.¹³ Thus, the divide

¹⁰ Murray, Brian. *Stalin, the Cold War and the Division of China: A Multi-Archival Mystery.* Washington D.C., Woodrow Wilson International Center For Scholars Press: 1995. 2.

¹¹ Murray, 9.

¹² Wingrove, Paul. *Mao's Conversations with the Soviet Ambassador 1953-1955.* Washington D.C., Woodrow Wilson International Center For Scholars Press: 2002. 18.

¹³ Ibid.

between ideological concerns and more nationalist concerns were beginning to cause greater strain on the Sino-Soviet alliance. Despite many of these concerns the initial period of the Sino-Soviet alliance was still largely an effective model for cooperation.

The Korean War provides an interesting viewpoint into the developing relations between the Soviet Union and the PRC. The later Sino-Soviet split, which had become completely apparent by 1968, can be traced to this early 1950s conflict. In the Korean War the Soviet Union and the PRC had begun to lay the ground work for the foreign policy objectives and responsibilities of each in the world geo-political system. Stalin had envisioned regional spheres of influence for each party, with the Soviet Union taking the west and the PRC taking the east.¹⁴ Stalin had believed that China would hold a greater sway in the semi-colonial Eastern countries, while the Soviet Union would then be free to focus on Eastern Europe and France.¹⁵ While initially Mao believed that this Sino-Soviet alliance would be the bedrock of China's geo-political interactions, world events came to show this alliance was shaky nearly from the start.

The conflict in Korea quickly helped to show to the PRC and Mao in particular how far apart the goals and intentions of the Soviet Union were from China's. The sphere of influence model held that China would be primarily responsible for on-the-ground assistance to Kim Il Sung, but Mao expected additional support from the Soviet Union. Particularly problematic for relations between the PRC and the Soviet Union was the reneging by Stalin on an agreement to provide air support by Soviet air forces in

¹⁴ Chen, 10.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Korea.¹⁶ Mao was infuriated by this perceived betrayal and came to believe that there were very clear limitations to the Sino-Soviet alliance system and that China should strive to stand further apart from the Soviet Union.¹⁷

Interestingly though, the decision to move away slowly from dependence on the alliance with the Soviet Union parallels later events between the PRC and the DRV. This parallel is particularly clear in regards to the move from close allies to fervent enemies over the course of roughly twenty years. Yet, more specific parallels exist in areas such as foreign policy moves and aid projects. In the early stages of PRC development the Soviet Union helped to provide badly needed technical expertise and equipment, much the same as the PRC would provide to Vietnam. Between 1950 and 1962 the USSR supplied China with roughly three billion dollars in equipment and helped to build 211 factories in China.¹⁸ This large scale aid helped to alleviate several key shortages that the PRC had been facing in their attempts to jump start a new industrial economy and make up for the cost of supporting other regional conflicts and interests. Yet, as the relations between the Soviet Union and the PRC deteriorated further the aid dwindled, along with the co-operation on a global scale. This early struggle between the PRC and the Soviet Union would be reenacted many times over in both Vietnam as well as other non-aligned countries in which both the PRC and the Soviet Union were involved.

By the middle of the 1960s PRC policy toward the Soviet Union had almost completely reversed. The earlier aid given by the Soviet Union in the 1950s had been given in the form of loans with interest, despite the feelings of China's leadership that the

¹⁶ Chen, 27.

¹⁷ Chen, 29.

¹⁸ Garver, 182.

assistance should have been provided free of charge. Later, the Soviet Union attempted to use these debts as a way to pressure China into acquiescence and a more subservient role.¹⁹ In order to escape these heavy debts China accelerated their payments and had liquidated its financial obligations to the Soviet Union by 1965, however this was done during a severe economic crisis within China, exacerbating problems and negative feelings against the Soviet Union.²⁰

Also, as the events of the Cultural Revolution played out within China, its foreign policy swung towards anti-hegemony rather than purely anti-American sentiment. This turn against all hegemony led to an even greater alienation of the Soviet Union in Chinese foreign policy objectives. These general impassioned feelings combined with a border conflict in a region of northeastern China in 1969 to push tensions to their breaking point. However, the final step in the decay of the Sino-Soviet relationship came from Beijing's overtures toward normalizing relations with the United States beginning in 1969 with the lowering of certain trade sanctions and coming fully into being with Richard Nixon's 1972 visit to China. After relations with the United States continued to normalize, the general policy of the PRC shifted from a united front against the United States to a united front against the Soviet Union, believing the greatest threat to China's national and regional security to be the Soviet Union.²¹ In fact by the 1970s, as a result of Sino-American rapprochement, Soviet hegemony was considered by China to be not

¹⁹ Garver, 184.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Kuan, 67.

only the greatest threat to China but also to world peace.²² Thus, by the end of the 1960s the Sino-Soviet alliance had completely crumbled, but the precedents set through this relationship provided the template for many other foreign policy decisions.

The United States

Although direct foreign relations between the two states were largely non-existent from 1949 to 1969 the PRC still carried out policy initiatives aimed at the United States during this period. These policies were largely intended at creating a “united front” against American hegemony and influence in the region, and eventually globally. This often meant becoming involved in armed conflicts regionally, in both Korea and Vietnam, in order to oppose the United States. The Korean War provided the PRC the opportunity for open armed conflict between China and the United States, especially given that the PRC anticipated the Soviet Union’s involvement and hoped to draw the United States into armed conflict with the Soviet Union.²³ Conflicts in Vietnam provided similar opportunities for the PRC to directly oppose the United States, although as this study will show the results were quite different from those in Korea.

Although these two regional crises characterize much of the Sino-American relationship from 1949 to 1969 there were also moments of tacit peace between the United States and the Soviet Union. These moments of tacit peace prompted a hard-line response against the United States from China, as the PRC feared further regional interference. The Taiwan Straits crisis in 1958 and the Sino-Indian conflicts in 1959 and

²² Chun-Tu Hsueh and Robert North. “China and the Superpowers: Perception and Policy” in Hsueh, Chun Tu. *China’s Foreign Relations: New Perspectives*. New York, Praeger Publishers: 1982. 10.

²³ Kuan, 67.

1962 brought in parallel interests of the United States and the Soviet Union in maintaining at least regional status quo, especially in terms of containing Chinese expansion.²⁴ Fears of U.S. and Soviet collusion against China continued to grow as the PRC came to be increasingly isolated from the global system.

Yet, Washington had begun to show signs of flexibility toward the PRC, as early as the Kennedy administration, slowly changing over a decade of U.S. policy towards China. By 1969 the PRC was growing convinced that the U.S. sincerely wanted to end the war in Vietnam and to improve Sino-American relations, and under these conditions relations began to normalize, culminating with Nixon's 1972 visit to China.²⁵ The issuance of the Shanghai Communiqué set forth the basic parameters of what the normalized relations would constitute; namely, the basic foreign policy objectives for each party, the recognition that Taiwan was a part of China and that there was only one China, although this question was left tabled to be resolved later, and a promise to move towards full normalization of relations. Although the complete normalization of relations occurred in 1979, outside the field of this study, these steps ultimately paved the way for the future direction of the Sino-American relationship.

PRC relations with neighboring states:

Japan

As pointed out by a keen observer of Japan's past foreign relations, Japanese patronizing attitudes toward the Chinese were based primarily on presumptions a feeble

²⁴ Hsueh and North. 25.

²⁵ Hseuh and North, 26.

and backward China.²⁶ As the CCP took power and forged a newly unified country with the possibility to rapidly modernize based in the Marxist-Leninist ideology this newfound opportunity for strength and unity combined with a sense of postwar guilt in Japan to open up the possibility for more positive relations starting in late 1949.

Regardless of these possibilities there remained two key sticking points for improved relations with Japan throughout the 20th century for China. First, despite some expressions of guilt that the Japanese expressed for the activities the imperial Japanese armies had caused during the war, the top members of the CCP, along with popular support from a populace still largely entrenched in wartime perceptions of the Japanese, found reconciliation difficult.²⁷ Second, the presence of United States forces stationed in Japan continued to foment feelings of unease in Beijing. This fear was particularly important in shaping foreign policy decisions through the mid 20th century as PRC officials felt continually threats to China's sovereignty from the United States as it engaged in armed conflict in areas directly bordering China. While Japan could have served as an ally in the region for PRC interests, top officials were more concerned with the immediate threats facing China's borders thus limiting major diplomatic advancements in the Sino-Japanese relationship.

Despite the decades of armed conflict and a deep running animosity between China and Japan at the dawn of the PRC, there were some attempts made toward enhancing relations with the Japanese Communist Party. In order to maintain greater regional security and as a part of an overall ideological commitment to global revolution

²⁶ Yee, Herbert. "China and Japan: A New Era of Cooperation." in Hsueh, Chun Tu. *China's Foreign Relations: New Perspectives*. New York, Praeger Publishers: 1982. 45.

²⁷ Yee, 48.

these brief overtures seemed very pragmatic for the CCP. However, the attempts to build relations were quickly halted as Mao and the upper party leadership began to feel that the Japanese Communist Party's attempts to rise to power peacefully were the wrong way to pursue the revolution.²⁸ In January of 1950 Hu Qiaomu 胡乔木 (1912-1992), the director of the General News Department of the PRC, issued a formal statement condemning top Japanese Communist Party members, particularly Nosaka Sanzo 野坂 参三 (1892-1993) , for what Hu claimed was the incorrect method of revolution and demanded their removal from the Party.²⁹

There were other moments during the middle portion of the 20th century in which Beijing contemplated or even directly tried to reach out to Tokyo, though largely they met with few results. Attempts to grow relations between China and Japan were briefly renewed as the Sino-Soviet split became further entrenched because a strong tie with Tokyo, in Beijing's calculations, would certainly enhance the solidarity of an anti-Soviet front.³⁰ As relations with the United States moved towards normalization, issues concerning the U.S. military presence in Japan abated slightly, but not completely. Overall however, the relationship between Japan and China remained largely adversarial. While there was little direct armed conflict and a few moments of co-operation, largely in humanitarian issues, the middle portion of the 20th century saw China and Japan remain wary of one another and largely disengaged from direct relations.

²⁸ Zhai, 23

²⁹Xinhua she 新华社, “Guanyu riben de qingbao ju kanwu pipan gang ye jin de heping zhuanbian lun 关于日本的情报局刊物批判冈野进的和平转变论” [Japan's Intelligence Bureau's publication of a criticism of the Okano peaceful transition theory], *Renmin ribao*, January 11, 1950.

³⁰ Yee, 45.

Thailand

Thailand provides an excellent case study for regional foreign policy in the early years of the PRC. The Sino-Thai relationship highlights several of the key themes that directed Chinese foreign policy in this period, namely border security, growth of global revolutionary efforts, regional alliances and the attempts to counterbalance big state hegemony. China's policies toward Thailand can be divided into three main periods, which correspond to other themes presented in this chapter such as China's foreign policy ideology and bi-polar Cold War rivalries. First, from 1949 to 1958 China preferred to adopt a moderate policy that sought to make overtures to Thailand despite that nation's growing U.S. relationship. During this period Thailand also experienced a large degree of internal turmoil, ending in Marshall Sarit's rise to power in 1959 and his decision to move into a closer alliance with the United States and join into the anti-communist movement.³¹ Sarit's rise ultimately provided the tipping point in the dynamic of Sino-Thai relations and moved toward a new more hostile phase in the relationship.

China's hostility toward Thailand after 1959 was due to a number of factors beyond Sarit's rise to power: Thailand's decision to get involved in Indochina, Thailand continuously rejected China's person to person level diplomatic attempts, Thailand's opposition to China's entry into the UN, and the relationship between Thailand and Taiwan.³² The relationship between Thailand and Taiwan was particularly problematic for the CCP in the early years following independence; the CCP consistently feared the remnants of the KMT army, which had been scattered in the southwest of China, linking

³¹ Kim, 73

³² Kim, 75

up with a foreign force to oppose CCP rule in China.³³ In addition to the real and immediate border threats posed by this relationship, the goal of the PRC to re-integrate Taiwan under the banner of the CCP proved to be a sticking point in relations between Thailand and Taiwan.

By 1965 Chinese policy on Thailand had shifted again, entering into a new era characterized with less hostility, with the CCP to support the local Communist Party of Thailand. As we saw with Sino-Japanese relations, this move by China to support a local communist party, while maintaining distant relations with the ruling party of the state, was a common theme in Chinese foreign policy from 1950 to 1980. While this move kept some relations open with Thailand it was primarily with the party of opposition and at times outright insurrection. Thus, the overall impact of this stage of the relationship was minimal. However, after China's admission to the United Nations in 1971 many of the key barriers in the relationship had fallen. In fact, by 1979 Chinese policy had shifted so far as to advise the Communist Party of Thailand to cooperate with the Thai government in order to handle regional affairs and maintain regional security, particularly against the threats in Vietnam.

Korea

In many ways the case of Korea provides the closest parallels to the policies that would be put into place for Vietnam, and although the policies are not identical, many of the strategies utilized in Vietnam were born directly from the experiences built in Korea. Therefore, a study of PRC foreign policy initiatives in the Cold War era would be deeply

³³ Zhai, 101

remiss in excluding the PRC intervention into the Korean War. Despite being a very newly formed state, the PRC played a critical role in the Korean War, and the Korean War helped to firmly shape PRC foreign policy and relations for much of the next few decades. Mao had been made aware of Kim Il Sung's invasion plans in advance and proved to be inclined to enter the war on the side of Kim regardless of any United States involvement in the war.³⁴ The direct interventionist policies of Mao would shape not only regional relations, with Korea, but also significantly shaped the relationship between the PRC and the Soviet Union. This conflict would become a playbook of sorts through which the PRC would form future decisions on intervention, aid, and foreign relations. The Korean War also helps to draw out the divisions within the CCP that would continue to present themselves in future conflicts, these themes are particularly resonant in Vietnam, helping to somewhat dispel a narrative of a monolithic political organization headed by Mao.

The majority of scholarship and public opinion from the United States through the 1990s has posited a sort of pre-ordained interventionist stance by the PRC into the Korean conflict. Yet, as Andrew Scobell has shown in his recent study on Chinese intervention into Korea this narrative of a pre-ordained desire to become intertwined in the Korean War is an overly Mao-centric view of both the conflict and Chinese foreign policy in general.³⁵ While there is little doubt that Mao and Zhou Enlai firmly supported direct action and deployment of People's Liberation Army (PLA) forces into Korea, a

³⁴ Chen, Jian. *The Sino-Soviet Alliance and China's Entry into the Korean War*. Washington D.C., Woodrow Wilson International Center For Scholars Press: 1992. 21.

³⁵ Scobell, Andrew. "Soldiers, Statesmen, Strategic Culture, and China's 1950 Intervention in Korea" in Zhao, Suisheng. *Chinese Foreign Policy*. New York, M.E. Sharpe Publishing: 2004. 118.

narrative based on these two titans of PRC political life can be deceiving. Rather, if the lens were to be focused upon the military elites within the CCP as a whole, a far different and more complex view of China's intervention into Korea can be placed into the narrative.

While Zhou and Mao were firm in their conviction to fight in Korea there were many doubters within the CCP, as many people had looked forward to a period of peace to focus on economic development after decades of armed struggle within China. Most interestingly the chief proponents of this strategy were the military elites within the CCP.³⁶ Three key military figures help to highlight the disconnect between the political desire within the party and the material realities that were facing the PRC in the period shortly after the 1949 Revolution.

First, Nie Rongzhen, the Chief of General Staff in the PLA, expressed reservations about entering a protracted war, citing the shortages facing the PLA and the country as a whole.³⁷ The shortages facing the PLA and the country as a whole are not surprising given the decades-long span of warfare in China. This top officer's reluctance alone could show the shortages and difficulties that were present for the new PRC regime as they tried to balance their international goals of global revolution with the difficulties of rebuilding and reforming China, a theme that will be quite evident in later relations with Vietnam. The more conservative military officials continued to be more cautious in regard to expending the huge amounts of resources necessary to aid in other regional

³⁶ Scobell, 112.

³⁷ Scobell, 114.

conflicts, while the political elites often pushed for the exact opposite and almost always won out.

For further evidence of the reluctance of military elites to enter into the struggle one needs only to examine the case of Lin Biao, one of the most famous military officials in the PRC. Lin Biao was so anxious to avoid entanglement into the Korean conflict that when personally asked by Mao to lead PLA forces in Korea, Lin “declined by feigning illness (*jiekou*)” in order to get out of the situation.³⁸ That Lin Biao was willing to potentially risk disgrace and the ire of Mao himself in order to avoid the Korean situation is particularly revealing of the disconnect between the military elites’ view of Chinese capabilities and potentially even foreign policy.

To this end, the final official Peng Dehui who notably described the conflict as “a Soviet and American dispute and not a Chinese one” reveals the domestic focus that the military elites sought to maintain after the long and costly revolution in China.³⁹ However, in the end Mao completely dominated the decision making. The dissention of the military elites made little impact in the final decision making process as in the authoritarian Chinese political culture, Mao’s power was absolute.⁴⁰ This division between the political and military elites in the CCP continued throughout the first few years of the PRC. Eventually the gap was closed somewhat as Mao continued to exert greater influence within the party. Yet, these differences in international goals provide an

³⁸ Scobell, 115.

³⁹ Scobell, 112.

⁴⁰ Zhai, Qiang. *China & The Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975*. University of North Carolina Press, 2000. 145.

interesting parallel to the situation in Vietnam, as this study will show in greater detail in Chapters Four and Five.

PRC relations with the third world

Additionally, as part of the attempt to build a new global socialist order the PRC made consistent attempts to build relations in Africa, this policy also helped to fortify against the growth of Soviet influence. The desire to check the expansion of Soviet influence had become particularly important to PRC foreign policy in the non-aligned world by the mid-1960s. To build new relations in Africa the PRC often relied upon sending foreign aid or military experts to help in the training or guerilla-style warfare. In order to present a clear picture of these relationship building processes, this thesis will draw on two case studies; PRC relations with Niger and Ghana.

First, in Ghana China entered into a two-year agreement from 1964 to 1966 to dispatch a team of military experts to train Ghanaian soldiers.⁴¹ The terms of this agreement were given by a secret protocol document, released by the Ghanaian government, that allowed for the dispatch of Chinese military experts for a period of two years that was to be extended or shortened through consultations between the two governments if necessary.⁴² The experts were sent to train the soldiers in the typical, for that region, guerilla-style warfare and provided with some light military hardware.

Second, a very similar agreement was entered into a year later with Niger, to provide guerilla warfare style training to Nigerian soldiers in 1965 and 1966.⁴³ The

⁴¹ Kuan, 45.

⁴² Kuan, 27.

⁴³ Kuan, 21.

agreement provided for the dispatch of military experts as well as the military hardware used for training of Nigerian soldiers much the same as the agreement with Ghana.⁴⁴ These two examples show that despite the limited ability to provide aid the PRC was acutely aware of the Soviet Union's desire to expand its own influence into Africa and responded accordingly to attempt to develop greater relations. This policy of sending military advisors and limited military aid in the form of technology and training was a common way of providing aid to foreign countries that the PRC had frequently exercised in its regional interactions with Korea and Vietnam.

PRC relations with India proved to be a bit more complex than many of China's other regional or non-aligned interests. This difficulty is partially due to the contested border regions of Kashmir and Aksai Chin which have provided a continuous source of tension between China, and India. As previously seen border conflicts were particularly important for China as Beijing perceived the greatest threat to be those that threatened to link up with internal opponents of the regime, particularly along ethnic boundaries.⁴⁵ This conflicted border space with India was particularly problematic for the CCP as the western and southwestern regions of China had been a worrisome spot of ethnic conflict that aroused consistent fear of rebellion. Particularly in the early years following independence, as seen with the case of Thailand, the CCP consistently feared the remnants of the KMT army.⁴⁶ While over time the concerns of KMT troops linking up with foreign powers lessened concerns over rebellion from other ethnic groups, such as the Tibetans, continued. The example of the Tibetans would become a contentious point

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Garver, 266.

⁴⁶ Zhai, 101.

between China and India as the Indian government was willing to give safe haven to the exiled Dalai Lama, giving Beijing further worry of a foreign power supporting the struggle of a hostile ethnic group against the CCP government.

Additionally, one of the other large splits that troubled India was the 1972 shift in Chinese foreign policy that was designed to arrest Washington's move towards détente with Moscow.⁴⁷ To India this move signaled that Beijing considered Sino-American relations more important than its relations with and interests of, even communist countries like the DRV. This alienation of Hanoi was particularly problematic from India's stance as it damaged the non-alignment stance that China had long attempted to promulgate by continuing to engage with the United States and the Soviet Union.⁴⁸ Thus, the PRC's move to greater involvement and acceptance with the United States in particular not only signaled a shift in Chinese foreign policy away from the creation of an alternative model, but also cemented that path as third world countries became alienated by China's new policy initiatives.

PRC policies towards overseas Chinese

A sizeable number of ethnically Chinese people made their homes in many neighboring countries, particularly in Southeast Asia. At times the PRC sought to try to utilize these populations by appealing to their historical heritage rather than their current national identity. This will be particularly salient for Vietnam as Chapter Four will highlight in detail. However, despite the overtures made at various times to ethnically

⁴⁷ Chavan, R.S. *Chinese Foreign Policy in the Chou En-Lai Era*. New Delhi, Sterling Publishers: 1979. 40.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

Chinese people abroad, China's main concern in regard to overseas Chinese was protection of national interests rather than the overseas Chinese themselves.⁴⁹ This attitude was particularly prevalent in the early period of PRC history as ethnic Chinese people along the borders of China were often viewed with suspicions of KMT ties and treated as a potential security risk. As the CCP consolidated their rule these fears began to fade and the ethnic Chinese abroad came to be seen as a potential asset or ally in some contexts rather than as a series of potential threats.

However, the plight of ethnic Chinese would often be ignored by the PRC if the local country were a key ally or strategically important location. This laissez faire policy is particularly evident from examples in Cambodia where at numerous points China ignored persecution of ethnic Chinese as Cambodia became a key geopolitical location for the control of regional influence between the PRC, DRV, and the Soviet Union. The hands off policy was continued, even as the Pol Pot regime took power and drastically increased persecutions, because of the importance of the alliance between China and Cambodia in checking Vietnamese attempts to grow its own regional influence.⁵⁰ Overall, these sorts of hands off policies help to underscore the importance that national affairs held over the safety or treatment of ethnic Chinese abroad. When the goals of the state fit with the needs of the ethnic Chinese populations abroad there was room for co-operation, but when it came to a decision of the national needs or the needs of ethnic Chinese abroad foreign policy was clear that the political needs of the PRC were to come first at all times.

⁴⁹ Kim, 74.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

There were certain times when the protection of ethnically Chinese people abroad could coincide with the furthering of national interests, and in these cases PRC foreign policy was often very clear in the decisions to provide support. Support policies such as this were often issued when ethnic Chinese were being persecuted by a state that already had a shaky relationship with the PRC or when ethnic Chinese living in a border region of a close ally could be called upon to aid in situation. North Vietnam provides clear examples of both of these situations as chapter four will express in greater detail.

Additionally, examples of these policies existed in other parts of Southeast Asia, particularly in Malaysia and Thailand. In May of 1969 Malaysia experienced a series of racial riots due to the divisions between the state and the large population of some four million ethnic Chinese citizens. As Malaysia and China had no formal relations this proved to be an excellent opportunity for Mao to extend aid to the ethnic Chinese community while also forwarding national interest. Thus, Mao and Malaysian leader Tun Razak sought to establish a zone of neutrality and détente, allowing for the eventual normalization of relations with China and the increased solidarity of the ethnic Chinese community in Malaysia with its government.⁵¹ This mutually beneficial situation was ideal for Chinese foreign policy efforts that aimed to satisfy national interests while also expanding regional influence and protecting ethnic Chinese people abroad.

Thailand provides a similar example of the combined utility of national interests and the desires of the local ethnic Chinese population. In their 1996 work Weidenbaum and Hughes highlight the economic advantages of the ethnic Chinese population who entered into trade along the border, in which the relationship was tolerated and even

⁵¹ Kim, 76.

encouraged by the PRC and Thailand to stimulate the little trade that existed between the two states.⁵² Thus, the national interests were satisfied through the trade interactions in order to allow for the greater support of the “overseas” Chinese population by the PRC.

While Singapore possessed a population of roughly 75 percent ethnically Chinese citizens, Singapore is largely left out of this study as the PRC policies toward ethnic or overseas Chinese policies were generally formulated with an ethnic minority population in mind. As Singapore made a conscious effort to establish an independent Singaporean identity before it established diplomatic relations with China in order to limit any potential Chinese influence over the Chinese-educated population in Singapore there were markedly different PRC policies for Singapore during the period this study focuses upon.⁵³

On the whole, the contextualization provided by this chapter will help to properly place the foreign policy relations between the PRC and the DRV in a more understandable framework. By building off of these starting points the remaining chapters will show what made the Sino-Vietnamese relationship unique and how other geo-political issues played a part in the evolution of the Sino-Vietnamese alliance. Each chapter that follows then, will continue to add new cultural themes presented through a variety of popular media, building on the established political narratives and providing a more holistic view of the Sino-Vietnamese relationship.

⁵² Murray Weidenbaum and Samuel Hughes. *The Bamboo Network*. New York, The Free Press: 1996. 55.

⁵³ Kim, 80.

Chapter 3. Brotherhood and Conflict: Foreign Aid Policies in the PRC and DRV

One of the most important elements in the Sino-Vietnamese relationship in the modern era comes from the policies of foreign aid between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV). The history of aid and cooperation between the two nations in the conflicts with the French, and later, United States-backed Republic of Vietnam in the south provides a unique window into this relationship. This roughly twenty five year period between 1950 and 1975 highlights a series of encounters that help to show the complexity of the relationship between the two nations. Through an examination of the shifts in the underlying dynamics propelling aid and interaction between the PRC and the DRV, important issues of identity are brought to the surface. The long term historical trends merge with the new issues confronted by both nations to reveal the ways in which identity and culture were negotiated and renegotiated between the two nations. This chapter will trace the ways in which aid was provided by China and highlight the differing levels of involvement and the reception given in return by the Vietnamese. By examining the period between 1950 and 1975 clear shifts in policy and public opinion on foreign aid emerge in both China and the DRV and allow insight into the important cultural undertones informing the decision making process on and public opinion on both sides. The gendered language, in particular, is a compelling cultural window from which to examine the relationship on foreign aid. The use of the term *xiongdi*, or brotherhood, appears readily and as this chapter will show emphasizes both closeness and a somewhat hierarchical relationship.

Chinese support for North Vietnam did not begin in 1950, rather the true origin might be more accurately traced to 1947 and the war against the French. During this war

for independence the Vietnamese relied on CCP military advisers to utilize more modern military tactics against the French army.¹ This willingness to provide military strategy to the Vietnamese reveals an ideological desire to aid a likeminded revolution and a pragmatic attempt to remove European influence from its borders. However, at the time the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was unable to provide substantial financial aid to back the Vietnamese against the French. Additionally, the Vietnamese were not always receptive to the adoption of Chinese style human-wave tactics that were championed by the CCP and often sought to use their own style of combat, instead utilizing what additional technological improvements the Chinese could offer.² This smaller scale example provides a somewhat prescient image of what was to develop as the North Vietnamese government would face a larger and more protracted conflict with the South, and its ally the United States, and the resulting interplay between the aid offered by the Chinese and the often varied Vietnamese response.

Following the French pullback from Vietnam in 1954, and the subsequent partitioning of the country between north and south, the Ho Chi Minh government in North Vietnam came to rely heavily on aid from both China and the Soviet Union in order to sustain its military campaign to reunify the country. The involvement by China in the war would become increasingly more important as the type and amount of aid that China provided to the DRV quickly came to dwarf that of the previous conflict with the French. As the Chinese came to be more closely invested in the alliance with the DRV

¹ Qiang Zhai, “Transplanting the Chinese Model: Chinese Military Advisers and the First Vietnam War, 1950-1954,” *The Journal of Military History*, 57.4 (1993). 692.

² Zhai, 692.

for both ideological and pragmatic reasons, the aid expanded from military advisors to significant numbers of “volunteer” soldiers to aid the North Vietnamese cause.³

This new aid varied in size and scope between 1954 and 1972, ranging from direct support of manpower to a bevy of economic aid packages from both China and the Soviet Union. China provided a larger amount of overall aid than the Soviet Union, contributing roughly 1.775 billion rubles worth of overall aid between 1955 and 1972 compared to the Soviet Union’s contribution of 1.212 billion.⁴ Additionally, and perhaps more important, the CCP designated a substantial number of “volunteer” soldiers to come to the aid of Vietnam. At the height of the deployment some 170 thousand Chinese soldiers were in North Vietnam performing a variety of supporting tasks to ease the extreme shortage of labor experienced in The DRV.⁵

While China was providing aid by sending advisors and engineers to help build the roads and general infrastructure, the Soviet Union contributed in monetary terms and advanced military hardware.⁶ Initially, this aid was well received on all sides as a contribution to stand against imperialism and unite against the common enemy of western capitalism and the United States. However, as the war moved forward the willingness of the Vietnamese to accept foreign soldiers, even volunteer non-combatants, that the Chinese were offering dwindled greatly. Additionally, the breakdown in Sino-Soviet relations led to an increasing paranoia between the two as to whose direction Vietnam

³ Chen, Jian. “China’s Involvement in the Vietnam War, 1964-69,” *The China Quarterly*. 133 (1993). 85.

⁴ Path, Kosal. “Ha Noi’s Responses to Beijing’s Renewed Enthusiasm to Aid North Vietnam 1970-1972,” *Journal of Vietnamese Studies*, 6.3 (2011). 108.

In keeping with Path’s study this thesis has maintained the usage of Rubles as the currency of aid exchange, rather than U.S. dollars or Chinese Yuan.

⁵ Path, 101.

⁶ Path, 106.

would follow. To this end, Vietnam was often able to utilize this rift in order to extort more aid by playing both sides off of one another, alternatively forcing China and the Soviet Union into a small scale arms race of funding.⁷ An examination of the ways in which the aid packages and public opinion evolved over the course of the 1954 to 1979 period and how the underlying relationship dynamics between the Chinese and Vietnamese changed between 1960 and 1979 reveals a clear set of examples of the complex and shifting relationship between China and Vietnam.

From 1955 to 1965 the People's Republic of China provided roughly 668 million rubles worth of monetary aid through both loans and unconditional funding and sent some 67 thousand volunteer support soldiers to North Vietnam.⁸ This amount of aid is particularly staggering as millions of Chinese peasants were dying of starvation at the time, largely as a result of Mao's policies of the Great Leap Forward. These seemingly contradictory policies of shipping monetary, and in some cases food, aid to Vietnam while large domestic issues plagued the Chinese countryside highlight two important factors for Chinese foreign policy that ultimately came to over-ride domestic concerns to some degree.

First, Mao consistently advocated for aid to Vietnam as a means to counter the real and perceived threats to Chinese security posed by the United States. Second, and perhaps more importantly, Mao sought to establish and demonstrate Beijing's credibility as a true supporter of the Third World nationalist liberation movements.⁹ Given these

⁷ Path, 117.

⁸ Path, 108.

⁹ Zhai, Qiang. *China & The Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975*. University of North Carolina Press, 2000, 152.

foreign policy objectives it should be somewhat unsurprising that this staggering amount of aid coincided with a period of extensive goodwill between both ruling parties.

The high level of cooperation can, perhaps, be best seen through Zhou Enlai's 1960 diplomatic visit to the DRV. During this diplomatic trip Zhou Enlai declared that China and Vietnam were brothers in peace and part of the larger brotherhood of Asian Socialism, comprised of the People's Republic of China, Myanmar, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.¹⁰ This theme of brotherhood and union through the combination of historical, political, cultural, and racial unity persisted strongly between 1960 and 1965. An editorial from the Chinese newspaper *Renmin ribao* called for the "friendship and brotherhood of the Vietnamese people" and historicized this love for Vietnam as an inheritance based on a common history and culture, not just the new bonds of socialism.¹¹ Thus, this notion of brotherhood and unity possessed a multitude of layers and was deeply informed by both contemporary ideas of socialist identity and longstanding cultural and historical connections.

While on his 1960 diplomatic visit Zhou declared that "the Chinese people needed to make a push to go to Vietnam and help build brotherhood through labor."¹² The notion of a shared brotherhood of labor provides an important insight into the centering of labor and work to the masculine ideals of the socialist party in the CCP and the

¹⁰ "Zhouzongli fang yue 周总理访越" [Zhou Enlai's visit to Vietnam], *Renmin ribao* 人民日报, May 10, 1960.

¹¹ "Zhongyue youyi kai chu geng xianyan huaduo 中越友谊将开出更鲜艳的花朵" [Sino-Vietnamese friendship opens more brightly colored flowers], *Renmin ribao* 人民日报, May 15, 1960, 4.

¹² "Xiongdi 兄弟" [Brotherhood], *Renmin ribao*, 人民日报, May 15, 1960, 4.

attachment of the relationship between the two states as the masculine brotherhood. As Kimberly Manning noted in her study on gender politics during the Great Leap Forward, the notion of a work based culture of equality in China was still largely dominated by traditionalist patriarchal systems operated by the largely male cadre members.¹³

This model built around powerful male cadres and local elites persisted throughout the disastrous period of the Great Leap Forward and beyond into the 1960s, when larger numbers of Vietnamese and Chinese citizens were moving across borders and exchanging ideas on what it meant to be a good worker and communist within the commune systems. The exportation of these ideas was mainly achieved through sending cadre elites and trained engineers along with volunteer soldiers; these party elites helped to further propagate a system that tied male identity and new communist ideologies together through labor. As the latter portion of this thesis will highlight, this process changed somewhat as new groups begin to flow across borders during the Cultural Revolution period, bringing both instability as well as an undermining of the relationship patterns from the Great Leap Forward period.

The notion of constructing a male-centered culture around this communist work-based identity was not purely a propagandistic push by the Chinese to sway their new ally to the south. In an editorial two months ahead of Zhou Enlai's visit the Vietnamese state paper called for a campaign to "raise the cultural level of the people and promote cultural

¹³ Manning, Kimberly. "The Gendered Politics of Woman-Work: Rethinking Radicalism in the Great Leap Forward," *Modern China*, 32.5 (2006): 351-352.

studies work for Vietnam.”¹⁴ This “spring cultural march” movement sent roughly forty thousand men to China to engage in studies to become a proper communist and “learn culture” centered on the work based ideals of the Chinese Communist Party.¹⁵ The desire by a large number of North Vietnamese to participate actively in a program of education in how to become a proper communist and learn culture from the Chinese could show a great deal of commitment to a brotherhood based upon a common past and present identity as presented by the DRV leadership. However, the DRV leadership’s readiness to accept this tutelage may well have been made as a part of an attempt to address the rather extreme lack of trained workers in North Vietnam at the time. Regardless of the purity of motives this “spring cultural march” highlights the importance of cultural development for the CCP as it sought to expand its influence into China. Whether the idealism of a socialist revolution played the decisive role in the decision to send personnel to China or not, the Vietnamese willingness to participate in such activities shows the deep entanglement between cultural and labor projects between the CCP and the DRV.

Additionally, upon the arrival of Zhou Enlai in Vietnam the chairman of the Vietnamese delegation delivered a statement in which he affirmed the Vietnamese regarded the Chinese as “brothers” as well.¹⁶ Thus, from the Vietnamese side there appeared to be both a top level desire to cooperate and create a shared community, and a

¹⁴ “Tigao renmin wenhua shuiping tuidong wenhua jinxiu gongzuo 提高人民文化水平 推动文化进修工作” [Raise the cultural level of the people to promote advanced cultural studies work], *Renmin ribao* 人民日报, March 3, 1960, 5.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ “Yuezhong youxie zhuxi huanying Zhouzongli fang yue 越中友协主席欢迎周总理访越” [Chairman of the Vietnam China Friendship association welcomes Premier Zhou Enlai], *Renmin ribao* 人民日报, May 6, 1960.

desire of at least forty-thousand individuals to participate directly in this program. While the trip afforded opportunities for more advanced training for these participants this number is remarkably high given the progressively growing need for labor that was a continuous problem for the DRV throughout the campaign. Overall, the benefits may have been worth this cost of a slightly reduced labor pool, an increase in aid and goodwill with China but also the more tangible benefits of technical training that these workers could engage in and return home with.

A strong alliance continued to flourish throughout the first half of the 1960s as both groups maintained high profile diplomatic meetings and writings. From the joint statement released by Liu Shaoqi and Ho Chi Minh in 1963 a clear desire for co-operation still existed between the two.¹⁷ Ho Chi Minh even went as far as to praise the PRC for its important contributions in international affairs in the region, a stance that would change drastically within Vietnam in the next few years.¹⁸ Throughout 1965 this commitment remained strong as did the aid that flowed from China into Vietnam.

While China's commitment to supporting the DRV remained strong through 1965, serious tensions began to emerge starting around 1966 and led to fractures in the Sino-Vietnamese relationship. As late as 1965 Beijing had declared that aggression against the DRV was aggression against China, showing the solidarity between the two nations and hoping to exert influence into the decision making of the United States as the war

¹⁷ "Joint Statement of Chairman Liu Shao-Chi and President Ho Chi Minh", Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1963, 2.

¹⁸ "Joint Statement of Chairman Liu Shao-Chi and President Ho Chi Minh", Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1963, 12.

escalated.¹⁹ However, by 1973 a near total shift had emerged in China's "Vietnam policy" to one that sought a balance of power in the region, stronger border protections, Chinese desire to influence the region, and attempts to limit the power and movement of Vietnamese troops across borders.²⁰ These overt changes to the strategy implemented on Vietnam by China are reflective of an underlying breakdown in the relationship between the two socialist countries as the alliance shifted from that of friendship and brotherhood to a competitive and outright confrontational relationship in the second half of the 1960s and 70s. This so-called breakdown of this alliance has been studied at length by political scientists, both at the time and by contemporary scholars, producing a wide variety of different explanations for the split. However, much of this scholarship glosses over the key importance of the Cultural Revolution.

Recent scholarship to explain the breakdown in the Sino-Vietnamese relationship highlights the impact of the Mao-inspired Cultural Revolution in China and the effects felt by the international community in the region. As Odd Westad highlighted in his study "From War to Peace to War in Indochina," the key causes for change in the relationship between China and Vietnam can be found in the domestic developments of China, particularly the onset of the Cultural Revolution in 1966.²¹ Based on recently released documents in the Soviet Union and China, Westad posits that the alliance breakdown was not necessarily a predetermined result, caused by the decaying importance of a marriage of convenience between China and Vietnam, but rather it was

¹⁹ Ross, Robert. *The Indochina Quagmire: China's Vietnam Policy 1975-1979*. New York: Columbia University, 1984. 38.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Westad, Odd Anne. "From War to Peace to War in Indo China" in *The Third Indochina War: Conflict Between China, Vietnam and Cambodia 1972-1979*. New York: Routledge. 2006. 5.

driven by the impact of the Cultural Revolution.²² This argument by Westad directly contradicts earlier works of scholarship that argued neither Vietnam nor China were particularly interested in creating a close alliance, but this was overcome in the face of a common threat posed by the United States.

In his study Robert Osgood claimed that there was a lack of “alliance mindedness” between China and Vietnam. For Osgood alliance mindedness is a state’s “subjective inclination or disinclination to enter alliances which may be closely related to considerations of expediency yet goes beyond sheer reasoned calculation of security requirements and reflects hopes, suspicions, and ideals that are deeply rooted in national culture and experience.”²³ This mentality helps to highlight the traditional narrative on the breakdown of the Sino-Vietnamese relationship, and as the relations with the common enemy began to shift the alliance quickly began to break down. While this understanding is helpful scholars such as Westad help to show that it is merely a part of the reason for the breakdown in relations.

Following Westad’s methods then allows for a view of the breakdown in relations to begin at an earlier period, in the 1960s. During the onset of the Cultural Revolution in 1966 shifts in Chinese policy greatly impacted the ways in which PRC citizens behaved in Vietnam and how they were perceived. Westad’s study showed that “Chinese leaders allowed their soldiers and aid workers who were stationed in Vietnam to propagate the Chinese road to Communism as an example to the Vietnamese.”²⁴ In this way Chinese

²² Westad, 7.

²³ Osgood, Robert. *Alliances and American Foreign Policy*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1968. 24-25.

²⁴ Westad, 5.

officials were attempting to show their method of Communism as the correct model for the rest of the world and serve as a leader in the development of politics and ideology throughout the region. This was met with substantial resentment by the Vietnamese elite, who were still wary of CCP directives after the previous land reform failures in the 1950s. As a result of these types of policies and actions taken by PRC volunteers in Vietnam, Vo Nguyen Giap asserted in 1969 that “Vietnam was surrounded on all sides by imperialists.”²⁵ This new concern with Chinese “big state chauvinism” highlights the understanding within Vietnam that China had now morphed from ally into a potential threat from the north.²⁶

While the primary concerns of the Vietnam during and after the Cultural Revolution in China were grounded in political questions about a new wave of imperialism from China economic concerns also existed. As Kosal Path noted in his intensive study on aid and exchange between China and Vietnam “During the height of the Cultural Revolution, 1967-1968, the DRV’s total export value dropped to an insignificant level potentially due to many economic disruptions caused by intensified war and the fallout of the Chinese Cultural Revolution. By late 1970, the major crisis in the DRV was the severe shortage of food supplies and consumption goods.”²⁷

Additionally, Chinese aid to Vietnam dropped nearly in half from 864 million rubles before the impact of the Cultural Revolution down to 472 million by 1970, a staggering drop as shortages within Vietnam mounted, as the DRV was only able to meet

²⁵ O’Neil, Robert. “Peking-Hanoi Relations in 1970”. *Contemporary China Papers*. (2) 1971, 5.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Path, 107-108.

only around 50% of their growing demand for food.²⁸ Tensions within the alliance continued as Beijing made overtures to renew attempts to provide aid in light of the dramatic shortages in Vietnam. In late 1970 the Chinese Minister of Economic Relations with Foreign Countries, Fang Yi, offered a substantial package of emergency aid of roughly 1.2 billion RMB as well as volunteer workers and technical advisors.²⁹ Chinese editorials from October of 1970 provided effusive praise for the attempts to reestablish aid to Vietnam, calling for a renewed move toward building a strong Indochina to defeat U.S. imperialism.³⁰ Editorials such as these are reflective of the dissemination of the foreign policy agenda of the PRC to stand opposed to hegemony that emerged as some of the strongest foreign policy themes from the Cultural Revolution.

Additionally, *Renmin ribao* produced a collection of editorial responses from *Nhan Dan*, the Vietnamese version of *People's Daily*, in order to highlight the need for a renewed commitment to aiding Vietnam.³¹ These articles recounted the past importance of Chinese aid in resisting the French, and made continuous references to the strong backing of China as the “reliable rear” for the DRV. This theme of China as the rear flank for Vietnam was utilized by both the DRV and the PRC as it emphasized China’s positive role in the struggle without mentioning the use of ground troops within

²⁸ Path, 108.

²⁹ Path, 110.

³⁰ “Xinhua she liu ri xun weile chedi dabai meiguo qinlue zhe ji qi zougou, zenqiang yuenan renmin kang mei jiuguo de jingji liliang he guofang liliang 新华社六日讯 为了彻底打败美国侵略者及其走狗，增强越南人民抗美救国的经济力量和国防力量” [The Xinhua news agency reports on the sixth hearing in order to defeat the United States aggressors and their lackeys, and to enhance the economic strength and national defense forces of the Vietnamese people against the United States and for national salvation], *Renmin ribao* 人民日报, October 7, 1970.

³¹ “Yue renmin bao jiu zhongguo jiyu yuenan jingji he junshi yuanzhu fabiao shelun 越人民报就中国给予越南经济和军事援助发表社论” [Vietnam's People's Daily publishes an editorial on China's military and economic aid to Vietnam], *Renmin ribao* 人民日报, October 11, 1970.

Vietnam.³² These editorials provided a strong reminder of the previous shared commitments of both sides, opening the way for a renewed commitment in aid from the PRC, but also downplaying the recent events of the Cultural Revolution and Chinese actions in Vietnam.

Despite the extreme conditions and shortages faced by Hanoi this offer for additional Chinese “volunteers” was met with some resistance as a result of lingering fears from the Cultural Revolution, particularly inviting Chinese technocrats and soldiers into the country. Ultimately, DRV leadership stressed the importance of Chinese material aid while denying the use of Chinese soldiers and laborers despite heavy shortages in labor across the country.³³ This decision in light of the conditions faced by Hanoi emphasizes the degree in which fears of Chinese “big state chauvinism” and worries of unruly Chinese citizens had become solidified within the policy-making elite of Vietnam. To forego critically needed labor while accepting material aid helps to underscore the ways in which the Cultural Revolution had weakened but not dissolved the Sino-Vietnamese alliance.

Thus, while the Cultural Revolution was instilling new concerns politically in Vietnam the economic hardships caused in Vietnam by China’s Cultural Revolution created a secondary problem that simultaneously diminished China’s ability to provide aid and Vietnam’s to engage in trade. The end result economically was a weakened position for the DRV as the war with the South and the Americans intensified, fostering a greater sense of resentment for China and a renewed rhetoric of national self-reliance

³² Ibid.

³³ Path, 113.

rather than a brotherhood of states. This combined with the new political fears of Chinese expansionist attitudes created a new view from both sides that began to shift away from a shared identity of brotherhood and move towards the potential for conflict.

Several of these concerns regarding a shift in Chinese policy toward regional control or regional influence had emerged even prior to the onset of the Cultural Revolution. As early as 1965 the trends begin to show themselves within the Chinese media. The tone regarding Vietnam had gradually begun to change by 1965 and while the articles still reflect cooperation between allies the overwhelming support given to the Vietnamese state for the past five years had begun to change. The earlier themes of brotherhood are gradually phased out or overshadowed by new concepts that were less focused on Vietnam in particular and began to shift primarily to internationalism. In a 1965 article commemorating the anniversary of formal diplomatic relations with Vietnam *Renmin ribao* begins with mentions of brotherhood, but the narrative quickly shifts to “proletarian internationalism.”³⁴ Focus on the internationalism aspect and China’s role as a propagator of certain ideologies sets the foundation for the sort of “big state chauvinism” that the Vietnamese officials came to view with great suspicion during the Cultural Revolution in China.

Additionally, in this period right before the onset of the Cultural Revolution the crux of the narrative within the Chinese media began to shift away from themes of brotherhood and friendship and took on a more militant tone against the U.S. An early 1965 article in *Renmin ribao* highlights this militant tone combined with the growing

³⁴ “Yijiulusan nian xiatai Liushaoqi zhuxi fangwen yuenan shi 一九六三年夏天刘少奇主席访问越南时” [Chairman Liu Shaoqi’s Visit to Vietnam in Summer 1963”] *Renmin Ribao* 人民日报, January 17, 1965.

mentality of Chinese interventionism. A particularly salient example comes from interviews given by a group of Chinese protestors who had organized a demonstration against U.S. imperialism in front of the Vietnamese embassy in Beijing. The organization at the embassy was designed to show both solidarity with Vietnam as well as resistance to the United States. One of the demonstrators, marching in front of the Vietnamese embassy, highlights the changing mentality from support to intervention with his statement to the paper “With the support of the 650 million Chinese people, the Vietnamese people will surely be able to defeat all aggression of U.S. imperialism!”³⁵ This statement by a common worker, a member of the municipal knitters union, a lower level textile producing group, shows that the notion of Chinese interventionism had become quite popular and that the role of the Chinese people was perceived as directly tied to the fate of the Vietnamese. Much of this enthusiasm may have been due to the pressure on workers to show their political loyalty through activism, quite possibly organized by the *danwei* leaders. While statements such as these showed support for the Vietnamese in their struggle against the United States the underlying notions of Chinese international influence and potential regional leadership are what would become troubling for leaders such as Vo Nguyen Giap by the end of the decade.

While the new scholarship on the impact of the Cultural Revolution provides a compelling starting point for the shift in the Sino-Vietnamese alliance other important changes that were the focus of more traditional narratives also need to be addressed. Whereas contemporary historians tend to favor this narrative centered on the impact of

³⁵ “Relie qinghe Yuenam junmin kangji Mei diguozhuyi qinlue de weida shengli 热烈庆贺越南军民抗击美帝国主义侵略的伟大胜利” [Celebrate the Vietnamese People’s Army’s Great Victory Against American Imperialism], *Renmin ribao* 人民日报, February 09, 1965, 2.

the Cultural Revolution, scholars of the 1970s and 1980s tended to favor a model built on top down politics and big issues of threats to sovereignty to each state to explain the split. Three obvious political issues existed between China and Vietnam regarding issues of sovereignty and foreign policy that helped to drive a wedge deeper into the alliance.

First, the more positive attitude in China vis-à-vis the United States and the opening of negotiations to protect Chinese border interests was viewed in Vietnam as an affront to their war efforts to reunify the country. Second, growing conflicts with Cambodia added to the difficulty of maintaining a strong relationship as Cambodia was seen as an important Chinese ally in the region to protect against the growth of Soviet influence while simultaneously a potential threat to Vietnamese security interests. Finally, the issue of the Spratly and Paracel islands, which both claimed sovereignty over as parts of their nations, created a series of confrontations and show perhaps the most marked change in rhetoric between the two, if not outright conflict.

A major cause for the shift in the Sino-Vietnamese alliance comes from China's changing relationship with the United States. From 1960 to 1968 the objectives from both the PRC and the DRV were a near perfect fit, the Chinese preferred to support a long protracted war, in order to hamper the United States over time, and the Vietnamese needed their resources as the Soviet Union began a large pullback on aid programs in 1962.³⁶ From 1965 to 1968, China perceived the United States as one of its main enemies. All of this combined with the Chinese desire to limit Soviet influence in Indochina prompting heavy amounts of aid to pour into the DRV as the Soviet aid began to diminish, an act that ultimately led to the DRV signaling clear support for China in the

³⁶ Ross, 21.

growing Sino-Soviet split from around 1962.³⁷ China's ultimate foreign policy goal then was to protect against a direct conflict with the United States, in any hypothetical future war, and to that end Vietnam served as an ideal place in which to bog down the U.S. in a protracted struggle. To this end China provided only small arms and anti air weaponry, not major weapons for an offensive, thus helping to push the war towards a slow protracted conflict with Vietnam serving as a buffer against direct aggression to China.³⁸

Yet from 1968 on, this stance began to change and relations between the two countries improved as China began to perceive the U.S. threat as diminishing.³⁹ A major rift between China and the DRV began to form as the negotiations that eventually led to the Paris Peace Accords began in 1968. China's changing policies and greater willingness to engage in negotiations with the United States no longer matched the objectives of the DRV. By 1973 as the Paris Peace Accords were in full swing and the United States was looking to end its involvement in the war the true discord between the goals of Beijing and Hanoi became ever more apparent. While the DRV government sought a reunification of Vietnam by virtue of defeating the opposition, China's strategic interests now centered upon preserving peace to prevent any extensions of outside influence and protections of their own borders.⁴⁰

A truly revealing statement from Zhou Enlai highlights the difference in objectives by 1973 “The ultimate goal of the Vietnamese people’s struggle was to expel

³⁷ Ross, 22.

³⁸ Gilks, Anne. *The Breakdown of the Sino-Vietnamese Alliance 1970-1979*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992. 26.

³⁹ Lawson, 133.

⁴⁰ Gilks, 100.

U.S. troops.”⁴¹ While removing the U.S. presence in Vietnam was clearly a goal for the DRV government, ultimately though, the final goal was to reunify the country under the leadership of the North. Beijing’s attempts to forestall this reunification through negotiations then are quite revealing to the discord that had grown between the policy objectives of the two nations. Thus, by 1973 the Sino-Vietnamese alliance had shifted from heavy Chinese aid to fund a protracted war against the United States and reunify under communist leadership in Vietnam to a discordant negotiation with the United States in which the DRV and China sought increasingly different results.

A study of Sino-Vietnamese relations in the 20th century would be remiss to not mention the importance of Cambodia in the changing dynamics of the Sino-Vietnamese alliance. While the majority of the direct conflict between China and Vietnam that was directly impacted by events in Cambodia occurs just after the focus of this essay there are longer term trends that also impacted the gradual shift in the Sino-Vietnamese alliance. As Anne Gilks has shown, the changing situation in Cambodia around 1970 proved to be a major turning point in the Sino-Vietnamese alliance.⁴² The Lon Nol coup against Sihanouk in Cambodia destroyed the “accommodating neutrality” that had previously existed, and threatened the regional balance of power, a move that exposed the diverging interests of Hanoi and Beijing. While the move towards a pro-United States regime held great significance for the Vietnamese war effort a more long term impact of the Lon Nol coup was the growing competition for regional power.

⁴¹ Zhou Enlai, ‘Internal Report on the Problems of Current International Situation, March 1973’ *Issues and Studies*, January 1977, 124-125.

⁴² Gilks, 51.

Beijing now saw the DRV as a legitimate contender for regional influence, assuming Hanoi could continue to receive badly needed Soviet aid.⁴³ This new threat to Chinese ambitions of regional influence prompted shifts in Chinese policy moving forward, towards not only an attempt to limit Soviet influence in the region, but also the limitation of spreading Vietnamese influence.

The issue of Soviet aid is of particular importance here, as China continued to view their aid as a critical component of Vietnamese success. This stance shows the middle ground viewpoint that China had adopted, where the Vietnamese alliance was beginning to be problematic, but Vietnam was not yet enough of a threat to warrant serious concerns on their own accord. Additionally, the PRC was still attempting to provide aid at rather large numbers, almost 500 million rubles worth, to support Vietnam in the war against the United States.⁴⁴ Thus, as the new decade began China was now beginning to take on an adversarial stance regarding Vietnam while simultaneously attempting to maintain its alliance against the United States, a balance that would continue to prove problematic. The truly dramatic shifts in the relationship would occur earlier, but the Lon Nol coup provides a useful historicization of the role that Cambodia played in the changing dynamics of the Sino-Vietnamese alliance.

One final key component of the shift in the Sino-Vietnamese relationship comes from the ethnic Chinese community living in Vietnam. The number of ethnic Chinese in terms of population in the DRV was relatively small, and around 40 to 50 thousand fled south at the division of the territory in 1954, further reducing the population of ethnic

⁴³ Gilks, 52

⁴⁴ Path, 108

Chinese people in the North.⁴⁵ This subsection of the population proved to be a challenging problem for both sides to navigate politically. Both the North and South Vietnamese governments regarded the ethnic Chinese population as a part of the Vietnamese citizenry, a view not necessarily shared by the ethnic Chinese themselves.⁴⁶

The early portion of the alliance, even prior to the establishment of the PRC, shows how closely the two parties were able to work. Hoang Van Hoan asked Zhou to organize both the First Regiment and overseas Chinese in Vietnam to contribute to the anti-French war. The plan to mobilize overseas Chinese was to utilize the First Regiment of the CCP's Guangxi-Vietnam Border Interim Working Committee to dispatch cadres to the province of Bac Giang to organize overseas Chinese armed units; the plan was approved by Viet Minh leadership in 1947.⁴⁷ An overseas Chinese self-defense force of over 1,000 members had been created by July of 1947.⁴⁸

Chinese foreign policy to encourage cooperation between the local Chinese communities in Vietnam and the DRV continued through the 1950s, and was met with approval by Hanoi, who saw the ethnic Chinese as part of the Vietnamese citizenry. However, as the Hanoi government attempted to consolidate the ethnic Chinese population into the overall system, tensions began to emerge as many of the ethnic Chinese did not see themselves as a part of the Vietnamese citizenry.⁴⁹ Despite this difference in perception Zhou Enlai continued with the policies to push "overseas" Chinese to integrate themselves into Vietnamese society. However, in 1956 greater

⁴⁵ Amer, Ramses. *The Ethnic Chinese In Vietnam and Sino-Vietnamese Relations*. Selangor, Malaysia: Forum. 1991. 12.

⁴⁶ Amer, 24.

⁴⁷ Zhai, 12.

⁴⁸ Zhai, 12.

⁴⁹ Amer, 24.

conflict began to emerge as the ethnic Chinese communities in Vietnam resisted the takeover of previously autonomous functions, such as education, by the DRV government.⁵⁰ This rift between the desires of the local ethnic Chinese community and the PRC highlights a fundamental point established in chapter two; China's main concern in regard to overseas Chinese was protection of national interests rather than the overseas Chinese themselves.⁵¹

However, as shown above by 1966 and the onset of the Cultural Revolution in China the situation had begun to gradually change between Vietnam and China. As fears of “big state chauvinism” from China grew in Vietnam so too did an anti-Chinese mentality. After encounters with unruly Red Guards within parts of Vietnam, unclear border disputes and a growing political distrust of the PRC government the DRV drew an increasingly suspicious eye upon the enclaves of ethnic Chinese in Vietnam. Discrimination against the ethnic Chinese grew steadily and eventually formed into outright persecution in some cases.⁵² Fear of persecutions and reprisals even grew to the point that as war drew to a close in 1975 roughly 65% of the almost half a million migrants seeking refugee status in the Vietnamese Diaspora were ethnically Chinese.⁵³ The scale of this migration is particularly revealing to the extent in which ethnically Chinese had become fearful of Vietnamese reprisals, a substantial departure from the earlier period of relative peace and autonomy. These persecutions drove a further wedge

⁵⁰ Amer, 14.

⁵¹ Kim, Shee Poon. “China and the ASEAN States: From Hostility to Rapprochement.” in Hsueh, Chun Tu. *China’s Foreign Relations: New Perspectives*. New York, Praeger Publishers: 1982.74.

⁵² Amer, 33.

⁵³ Grant, Bruce. *The Boat People: An Age Investigation*. New York: Penguin Books, 1980, 82.

in the relationship between the PRC and DRV governments adding to existing political tensions.

Through an examination of policies of aid and foreign policy objectives it becomes clear that a variety of factors caused the shift in the Sino-Vietnamese relationship in the 25 year period from 1950 to 1975. The shift wasn't caused by just one moment but rather a series of factors; the treatment of ethnic Chinese in Vietnam, the changing relations with the United States, the impact of domestic developments within China, a series of territorial disputes and regional power dynamics within Indochina all came together to drastically change the Sino-Vietnamese relationship. This confluence of factors came together to transform perceptions of one-another in terms of brotherhood and friendship into an alliance on convenience against a greater hegemonic force and eventually into tropes of longstanding antagonism and distrust. While in the early portion of the alliance vast amounts of Chinese aid money helped to facilitate these feelings and cultural exchanges between China and Vietnam, ultimately the enhanced interactions and conflicting desires combined with a drop-off in aid and assistance from China helped to radically shift perceptions contributing to the overall break in the Sino-Vietnamese alliance. The next chapter will discuss media reactions to these policies as a way to further understand the cultural factors at work in defining the Sino-Vietnamese relationship during the Cold War.

Chapter 4. Movies, Comic Books and Newspapers: Popular Media and the Dissemination of Foreign Policy

At the end of 1949, in the mind of the CCP, three choices existed for the foreign policy of a socialist China; the withdraw from the international economy and attempt to create an alternative socialist model, withdraw and move toward autarky, or participate in the current global order as constituted.¹ These models, enacted over the course of the 20th century, would prove to be crucial in the development of relations between the PRC and the DRV. As seen through the examples of the Korean War in Chapter Two, the early period of PRC foreign policy was centered on an ideological desire to create an alternative socialist world model with a particular commitment to aiding revolutions in the region. Combinations of early recognition of governments, aid packages, and military support provided the backbone for foreign policy initiatives to build relations in an attempt to direct the creation of this new alternative world geo-political model centered on socialism.

During the entanglement with Korea the PRC also quickly moved to establish relations with Ho Chi Minh and North Vietnam. In late November of 1949 the Viet Minh resistance government in North Vietnam began to seek formal diplomatic recognition as the legitimate government of Vietnam. However, between December 16th, 1949 and February 17th, 1950 Mao Zedong was in Moscow leaving Liu Shaoqi in charge of Beijing's Indochina policy.² In Moscow, Mao informed Stalin that China was

¹Garver, John. *Foreign Relations of the People's Republic of China*. New Jersey, Prentice Hall: 1993, 180.

² Zhai, Qiang. *China & The Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975*. University of North Carolina Press, 2000. 13.

prepared to recognize the DRV and provide active support for the Indochinese peoples' struggle for national independence. Endorsing Mao's plan the Soviet leader said that China should recognize the DRV first and the Soviet Union would do so afterward.³ While the top leadership in Mao, Liu Shaoqi, and Zhou Enlai moved quickly to establish formal relations with the newly forming socialist government in North Vietnam the Soviet Union and Stalin actually held back due to the need for French recognition and support in Europe to further their geopolitical goals.

The ideological importance of supporting revolutionary activities in the region prompted China to disregard external pressure from France as the newly established PRC continued to seek its own diplomatic legitimization abroad. A quote from Liu Shaoqi highlights the prioritization of regional relations over relations with major global powers, other than the Soviet Union. Liu stated that China could move forward without French recognition because when China became stronger later, the French would have to recognize it. Liu's remarks are particularly important because they clarify what price China was ready to pay in supporting the Viet Minh by foregoing French recognition, in some ways harming their own short-term political maneuverability.

Yet, to a significant degree CCP leaders intervened in Indochina in order to define China's identity or self-image in the world, identifying the Chinese revolution with national liberation movements in underdeveloped countries.⁴ This desire, especially regionally, to support liberation movements coincides with early PRC foreign policy

³Sergei Goncharov, John Lewis, and Litai Xue. *Uncertain Partners: Stalin, Mao, and the Korean War*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998. 278.

⁴Zhai, 21.

directives geared towards establishing a new socialist international order.⁵ Vietnam and Korea then represented for the PRC the ability to combine domestic projects, such as collectivization and later the Cultural Revolution with the process of national identity-making with foreign policy objectives regionally.

The policy of rapid recognition by the Chinese greatly influenced the short term policy for Ho Chi Minh's government. After the recognition by China the key alliance in the view of the DRV shifted from Thailand to the PRC. Hoang Van Hoan, who had been in Thailand attempting to build overseas Vietnamese support for the struggle in Vietnam, was quickly recalled back to the DRV.⁶ A shift from Thailand to the PRC as the focus of relations fundamentally altered the agenda for Vietnam. While the Ho Chi Minh government was willing to embrace many of the ideological elements that the PRC was driven by in the early stage of this alliance, the motives for Ho seemed to be based more on material need and the desire to throw off colonial rule.⁷

After Mao had seized power in China, based largely on the CCP's claims to legitimacy based in a "restoration" of peasant land ownership, the CCP were eager to transplant their model of land reform and redistribution to Vietnam starting in 1953.⁸ In order to export this type of domestic policy to Vietnam, the CCP relied on cultural and artistic expressions to explain to soldiers of the DRV, as well as the peasantry the reasons behind the need for land reform. Popular media, designed to be easily understood by those with lower rates of literacy, helped to quickly disseminate policy information and

⁵ Garver, 180.

⁶ Zhai, 18.

⁷ Gilks, Anne. *The Breakdown of the Sino-Vietnamese Alliance 1970-1979*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992. 9.

⁸ Zhai, 39.

merged with existing cultural models to create the base for understanding among the masses for the tenets of the Sino-Vietnamese relationship.

Additionally, the role of art as a sort of intermediary between Party idealism and cultural productions proved crucial during the early years of the PRC. As Julia Andrews highlights in her study of *guohua* painters and the anti-rightest campaign in the early 1950s, earlier styles of *guohua* were quickly replaced by new pro-communist works.⁹ The older *guohua* were declared to be “moribund as the old literatures were” by both influential artists and Party leaders.¹⁰ In this case, the connection between the attempts to spread political ideologies through art became increasingly clear as well known artists were pushed out of productions in favor of those who better fit the party-line needs.¹¹ Paintings then, much as other forms of popular or mass media took on a dual role of artistic production and party propaganda to help spread acceptable ideologies and create a shared sense of consciousness. While these artistic productions may have had a somewhat limited reach; film as we shall see possessed the capacity for a much broader influence over the populace.

Films

Propaganda films helped to serve this need to quickly disseminate these ideas to the target audience. As Shawn McHale has shown in his studies of print media, the effective dissemination of political and cultural ideals to the peasantry was always a

⁹ Andrews, Julia. “Traditional Painting in New China: Guohua and the Anti-Rightist Campaign.” *The Journal of Asian Studies*. 49.3 (Aug., 1990). 564.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Andrews, Julia. “Traditional Painting in New China: Guohua and the Anti-Rightist Campaign.” 563.

difficult task in Vietnam.¹² Political slogans had somewhat of a limited reach, especially with the illiterate portions of the population, who the DRV most needed to reach out to in order to successfully carry out land reform policies.¹³ As the PRC had earlier discovered the answer to quickly building ideological support lay in public speeches, radio broadcasts and film showings, when possible. By utilizing mass meetings and public broadcasts, the CCP was able to disseminate its policy messages quickly throughout the country.

In order to quickly bridge the gap in policy information in Vietnam the Chinese Military Advisory Group (CMAG) employed the 1950 Chinese film, *The White-Hair Girl* 白毛女.¹⁴ The film, an adaptation of a 1945 Beijing Opera, directed by Wang Bin 王濱 and Shui Hua 水華, was an immensely well-liked revolutionary themed musical. The Changchun Film Studio 長春電影製片廠 produced the 1950 version of the film, which proved to be both extremely popular and an excellent propaganda tool for spreading anti-landlord sentiment among the Chinese population.¹⁵ The film highlights the failings of the old feudal order that had continued to exert tremendous power during the rule of the Republic of China. Scenes of violence by the tyrannical landlord Huang Shiren featured the indiscriminate killing of a peasant farmer as well as the abduction of a young girl to

¹² McHale, Shawn Frederick. *Print and Power: Confucianism, Communism, and Buddhism in the Making of Modern Vietnam* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004). 94.

¹³ McHale, 137.

¹⁴ Lockhart, Greg. *Nation in Arms: the Origins of the People's Army of Vietnam*. Sidney: Allen and Unwin Publishing, 1989. 250.

¹⁵ “Bai Mao Nu 白毛女” [The White Hair Girl], directed by Wang Bin 王濱 and Shui Hua 水華, Changchun 長春: Changchun dianying zhipianchang 長春電影製片廠 [The Changchun Film Studio], 1950.

be forced into the life of a concubine.¹⁶ The feelings of helplessness and the necessity to endure a series of injustices characterized the portrayal of China's old order.¹⁷ The failures of the old regime were contrasted with the new CCP policy messages that sought to provide more equitable land distribution, more gender-equable policies, and marriage laws, but also a punishment to the landlord class for past transgressions, real or imagined.

In order to bridge the ideological gap for many soldiers in the DRV, top leadership and CMAG imported films like *The White-Hair Girl* and organized public viewings to help disseminate new policy messages. The themes emphasized by *The White-Hair Girl* were utilized to galvanize public opinion in Vietnam to rally against the land lord class and enact a Chinese based model for land reform. The focus of the film screenings featured the sufferings of a poor peasant daughter at the hands of a cruel landlord, a relatable theme that was used in order to reeducate soldiers and peasants about the need for land reform.¹⁸ *The White-Hair Girl* was so effective a motivator that it was used to spur a boost of thousands of soldiers in 1953 who joined the Viet Minh, willing to fight and die at the battle of Dien Bien Phu in the belief that they were fighting for their own land.¹⁹ These screenings combined to be a perfect complement to the new land reform policies, which the DRV had pushed at the behest of the CCP, simultaneously reinforcing the need for land reform and galvanizing new recruits to join in the struggle.

¹⁶ “Bai Mao Nu 白毛女” [The White Hair Girl], directed by Wang Bin 王濱 and Shui Hua 水華, Changchun 長春: Changchun dianying zhipianchang 長春電影製片廠 [The Changchun Film Studio], 1950.

¹⁷ Chen Shaoming and Zheng Shuhong. “Endurance and Non-Endurance: From the Perspective of Virtue Ethics”. *Frontiers of Philosophy in China*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (Sep., 2008). 338.

¹⁸ Lockhart, 255.

¹⁹ Lockhart, 257.

While the implementation of the land reform policies garnered support, the results were overwhelmingly negative. Early on in the land reform process complaints emerged within the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) as officers were often drawn from landlord families who were being struggled against. The real blowback against the land reform policies of 1953 came in the following two years, as not just pro-French or neutral landlords were attacked, but also those who had been supportive of the Viet Minh were targeted. Even those of landlord families who had joined the Viet Minh were fined, lost their property and were imprisoned or executed.²⁰ Land reform policies and the media campaigns by films such as *The White Hair Girl* effectively motivated many to join the PAVN for the decisive battle at Dien Bien Phu combining the international and domestic ambitions of the party. Yet, the struggle against even the landlords who were members of the Viet Minh simultaneously cut off some financial support and weakened the growing sense of national cohesion in the struggle against the French. Thus, the excessive class struggle during the land reform contradicted the DRV's united front policy and polarized the society by alienating an important segment of the population.

The negative impact of the Vietnamese land reform was an important reason for later criticism of the Chinese model of socialism.²¹ As the criticisms grew the foreign policy initiatives of Hanoi grew less and less accommodating to the demands of the PRC, crafting instead policies geared toward national issues rather than the international issues that concerned Beijing. After the detrimental effects of the 1953 land reform effort DRV foreign policy swung away from acceptance of ideological and domestic policy proposals

²⁰ Kolko, Gabriel. *Anatomy of a War: Vietnam, the United States, and the Modern Historical Experience*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1985. 60

²¹ Kolko, 58.

from Beijing and instead focused on securing monetary and material aid in order to advance their national interests.²²

Newspapers

A series of newspaper articles in the Chinese national newspaper *Renmin ribao* help to highlight this gradual shift on both sides away from purely ideological efforts, like the 1953 land reform, into a combination of socialist cultural programs with material aid. The notion of constructing a culture around this communist work-based identity was not purely a propagandistic push by the Chinese to sway their new ally to the south. As referenced in Chapter Three, an editorial two months ahead of Zhou Enlai's visit the Vietnamese state paper called for a campaign to "raise the cultural level of the people and promote cultural studies work for Vietnam."²³ In a parallel to the Sino-Soviet experience of Chinese students going to the USSR to study in the 1950s, this "spring cultural march" movement sent roughly forty thousand men to China to engage in studies to become a proper communist and "learn culture" centered on the work based ideals of the Chinese Communist Party.²⁴ The effusive praise of Chinese idealism presented by the Vietnamese newspaper highlighted the closeness in the Sino-Vietnamese relationship in the early 1960s.

This notion of brotherly tutelage was accepted in this period to a degree that would not be matched in the near future by the DRV. As the DRV accepted huge

²² Garver, 181.

²³ "Tigao renmin wenhua shuiping tuidong wenhua jinxiu gongzuo 提高人民文化水平 推动文化进修工作" [Raise the cultural level of the people to promote advanced cultural studies work], *Renmin ribao* 人民日报, March 3, 1960, 5.

²⁴ Ibid.

amounts of aid both in the 1950s and 1960s this seems to be an important place to analyze how the masses experienced this aid, as the rhetoric in the 1950s and the early 1960s differed greatly from statements after the start of the Cultural Revolution. While it can be argued that the DRV leadership accepted the aid of the PRC and sent huge numbers of people to participate in the “spring cultural march” due to the shortage of labor and expertise in Vietnam at the time, similar conditions existed in the late 1960s and produced no such exchanges.²⁵

Thus, some combination of governmental and popular support in the early 1960s led to some 40,000 Vietnamese people joining the study program in China in an attempt to exchange cultural ideas and gain technical expertise. In the broad scheme of the Sino-Vietnamese alliance 40,000 people may seem to be an insignificant number, but the peak number of Chinese volunteers in Vietnam at any one time was around 100,000.²⁶ The exchange of roughly 40,000 people to participate in a cultural exercise in one year then should be seen as a significant number in the context of Sino-Vietnamese exchanges.

This example of the “spring cultural march” provides a populist example of the closeness of relations for between the PRC and the DRV in the early stages of the relationship. The portrayal of this event in *Renmin ribao* is also particularly important in examining how the PRC masses were exposed to the Vietnamese in the early period of the Sino-Vietnamese alliance. The positive tones in *Renmin ribao* in 1960 provided about the creation of a new socialist brotherhood and a firm partnership with the

²⁵Path, 102.

²⁶Path, 101.

Vietnamese reveal the broader governmental foreign policy for Vietnam.²⁷ This positive image is particularly important for the creation of the image of a brave Vietnamese ally in the struggle against global hegemony for the Chinese. As the next set of popular media will show, these positive cultural themes will be omnipresent any time that the PRC tried to renew its commitment to the DRV.

Comics

A series of bound comic books, known as Lianhuanhua 连环画, help to illuminate the interplay between cultural ideas, state propaganda, and the dissemination of policy initiatives. Each serialized set was designed for those with a low literacy level, both adults and children, to better absorb political and moral lessons. The Lianhuanhua from the Cultural Revolution help to highlight the attempt to restore the faltering Sino-Vietnamese relationship, particularly on the ideological lines espoused in the PRC during the Cultural Revolution.²⁸ The primary themes emphasized by these Lianhuanhua underscore not just the PRC's attempts at unity with Vietnam, but the anti-hegemonic stance firmly entrenched in the Cultural Revolution mindset. While the themes show the bravery and focus of the young volunteers involved in the fighting, the message of the stories clearly focuses upon the importance of standing against the aggression and hegemony of the United States.

In the Lianhuanhua comic book *A Fu* 阿福 the story focuses on a young teenager, A Fu, who is eager to participate in the People's Liberation Army as he wants to fight

²⁷ “Tigao renmin wenhua shuiping tuidong wenhua jinxiu gongzuo 提高人民文化水平 推动文化进修工作” [Raise the cultural level of the people to promote advanced cultural studies work], *Renmin ribao* 人民日报, March 3, 1960, 5.

²⁸ Garver, 180.

against the U.S. aggressors in Vietnam.²⁹ The general themes emphasized by the comic are reflective of the ideological goals of the PRC for Vietnam; the re-unification of Vietnam under socialist rule and the liberation of its people from oppression. A Fu is able to achieve these goals by striking against the forces of the United States and its allies in Vietnam by performing a variety of acts of guerilla style warfare and espionage, such as sabotaging an ammunition depot or attacking an enemy barracks.³⁰ Children and teenagers are depicted as having to grow up quickly through their commitment to struggling against the forces of United States aggression in this propagandistic comic, a theme that highlights the necessity of all citizens of the PRC to contribute to the effort in halting hegemonic aggression.³¹ These examples of direct confrontation underscore the foreign policy ideology of the PRC during the Cultural Revolution of directly confronting the United States in support of the DRV and a global anti-hegemonic stance.

Another Lianhuanhua comic *Qionghu* 琼虎, produced in 1972, helps to highlight the last attempt at Chinese policies geared towards re-asserting the Sino-Vietnamese alliance. *Qionghu* follows the story of South Vietnamese resistance in 1965 against the United States. In this story the people of the South Vietnamese resistance emerge as heroes, highlighting the title character, which grew up in a poor family experiencing many hardships brought upon him by the United States and the landlord class of South Vietnam who supported them.³² *Qionghu*'s family experiences many atrocities and a brutal oppression from the landlord class that, as the story goes, must be struggled

²⁹ Huang, Baozhu. 黄宝柱 “A Fu,” 阿福 (Beijing: Ren min mei shu chu ban she, 1972), 111.

³⁰ Huang 黄, 102.

³¹ Huang 黄, 111.

³² Xihong 西虹, *Qionghu* 琼虎, Beijing: Ren min mei shu chu ban she, 1972. 10.

against.³³ Qionghu was determined to join the People's Liberation Army's fight for the re-unification of his homeland under the leadership of the communist party. With the help of his training Qionghu quickly became an excellent soldier and scout, leading other soldiers to safe passage across the villages and allowing them to have a decisive advantage against the enemy.³⁴ With Qionghu's help the PLA forces were able to gain a quick advantage and secure several strategic villages in order to destroy the enemy.³⁵ Qionghu participated in a wide variety of combat in his mission to eradicate the forces of the United States and re-unify his homeland under a socialist banner.

These propagandistic messages that the story of Qionghu emphasizes come at a time in the early 1970s when the PRC attempted to balance its previous commitments to the DRV and the growing opportunity for détente with the United States in light of conflict with the Soviet Union. This balancing act came at a time when the propaganda of the Cultural Revolution stressed themes of anti-hegemony and resistance to the United States. Thus, the foreign policy of the period grew increasingly convoluted in attempting to balance support of the DRV with a shift in opposition from the U.S. to the Soviet Union. This tension is reflected in the PRC's attempt to renew its amount of aid to Vietnam, particularly in military aid, while at the same time attempting to create a new relationship with the United States.³⁶ The enormous aid package of over 1.2 billion RMB provided to the DRV between 1970 and 1972 is particularly reflective of the intense

³³ Xihong 西虹, 11.

³⁴ Xihong 西虹, 65.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Path, Kosal. "Ha Noi's Responses to Beijing's Renewed Enthusiasm to Aid North Vietnam 1970-1972," *Journal of Vietnamese Studies*, 6.3 (2011), 103-104.

desire to maintain the Sino-Vietnamese relationship.³⁷ However, as chapter three noted, this overwhelming promise of aid overtaxed the Chinese economy that had been already weakened by the Cultural Revolution causing the PRC to default on many of the promises, prompting even further resentment.³⁸

While the propagandistic messages of the Cultural Revolution backed the last attempts at a renewed Chinese commitment to Vietnam, particularly in the face of growing tensions with the Soviet Union, the geopolitical landscape also began to shift in 1972 with Richard Nixon's visit to Beijing. Negotiations that had begun after U.S. withdraw from Cambodia came closer to fruition as Nixon made his formal visit to China, and though the normalization of relations would not occur until seven years later the impact upon the Sino-Vietnamese relationship was immediate. As China sought rapprochement with the United States the DRV was still mired in armed conflict with the Americans, and were increasingly convinced that the PRC was abandoning its commitments to Vietnam. The top leadership of the CCP, and Zhou Enlai in particular, were anxious to reassure the DRV of their commitments to them so as not to drive Vietnam closer to the Soviet Union.³⁹

However, as Beijing moved closer towards détente with the United States and a normalization of relations the DRV media began to taking an increasingly hard stance against the foreign policies of the PRC. *Nhan Dan* (the DRV version of People's Daily) responded to the suggestions of a new Geneva conference on Indochina by reminding the

³⁷ Path, 110.

³⁸ Path, 130.

³⁹Jayne Werner and David Hunt, eds. *The American War in Vietnam*. Ithaca, Cornell University, 1993. 48.

world that Hanoi had a long standing opposition to a new conference on Indochina, and that this position remained unchanged.⁴⁰ The *Nhan Dan* article claimed that ‘the most important voices belong only to those who are defeating U.S. aggression and the most important cause of victory, in Vietnam, is our correct and creative independent sovereign line.’⁴¹ The highly charged articles in *Nhan Dan* caused panic in the leftist party officials in the PRC who saw the growing Sino-Vietnamese split as undermining domestic Chinese policy during the Cultural Revolution.⁴² Therefore, the *Nhan Dan* editorials were not made available to the Chinese population as Zhang Chunqiao the party official in charge of propaganda denied their release in China.⁴³

The DRV newspaper articles underscore the growing feeling in North Vietnam that Beijing had abandoned their efforts in Vietnam, particularly on ideological grounds, in order to focus on their own national concerns. The Vietnamese interpretation seems to be largely accurate. As tensions mounted between the Soviet Union and the PRC the move to normalize relations with the United States proved to be one of the most important security concerns for the CCP. These security concerns largely over-rode the ideological commitments that had previously been made to the DRV, and while there were last attempts made at mollifying the DRV through material aid, the PRC moved forward with its attempts at rapprochement with the United States.

⁴⁰ Papp, Daniel. *Vietnam: The View from Moscow, Peking, Washington*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland Publishing, 1981. 164.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Papp, 160.

⁴³ Papp, 161.

Conclusion

Through an examination of various forms of popular media this chapter has examined the interplay between the state, popular media and political activism. The films and comics used as propagandistic tools helped to explain the motivations of volunteers and the participation in broad political and military struggles. A greater understanding of the ways in which the masses perceived their involvement in the Sino-Vietnamese relationship helps not only to place these people into their proper place in the narrative, but also helps to provide more clarity to the fluid years of the early 1960s. As the relationship between the PRC and the DRV began to shift citizens from both states still actively participated in cultural and military exchanges. Overall, various forms of popular media helped to disseminate foreign policy initiatives to the population who in turn incorporated these messages into their own cultural models for understanding and created the tangible human element of the Sino-Vietnamese relationship.

Chapter 5. International Politics, Local Media

As Mark Bradley has noted, tense situations between the DRV and China were often especially fraught given Vietnamese historical memories of past Chinese conquest and occupations.¹ The Sino-Vietnamese relationship was long mired in the history of interaction between the two states. An exploration of these relations has revealed both the positive and negative elements of this relationship and the ways that these feelings have manifested themselves in popular forms of media. These tensions have become clear at various points in this study through the after effects of several disastrous policies on both sides of the border. Popular forms of media came to represent these tensions manifesting themselves in the form of scathing editorials or cartoons.

Yet, the development of popular media expressions of the Sino-Vietnamese relationship did not occur solely based around the relationship between the two states. As chapter three alluded to the impact, especially regionally, of other nations on the Sino-Vietnamese relationship was often substantial. The impact of the Soviet Union and the United States has been well established on the Sino-Vietnamese relationship. Issues of Sino-American rapprochement or the growing conflict between the Soviet Union and the PRC led to continually shifting strategies on both sides of the Sino-Soviet relationship.

Yet, these were not the only states that impacted the Sino-Vietnamese alliance. Other socialist powers both regionally and globally played an important role in the evolution of the Sino-Vietnamese relationship. In particular, the popular media in the PRC began to focus heavily on the expansion of Vietnamese relations with other

¹ Bradley, Mark. *Vietnam at War*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009. 43.

international powers. This media focus reveals both state and popular opinions on the changing dynamics of the Sino-Vietnamese alliance and help to reveal an earlier resentment to continued aid policies to Vietnam in the 1970s despite the large push to renew aid from 1970 – 1972.

By 1975 relations were strained near to the breaking point, particularly over foreign aid. Mao rebuffed the Vietnamese on continued aid packages, claiming that “today, you are not the poorest under the heaven. We are the poorest. We have a population of 800 million.”² The split between the PRC and Vietnam had now become apparent to the world as Mao and the PRC openly rejected the Vietnamese for further aid in order to focus on Chinese national issues. This sentiment of being over-burdened by commitments to Vietnam became apparent to the world in 1975 with Mao’s declaration, but these feelings had been growing in the PRC since the start of the 1970s, despite renewed attempts to give aid at the start of the 1970s. As Stephen Morris detailed in his 1999 study from the perspective of the Soviet Union, previously secret Soviet documents reveal that the 1975 public split had been brewing among factions in both governments for over half a decade.³

This chapter will seek to examine the ways in which the popular media represented these shifting power dynamics regionally and globally and then analyze the impact on the development of Sino-Vietnamese relations. Starting with an examination of popular magazines in both the PRC and the DRV this chapter traces the growth of

² Odd Arne Westad, Chen Jian, Stein Tønnesson, Nguyen Vu Tungand, and James G. Hershberg . 77 *Conversations Between Chinese and Foreign Leaders on the Wars in Indochina, 1964-1977*. Washington D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center For Scholars Press 1998. 22.

³ Morris, Stephen. *The Soviet-Chinese-Vietnamese Triangle in the 1970s: The View from Moscow*. Washington D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center For Scholars Press 1999. 6.

Vietnamese internationalist polices and the reactions of the PRC and the media consumption of populations on both sides. After this international trend in political movements has been established in the popular media the chapter turns to an analysis of the media reactions in the 1970s from the Chinese state newspaper *Renmin ribao*. Selections from articles and editorials over a three year span in the early 1970s help to highlight the growing discontent within the state and population over the commitments to Vietnam, in spite of the huge aid policies granted in the same period. Ultimately, by synthesizing these popular forms of media to combine state policies and popular consumptions and opinions the split in the Sino-Vietnamese relationship over foreign aid that became public in 1975 can be more accurately traced to the start of the 1970s.

Internationalism and Pictorial Magazines

Despite the closeness of the Sino-Vietnamese alliance in the 1950s and early 1960s the PRC was not the only form of aid and support for the DRV. Particularly in the 1960s, the DRV adopted a larger pro-Soviet stance and heavily increased its usage of Soviet technology and loans.⁴ Additionally, the DRV sought to situate itself globally in the international socialist community of nations, establishing new agreements with the Soviet Union, the Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea, Romania, and Cambodia. The more global image of international socialism rather than the special brotherly relationship with the PRC became the message of the popular media in Vietnam as early as 1955.

A serialized set of pictorial magazines produced in both China and Vietnam help to trace the breakdown of the Sino-Vietnamese relationship in this global context. These

⁴ Morris, 5.

magazines were largely designed as propagandistic tools to tout the exploits of the party in each state for each given month. The magazines are centered on their pictographic representations of current events, highlighting important military, political and economic activities that the nation was involved in. The most important issues in each magazine were accompanied by a small feature length article, while the majority only received captions or very, paragraph or shorter, explanations.

By relying primarily on the pictures to tell the story in the magazines, these issues were largely accessible for those of lower literacy levels, but the accompanying stories were also printed in a wide variety of languages to open the publication to a more global audience. According to the editors of *China Pictorial*, the magazines were routinely published in Chinese, Mongolian, Tibetan, Uigher, Korean, English, Russian, French, Japanese, Indonesian, and Spanish.⁵ Despite this wide range of production languages to encompass many groups within China, as well as more global Lingua Francas, Vietnamese language productions were conspicuously absent.

While there was no Vietnamese language production of *China Pictorial* there was a Vietnamese version of this type of magazine entitled *Viet Nam Pictorial* which created similar productions, largely centered on a series of photographs with short accompanying descriptions. However, the *Viet Nam Pictorial* editions often had a greater number of long form features than its Chinese counterpart. The number of feature articles grew over time and continued to focus more on the war with the United States as the dominating theme. Productions in English, produced for an international audience, focused heavily

⁵ Anonymous. "First Meeting of the Committee for Drafting the Constitution of the People's Republic of China", *China Pictorial*. Beijing: Guozi Shudian. April 1954. 1.

on the “crimes” committed by the United States against Vietnam, these stories were often accompanied by dramatic photographs of protest, such as a June 1967 *Viet Nam Pictorial* highlighting a woman’s protest against the war from within the United States.⁶

Each magazine provides a unique look into the priorities of each regime as well as insight in how the portrayal of subjects changed over time. The degree of coverage and in what setting allows the reader to sense the priorities of the editors in their depiction of political events. Over the course of the production run from the 1950s to the 1970s trends emerge in the coverage of events that help to establish a narrative produced to the public. By analyzing these trends the pictorial magazines reveal further cultural elements in the narrative of the development of the Sino-Vietnamese relationship and also an incorporation of more global themes.

First, it is important to note the basic content differences that existed between *China Pictorial* and *Viet Nam Pictorial*. The content of *China Pictorial* tended to focus largely on developments within China, highlighting particular groups from within the country in order to show a unifying image of the PRC. These types of stories would center on cultural or economic figures, such as the inclusion of the Tibetan minority culture and its value to the PRC.⁷ Additionally, content to inspire political unity also featured heavily, such as a feature story on Tibet and other minority regions’ incorporation of Mao Zedong thought during the Cultural Revolution.⁸ While these

⁶ Bao Hanh. “Storm in the Heart of America”. *Viet Nam Pictorial*. Hanoi: Xunhasaba, July, 1967. 19.

⁷ Hsiao Chien-Chun and Chung Pu-Chiu. “Vignettes of Tibet”, *China Pictorial* Beijing: Guozi Shudian. 1955. 22-24.

⁸ Anonymous. “A new team for the dissemination of Mao Zedong Thought”. *China Pictorial*. Beijing: Guozi Shudian. January, 1967. 30.

images and stories were clearly party-line propaganda versions of events, the selection of the particular stories is important in understanding the priorities of the regime.

Viet Nam Pictorial, by contrast, tended to focus on a more international content base. Stories of relations with other nations dominated the pages of the magazine, regardless of whether the subjects were allies or enemies. Pictures and articles on the war with United States constituted the single largest subject area for a period of more than a decade in the production of *Viet Nam Pictorial*. Yet, other international focuses featured heavily in *Viet Nam Pictorial*. Naturally, key allies and regional figures were also regular components of the magazine. The nations most often included tended to be the PRC, the Soviet Union, and Cambodia, but other regional and international states also appeared at times.

The self-inclusion into the international community seems to have been a conscious effort made at continuing to gain international recognition in the struggle for independence and re-unification. Concepts such as being a part of a world-wide socialist camp, provides a vision of Vietnam as an international player in an important way for the political identification of the nation.⁹ By analyzing the ebbs and flows of the focus given to particular states and groups the interplay of this popular form of media and governmental policy goals is revealed over time.

The narratives seen in other portions of this study of a close relationship between the PRC and the DRV, accompanied by a close cultural element, existed within these pictorials in the 1950s as well. A July edition of *China Pictorial* from 1955 underscores

⁹ Nguyen, Han. “The Whole Socialist Camp is Solidly Behind the Vietnamese People”. *Viet Nam Pictorial*. Hanoi: Xunhasaba, June 1967. 22.

the closeness and importance of the Sino-Vietnamese relationship within China and is given extensive coverage. Feature length articles and front page cover stories are given to detail the “Great Unity between the Chinese and Vietnamese Peoples.”¹⁰ The accompanying articles described the Sino-Vietnamese relationship as “fraternal friendship” and “intimate neighbors” as a way to highlight the closeness of the two sides.¹¹ These narratives easily fall in line with the other themes portrayed by different forms of popular media, such as the newspapers and Lianhuanhua comics.

The content of the pictures provided in this section on Sino-Vietnamese unity are also quite revealing in understanding the messages that the editor was attempting to convey to the reader. In a series of cover photos Mao Zedong and Ho Chi Minh appear jubilantly in a crowd to greet the youth brigades in the PRC.¹² Marching through the streets of China together, the personal relationship between the two socialist leaders is meant to be seen as a friendship beneficial to the future of both states as represented by the children. An additional photo shows Ho Chi Minh alone, receiving a red scarf from a group of children, highlighting both the closeness of the relationship between the PRC and the DRV leader and also China’s generosity toward the newly socialist state.¹³ The PRC policies of person to person political relationships in international relations and the creation of an alternative socialist order are clearly exemplified through these pictures.¹⁴ While the audience of readers focusing largely on these pictures may not have

¹⁰ Pan Wen-Hsu. *China Pictorial*. Beijing: Guozi Shudian. July 1955. 2-3.

¹¹ Pan Wen-Hsu, 2.

¹² Pan Wen-Hsu, 1.

¹³ Pan Wen-Hsu, 3.

¹⁴ Garver, John. *Foreign Relations of the People's Republic of China*. New Jersey, Prentice Hall: 1993, 180.

consciously incorporated all of these subtleties, the message of a new fraternal socialist order should have been clear to the majority of readers.

In contrast, the *Viet Nam Pictorial* highlights a markedly different view of the Sino-Vietnamese relationship during the height of the Cultural Revolution. While the PRC continued to make overtures in the Sino-Vietnamese alliance as if the relationship was a unique and special one within the global order, the Vietnamese perspective was trending away from this mindset. As developed in the PRC within the same two to three year window of 1965-1967, shown through a series of *Renmin ribao* articles, the relationship devolved from a close brotherhood to one based around a common enemy of the United States and hegemony.¹⁵ These feelings are based in similar terms in both nations, with *Viet Nam Pictorial* describing the PRC as a supporter of the Vietnamese people's struggle against the U.S. aggressors and for national salvation.¹⁶

In the 1967 set of *Viet Nam Pictorial*, the PRC is framed as simply a member of the global socialist community, and even within this designation the PRC is relegated to a scant few appearances. Through a selection of images and articles entitled "Solidarity, Co-Operation, Friendship" a series of special relationships in support of the DRV are highlighted, special nods are given to the U.S.S.R., Syria, Guinea, and even the Japan with no mention of China.¹⁷ Reducing the relative importance of China in the cultural

¹⁵ “Yijiulusan nian xiatai Liushaoqi zhuxi fangwen yuenan shi 一九六三年夏天刘少奇主席访问越南时” [Chairman Liu Shaoqi's Visit to Vietnam in Summer 1963] *Renmin Ribao* 人民日报, January 17, 1965.

¹⁶ Nguyen, Han. “Mammoth meeting of the Peking People in support of the Vietnamese people's struggle against the U.S. aggressors and for national salvation”. *Viet Nam Pictorial*. Hanoi: Xunhasaba. June, 1967. 23.

¹⁷ Thanh Lang and Vu Ba. “Solidarity, Co-Operation, Friendship” *Viet Nam Pictorial*. Hanoi: Xunhasaba. September, 1967. 19.

presentations and attempts at dissemination of Party goals in the DRV matches neatly with growing concerns over the PRC's reliability as an ally.

With the onset of the Cultural Revolution the previously secure “rear flank” of the DRV now became a source of chaos and disorder that the DRV was concerned by.¹⁸ Additionally, a portrayal of broader internationalism in the popular media fits neatly with Hanoi’s attempts at diversifying their sources of foreign aid, with increasing attempts to gain further forms of aid from the Soviet Union and marginally reduce the reliance on the PRC.¹⁹ Thus, it is not surprising that the messages delivered to the population through the popular media reflected this political turn in the selection of topics for the magazine. This sort of selection biasing in the information provided to the population, both at home and abroad, had the power to create a mutually reinforcing notion of the changing dynamics of the Sino-Vietnamese alliance.

The internationalist turn in the DRV’s foreign relations appears readily in the *Viet Nam Pictorial* through both imagery and articles. The turn towards greater internationalism in the Sino-Vietnamese relationship in the Chinese popular media must be found elsewhere however. Pictures and articles in *China Pictorial* due to their more nationalistic focus tended to experience less transformation in their regularity and tone towards the DRV than their Vietnamese counterparts. Instead the shifting internationalist dynamics in the Sino-Vietnamese relationship are better found in the PRC newspapers than the pictorial magazines or films. A series of selections from *Renmin ribao* and the Xinhua News Agency help to provide a clear vision of the Chinese perspective n the

¹⁸ Zhai, 154.

¹⁹ Path, Kosal. “Ha Noi’s Responses to Beijing’s Renewed Enthusiasm to Aid North Vietnam 1970-1972,” *Journal of Vietnamese Studies*, 6.3 (2011).106.

changing internationalist attitudes of the Sino-Vietnamese alliance and how these new views were incorporated into governmental policy and the popular understanding.

Articles and Editorials

Along with the renewed enthusiasm for aiding the DRV that took place at the start of the 1970s the media in the PRC began to turn the focus further away from the special relationship between the two nations and placed the DRV in a broader socialist network. These feelings of desire to aid but to continue to avoid entanglement permeated the national consciousness through the newspaper articles in *Renmin ribao* and were reflected in a broad series of editorials over a two year period. As chapter three showed the tone presented by the media had already shifted away from brotherhood and moved toward an increasingly hostile posture by this period. These themes can also be seen in the desire of the PRC, and even among editorial writers, for a greater international policy by the DRV that would be less reliant on the PRC.

While the PRC stepped up efforts to provide foreign aid and manpower between 1970 and 1973 the tone of the articles in *Renmin ribao* reflected the desire for the DRV to diversify its sources of funding further, as long as the source was not the Soviet Union. By 1973 editorials in *Renmin ribao* reflected the strain felt among the population by economic hardships, ignited in large part due to the effects of the Cultural Revolution. While many within the PRC government were wary of openly rebuffing Vietnamese aid attempts, for fear of pushing the DRV closer to the Soviet Union and increasing Soviet influence in the region, the opinions presented in the popular media had begun to shift in

their tone.²⁰ Articles called for a lessening of aid to Vietnam in order to focus more on China's internal development. One *Renmin ribao* editorial called the current level of aid in 1973 "gratuitous", reflecting an increased sense of economic strain on the people of the PRC to keep up with national problems on top of supporting the efforts of the DRV.²¹ These tensions did not appear suddenly in 1973, but can be seen through the growth in support for the diversification of Vietnamese sources of aid and support throughout the early 1970s. The popular media highlighted many meetings and new alliance brokering by the DRV and heaped almost universal praise on these new agreements as they served both the national and international interests of the PRC. Popular opinion praising the Vietnamese move away from reliance on the PRC can also be seen through a series of editorials that followed the establishment of these new alliances.

First, in a November article from 1970 the DRV is warmly praised for accepting new aid packages from the Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea (DPRK).²² In the standard sort of party-line jargon the DRV was praised for contributing to the creation of a new positive atmosphere for economic development, military solidarity, and peaceful cooperation.²³ The establishment of new sources of funding for the Vietnamese struggle

²⁰ Zhai, Qiang. *China & The Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975*. University of North Carolina Press, 2000. 9.

²¹"Guanyu yijiujisi nian zhongguo jiyu yuenan wu chang jingji he junshi yuanzhu xieding zaijing qianzi 关于一九七四年中国给予越南 无偿经济和军事援助协定在京签字" [About the Chinese and Vietnamese agreement for free military and economic assistance in 1974 signed in Beijing], *Renmin ribao* 人民日报, June 6, 1963. 1.

²²"Chaoxian xiang yuenan tigong wuchang jingji he junshi yuanzhu xieding zai pingrang qianzi 朝鲜向越南提供无偿经济和军事援助协定在平壤签字" [North Korea to provide Vietnam free economic and military assistance, the agreement was signed in Pyongyang], *Renmin ribao* 人民日报, October 31, 1971. 6.

²³ Ibid.

for re-unification clearly pleased the PRC government as it lessened their burden to a degree without increasing Soviet influence in the region.

The positive feelings on the growing international relations of the DRV within the socialist community were further re-enforced by a follow up editorial to the agreements between the DPRK and the DRV the following year. In October 1971 the agreements connecting the DPRK and the DRV were renewed, and *Renmin ribao* published a large editorial praising the continuation and growth of this relationship. This editorial praised the developing unity and fraternity between the DPRK and the DRV, claiming that the two nations were fighting for “unity and brotherhood.”²⁴

This language mirrors the ways in which the PRC had previously attempted to define the Sino-Vietnamese relationship in the 1950s and 1960s. Interestingly, as fractures had developed in the Sino-Vietnamese alliance the popular media reflected the growth of broader international relations by Vietnam in a positive tone. The continued struggle by the DRV clearly served the interests of the PRC ideologically; so long as the efforts were not too costly to Chinese national goals the efforts would be supported. Thus, the outgrowth of the Vietnamese international relationships fit many of the PRC needs and was supported by the state produced media.

Though the relationship with Cambodia eventually became a source of serious conflict between the PRC and Vietnam in the early portion of the 1970s, efforts by the DRV to establish better cultural and economic relations with Cambodia were highly praised in the Chinese media. A 1971 editorial in *Renmin ribao* praised the cultural

²⁴ Ibid.

commitments made to establishing better relations between the two nations by Pham Van Dong and the Vietnamese Ministry of Culture to improve understanding and cooperation with Cambodia.²⁵ Another article issued in 1973 praised the growing united front of Cambodia and the DRV against U.S. aggression. The article gave support to a number of socialist states, but singled out and praised the commitment of Cambodia and the DRV.²⁶ These articles further underscored the popular media's portrayal of support for the growth of Vietnamese internationalism, a move that highlights Beijing's reticence for the continuation of huge aid programs and direct involvement in the DRV's re-unification attempts. Rather than showing a sense of concern for a potential rise in Vietnamese regional ambitions this continuously positive stance highlights the more pragmatic nationalist desires by the PRC government, a cause which would later bring out the growing split in the Sino-Vietnamese alliance into clear public focus.

The support of the DRV in its attempts to secure relations with other socialist nations was not limited on regional lines, which could have been a motivation as the PRC exerted significant influence over the DPRK. In early 1972 the DRV entered into a new agreement with Romania for the exchange of goods and technology bilaterally.²⁷ The *Renmin ribao* editorials produced on the topic were pleased by the growing relationship between the DRV and a European socialist nation. Lavish praise was heaped on both

²⁵Yuenan wenhua bu juxing yinyue yanzou hui 越南文化部举行音乐演奏会 [The Vietnamese Ministry of Culture held a concert], *Renmin ribao* 人民日报, October 10, 1971. 5.

²⁶“Guba shengyuan yue jian, weiyuanhui fabiao shengming relie zhuhe jian minzu tongyi zhenxian chengli san zhounian 古巴声援越柬,委员会发表声明热烈祝贺柬民族统一阵线成立三周年”[Cuban solidarity with Vietnam and Cambodia, the committee issued a statement warmly congratulating the third anniversary of the founding of the National United Front of Cambodia], *Renmin ribao* 人民日报, March 3, 1973. 5.

²⁷“Luo yue qianting jingji he junshi yuanzhu de xieding 罗越签订经济和军事援助等协定”[Romania and Vietnam sign agreements on military and economic aid], *Renmin ribao* 人民日报, November 23, 1970. 6.

parties by the Beijing media, as one article claimed that the new agreements would result in the development of a rich and handsome new era for both states.²⁸ Once again the needs of the state in China were well served by this sort of agreement as the DRV took a posture of moving away from its heavy reliance on Chinese aid, but continued to build on the international socialist community where the PRC was influential.

Conclusion

Through an examination of the popular media's portrayal of Vietnamese diversification of international relationships and foreign aid it has become clear that the public split that occurred in 1975 between Mao and Le Duan over foreign aid had its roots far earlier in the relationship. Vietnamese popular media through the form of pictorial magazines help to highlight the early internationalist attempts in foreign policy and identity construction in the DRV. The reduction in relative importance given to the PRC, in the DRV's approximation, beginning as early as 1955 is a crucial factor in understanding the development of the Sino-Vietnamese relationship at both a state and individual level.

Throughout the 1970s the media presented a resoundingly strong public opinion within China to encourage the Vietnamese to seek other forms of aid and alliances within the broader global socialist community. While there were instances that gave the PRC and its leaders pause, primarily surrounding the Soviet Union's attempts to further expand its influence in Vietnam, the tone given throughout the 1970s was overwhelmingly positive when the DRV sought other socialist alliances. Simultaneously

²⁸Ibid.

feelings soured on the “gratuitous” level of aid being given to the DRV while the national economic situation within China was continually unstable. These editorials provide a unique window into the confluence of state policies and public opinions that are often quite difficult to include in the national level political narrative. By including these voices of public dissent, even if they were filtered through the party mouthpiece, within the broader media narrative these voices help to properly periodize the Sino-Vietnamese split on foreign aid to an earlier date and shifts the understanding on how the people interpreted the relationship between the PRC and the DRV in the early 1970s.

Providing a new sense of periodization to more completely understand the timeline of the evolution of the Sino-Vietnamese alliance remains an important reason for this study. Yet, another key element of the study comes from the inclusion of these popular forms of media. These forms of media allow for a window into the public’s understanding and opinions on large scale national political events that is often left out of the narrative of the Sino-Vietnamese relationship.

As Trinh Minh-ha noted the use of the term “the masses” and broad studies of “the people” tend to focus on these people in a derogatory sense; removing from them identity, intellect, and agency.²⁹ By utilizing popular forms of media which were often created for and consumed by the masses to understand the political issues of the day this study has attempted not only to change the periodization of the Sino-Vietnamese alliance, but also to bring in a small degree of the perspective of the masses. The interplay in these popular forms of media through the stylist presentations of political tropes or the reactions given by newspaper editorials present a window into the mutually re-enforcing

²⁹Minh-ha, Trinh. *Woman, Native, Other*. Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1989. 12-13

power of popular media. This greater understanding provides a more holistic approach to conceiving of the Sino-Vietnamese relationship in the mid-20th century by adding to the standard political narrative themes of media, culture, and mass identity.

Chapter 6. Conclusion

In this thesis I have tried to show how the examination of popular forms of media and the various themes they present, be it political ideology, a gendered discourse or any other of a number of tropes, in the mid-20th century can reveal new and important ways of thinking about political relations in the Sino-Vietnamese relationship. By adding in popular modes of information consumption such as newspapers, films and comic books the narrative of political relations between the PRC and the DRV becomes a more complex and inclusive account. Rather than a purely top down approach that has been utilized by many historians throughout the 20th century, the inclusion of popular media helps to reveal the interplay between citizen understanding and governmental policy. Motivations of “volunteers” or soldiers willing to risk their lives for these new ideals are brought to light through the films and comics used by the government to help them understand a particular policy or idea. As shown by Shawn McHale’s work the dissemination of information down to the individual level in society is often quite difficult.¹ Therefore these forms of popular media are particularly important in gaining a sense of how information travelled throughout societies and what the resulting impact was on not just the population, but also the overall foreign policy objectives and realities.

Additionally, this cultural dimension of the Sino-Vietnamese alliance helps to define the timeline of the relationship. This dimension is particularly useful as it helps to expand on the overall existing scholarship by placing the timeline of relations into a broader population, allowing for a sense of when the overall population felt the peaks and valleys in the broader political relationships. This period of 1950-1975 has typically been

¹ McHale, Shawn Frederick. *Print and Power: Confucianism, Communism, and Buddhism in the Making of Modern Vietnam* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004). 94.

described as a vacillation between cooperation and conflict between the top political figures of the era, but the reflections brought out by the inclusion of popular media allow for a greater contextualization of the relationship between the nations.

First, I have illustrated how the Sino-Vietnamese relationship transformed from the feeling of cultural brotherhood and unity into a sense of conflict and antagonism. The large collection of *Renmin ribao* articles and editorials used in this study help to track the development of this relationship as well as how the public was informed of these developments in the Sino-Vietnamese alliance. By focusing on the newspapers this section allows for an inclusion of key events and issues, such as embassy protests or the dispatch of “volunteer” workers, as well as the public response to such activities. The narrative of brotherhood in particular, helps to highlight the role of culture in the Sino-Vietnamese political relationship.

Second, in this thesis I wanted to highlight the role of popular media in disseminating policy initiatives to the population as a whole. By utilizing films such as *The White Hair Girl* I was able to explore the interplay between policy directives and individual motivations. Films such as *The White Hair Girl* were particularly important as they enabled large scale distribution of messages of land reform and resistance, key policy initiatives for both the PRC and the DRV. *The White Hair Girl* was a useful device for historical study due to its Chinese origins, but also the great impact the film had on motivating the Vietnamese peasantry to take part in land reform initiatives and join the resistance against the French.² This media analysis allows for a deeper

² Lockhart, Greg. *Nation in Arms: the Origins of the People's Army of Vietnam*. Sidney: Allen and Unwin Publishing, 1989. 250.

understanding of participation in the broad historical and political processes often discussed in the narrative of Sino-Vietnamese relations.

Additionally, this section focused on the usage of Lianhunahua comics in order to discuss the portrayal of policy initiatives and the Vietnamese to the Chinese youth and those with lower literacy. This type of media allowed for a unique investigation into the distillation of political themes into existing cultural models, as well as the ways in which those models were adapted to fit the current needs of the situation. These forms of media are particularly important in recognizing the level of understanding that large segments of the Chinese population had for the involvement in Vietnam. The combination of political themes and slogans with the pre-existing culturally romantic notions of adventurism or the bravery of young men provide a window into the ways in which the population were taught to frame broader geo-political events.

Finally, the last portion of the thesis turned to a broad examination of media reactions to the deterioration of the Sino-Vietnamese alliance. Through the usage of newspapers and editorials from both the PRC and the DRV I attempted to highlight the ways in which the greater population was informed of these processes and what the general responses were. Additionally, this section made use of another unique resource for understanding how those with low literacy made sense of these broad political responses that impacted their lives. The use of these serialized picture magazines to depict current events within China and Vietnam allow for an exploration into visual culture as well as the propagandistic undertones exhibited. Overall, this section helps to tie together many of the underlying themes brought up in the previous two chapters.

Thus, this analysis has attempted to move slightly away from the previous narratives of the Sino-Vietnamese relationship that rested almost completely upon the key political leaders of the time, rather than politics was not limited to public pronouncements and economic decisions, but was absorbed in cultural and media productions. While my narrative includes several of these same actors and events, the inclusion of popular and propagandistic media sources has allowed for a greater inclusion of the populations as a whole. This broader prospective, particularly on how the population made sense of these key issues that immediately impacted their lives is crucial in providing a more complex holistic narrative on the Sino-Vietnamese relationship. New subtleties in periodizing the relationship emerge, but the various forms of media analysis also allow for the inclusion of significantly larger groups of people into the narrative.

This thesis still possesses further room for growth as it has opened up many new avenues for study. An expanded version of the project could include a far greater number of Vietnamese source materials to better highlight the Vietnamese perspectives on these events. While there has been some inclusion in this thesis of these Vietnamese perspectives the study has largely been limited to the Chinese perspective. In a larger scale version of this project a greater selection of media resources could also be drawn upon, media such as radio broadcasts were influential in disseminating information, but are perhaps an even more rare resource than the limited selection of comic books and films that have survived from this era.

Overall though, this thesis has brought forward several useful avenues for inquiry in the developments of the Sino-Soviet relationship. By moving into the direct cultural

representations of the relationship the narrative can move deeper past the top down rhetoric of the leading politicians in the PRC and DRV. The true utility of an examination based on popular media is its complementary nature. Rather than being a deconstructionist project that attempts to completely re-write the narrative of the Sino-Vietnamese relationship in the 20th century, this project examines the ways in which popular media existed alongside and helped to create these narratives.

This inclusionary nature of popular media helps to highlight the inescapable connection between politics, culture, and society. While politicians made use of the popular forms of media to effectively disseminate their message to society and motivate support for large scale projects, the population too used these forms of media. Not only were comics, films and newspapers a source of entertainment for the peasantry, they were also a window for understanding their world.

As I noted earlier the jargon term interplay connotes a fluid sort of relationship that is often difficult for scholars to define. Here though the notion of interplay between media, population, and government is clear. The popular media productions of the time were in many cases created by the government for public consumption, who then synthesized many of the messages, and then reacted according to their own knowledge and beliefs. This relationship is between media and population is what makes popular media such a valuable complementary tool in understanding historical high level political processes. The utilization of media to create greater understanding was a useful tool during their production in the mid-20th century, and remains a useful tool for understanding now as a way to, at least partially, access the mindset of the masses.

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